FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION WASHINGTON, DC 20426 June 5, 2009

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 13123-000 – California Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project Eagle Crest Energy Company

Reference: Scoping Document 2 for the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project

To the Parties Addressed:

On January 10, 2008, Eagle Crest Energy Company (Eagle Crest) filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) a Notice of Intent to file a license application, a request to use the Traditional Licensing Process, and a Pre-Application Document for the proposed 1,300- megawatt Eagle Mountain Pumped Project.⁸

The project would be located in two depleted mining pits in the Eagle Mountain Mine in Riverside County, California, near the town of Desert Center, California. The proposed project would occupy federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands owned by Kaiser Eagle Mountain, LLC.

On June 16, 2008, Eagle Crest submitted a Draft License Application (DLA). The Commission has reviewed the DLA and provided comments along with many interested stakeholders. These comments can be viewed on the Commission's website at http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20081015-5009.

On October 17, 2008, Eagle Crest filed a request for approval of an early scoping process to coordinate both federal and California state environmental procedures. The Commission approved this request on October 29, 2008 and will hold early scoping to coordinate the Commission's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) with the State Water Resources Control Board's California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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⁸ Previously, the project was given FERC Project No. 12509-001. Upon issuance of a new preliminary permit on August 13, 2008, the project was given FERC Project No. 13123-000. On March 4, 2008, the Commission approved Eagle Crest's request to use the TLP.

Based on the comments filed for the DLA and pursuant to NEPA, the Commission staff intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the project, which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue new hydropower licenses for the projects. To support and assist our environmental review, we are beginning the public scoping process to ensure that all pertinent issues are identified and analyzed, and that the environmental document is thorough and balanced.

On December 17, 2008, we issued Scoping Document (SD1) in which we disclosed our preliminary view of the scope of environmental issues associated with the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project. Based on the verbal comments that we received at the scoping meetings held on January 15 and 16, 2009, in Palm Desert, California, and written comments we received throughout the scoping process, we prepared the enclosed Scoping Document 2 (SD2). We appreciate the participation of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the general public in the scoping process. The enclosed SD2 for the project is intended to serve as a guide to the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. Key changes from SD1 to SD2 are identified in bold, italicized type.

SD2 is distributed to all entities listed on the Commission's official mailing list. SD2 is issued for informational use by all interested entities; no response is required. SD2 is also available from our Public Reference Room at (202) 502-8371. It also can be accessed online at http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/elibrary.

For any questions about the SD1, the scoping process, or how Commission staff will develop the EIS for this project, please contact Kim Nguyen at (202) 502-6105 or e-mail at kim.nguyen@ferc.gov. Any questions concerning CEQA, the water quality certification, and the California water rights process should be directed to Camilla Williams at (916) 327-4807 or email at CKWilliams@waterboards.ca.gov. Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Eagle Mountain Project may be obtained from our website, http://www.ferc.gov.

Enclosure: Scoping Document 2

cc: Mailing List Public Files

NEPA SCOPING DOCUMENT 2

and

CEQA NOTICE OF PREPARATION

EAGLE MOUNTAIN PUMPED STORAGE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

CALIFORNIA

FERC PROJECT NO. 13123-000



State of California Environmental Protection Agency State Water Resources Control Board



Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Office of Energy Projects Division of Hydropower Licensing Washington, DC

June 2009

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Figure 1. Location of the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project2

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Aqueduct Colorado River Aqueduct

BLM U.S. Bureau of Land Management

CCV Citizens for the Chuckwalla Valley

CEQA California Environmental Quality Act

Commission Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

Districts County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County

DLA draft license application
Eagle Crest Energy Company

Eagle Mountain Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project

Project

EIR environmental impact report EIS environmental impact statement

FLA final license application

FPA Federal Power Act

Kaiser Eagle Mountain LLC

Metropolitan Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

MW megawatt

MWh megawatt-hour

NEPA National Environmental Policy Act NGO non-governmental organization

NPCA National Parks Conservation Association

PAD pre-application document

project Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project

REA notice Ready for Environmental Analysis notice

Reclamation U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

SD scoping document

TLP Traditional Licensing Process

Water Board State Water Resources Control Board

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA), may issue licenses for terms ranging from 30 to 50 years for the construction, operation, and maintenance of non-federal hydroelectric projects. On January 10, 2008, Eagle Crest Energy Company (Eagle Crest) filed a Notice of Intent to file a license application, a request to use the Traditional Licensing Process (TLP), and a Pre-Application Document (PAD) for the proposed 1,300-megawatt (MW) Eagle Mountain Pumped Project. 10

The project would be located in two depleted mining pits in the Eagle Mountain Mine in Riverside County, California, near the town of Desert Center, California. See Figure 1. The proposed project would occupy federal lands administered by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands owned by Kaiser Eagle Mountain, LLC.

Following the submission of the PAD, there was a 60-day comment period when interested stakeholders were invited to submit requests for additional studies. In addition, a joint meeting and site visit was held on April 9 and 10, 2008. Transcripts from the joint meeting are available on the Commission's website at www.ferc.gov.

On June 16, 2008, Eagle Crest submitted a draft license application (DLA) to the Commission. Comments on this DLA were filed by many interested stakeholders and can be viewed on the Commission's website at http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file-list.asp?accession-num=20081015-5009.

On September 26, 2008, Eagle Crest applied to the State Water Resources Control Board (Water Board) for water quality certification under section 401 of the Clean Water Act. For purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Water Board will be the California state lead agency for the preparation of an environmental impact report (EIR) for California public agency approvals relating to environmental impacts associated with the proposed licensing of the project. On October 15, 2008, the Water Board determined that the application met the requirements for a complete application and was acceptable for processing.

⁹ 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r) (2000).

¹⁰ Previously, the project was given FERC Project No. 12509-001. Upon issuance of a new preliminary permit on August 13, 2008, the project was given FERC Project No. 13123-000. On March 4, 2008, the Commission approved Eagle Crest's request to use the TLP.

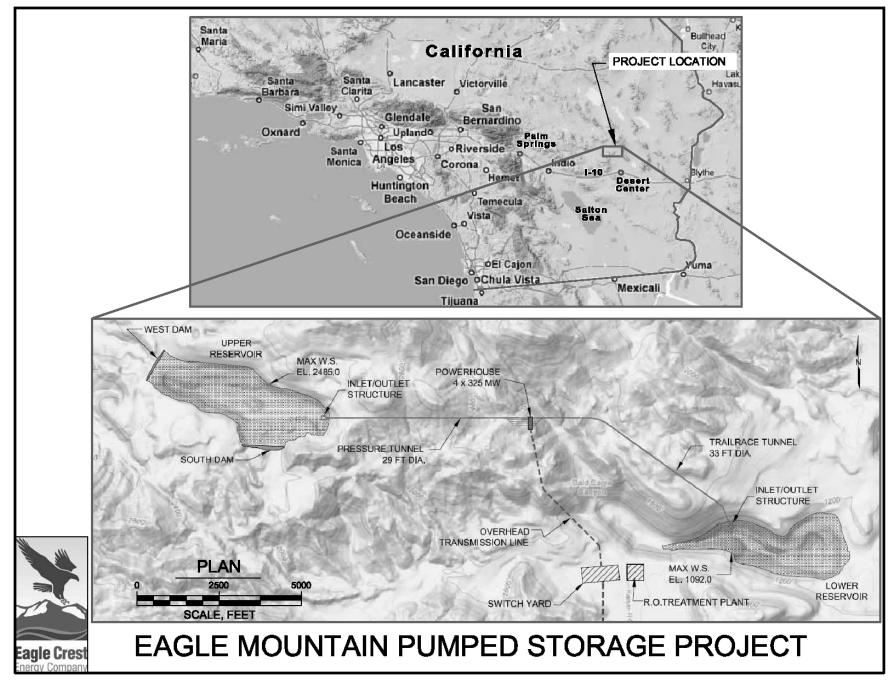


Figure 1. Location of the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project (Source: Eagle Crest Energy Company, 2008).

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,¹¹ the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of licensing the project as proposed, as well as consider reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. At this time, we intend to prepare a draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS) that describes and evaluates the probable impacts, including an assessment of the site-specific and cumulative effects, if any, of the proposed action and alternatives considered. This scoping process will help the Commission and Water Board staff to identify the pertinent issues for analysis in the EIS and EIR.

SCOPING

On October 29, 2008, the Commission approved Eagle Crest's October 17, 2008, request for an early scoping process to coordinate the federal and California state environmental review procedures.

2.1 Purpose of Scoping

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities for enhancement or mitigation associated with a proposed action. The process should be conducted early in the planning stages of a project.

The purposes of the scoping process are to:

- invite participation of federal, state, and local resource agencies; Indian tribes; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and other interested persons to help us identify significant environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the proposed action.
- determine the resource areas, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the EIS and EIR.
- identify how the project would or would not contribute to cumulative impacts in the project area.
- identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that should be evaluated in the EIS and EIR.
- solicit from participants available information on the resources at issue.

¹¹ National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (Pub. L. 91-190. 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, January 1, 1970, as amended by Pub. L. 94-52, July 3, 1975, Pub. L. 94-83, August 9, 1975, and Pub. L. 97-258, §4(b), Sept. 13, 1982).

• determine the resource areas and potential issues that do no require detailed analysis during review of the project.

We issued Scoping Document 1 (SD1) for the project on December 17, 2008, to enable appropriate resource agencies, Indian tribes, and other interested parties to more effectively participate in and contribute to the scoping process. In SD1, we requested clarification of preliminary issues concerning the Eagle Mountain Project and identification of any new issues that need to be addressed in the EIS and EIR. We revised SD1 following the scoping meetings and after reviewing comments filed during the scoping comment period. SD2 presents our current view of issues and alternatives to be considered in the EIS and EIR. Additions to SD1 are shown in bold and italic type in this SD2.

2.2 Comments and Scoping Meetings

In addition to written comments solicited by SD1, we held two scoping meetings to identify potential issues associated with the Eagle Mountain Project. The notice of the scoping meetings was published in local newspapers and in the Federal Register. An evening scoping meeting was held on January 15, 2009, and a morning scoping meeting was held on January 16, 2009. A court reporter recorded comments made during the scoping meetings.

In addition to the comments received at the scoping meetings, the following entities filed written comments on the SD1:

Entity	Date Filed
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California	February 10, 2009
Kaiser Eagle Mountain LLC	February 13, 2009
Citizens for the Chuckwalla Valley	February 16, 2009
National Parks Conservation Association	February 17, 2009
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County	February 20, 2009
Riverside County Fire Department	March 5, 2009
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation	March 26, 2009

All comments received are part of the Commission's official record for the project. Information in the official file is available for inspection and reproduction at the Commission's Public Reference Room, located at 888 First Street, N.E., Room 2A, Washington, DC 20426, or by calling (202) 502-8371. Information also may be accessed through the Commission's eLibrary using the "Documents & Filings" link on the Commission's web page at http://www.ferc.gov. Call (202) 502-6652 for assistance.

2.3 Issues Raised During Scoping

The general concerns raised by participants in the scoping process are summarized below by subject area. Comments received at the scoping meetings are similar to those written comments submitted to the Commission during the comment period. The summary does not include every oral and written comment made during the scoping process. For instance, we do not address comments that are recommendations for schedule changes, or minor editorial corrections. We also have not included comments that are recommendations for license conditions. Such recommendations will be addressed when we request final terms, conditions, recommendations, and comments when we issue our Ready for Environmental Analysis (REA) notice.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

<u>Comment:</u> Kaiser Eagle Mountain LLC (Kaiser), the County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Districts), and Citizens for the Chuckwalla Valley (CCV) say that the applicant's description of the project is incomplete and lacking in specificity, such that adequate environmental review is not possible. Kaiser and the Districts, for instance, note lack of specificity on transmission line routes and on sources of water for filling and make-up, and the Districts cite lack of information about the project's seepage control, potable water, sewage, and storm water systems, including proposed best management practices during construction.

<u>Response:</u> We will review the project description contained in the final license application (FLA), when filed, and determine at that point whether additional project description information is required for our environmental analysis.

Information Adequacy

Comment: Kaiser and the Districts agree that all the studies listed in SD1 section 3.1.3 are necessary, but argue that a great deal of additional analysis is required to provide the quality and quantity of information necessary to support an adequate evaluation of the project and its effects. Kaiser and the Districts further argue that issues of compatibility with the planned Eagle Mountain Landfill cannot be postponed, but must be addressed in the environmental analysis based on detailed information provided by the applicant. Specifically, the Districts request detailed three-dimensional groundwater flow modeling to identify likely reservoir and tunnel seepage patterns and to identify likely groundwater impacts from groundwater pumping. The Districts also request stability calculations and modeling for reservoir slopes, project dams, and landfill slopes, and along with CCV, they ask for a seismic study using current data and California Department of Water Resources-approved methodology.

Response: After the FLA is filed, we will issue a Notice of Application Tendered for Filing with the Commission and Soliciting Additional Study Requests, in response to which participants can provide recommendations for additional studies. We will review any recommendations we receive and also conduct our own review of the FLA and other information in the record in light of the issues identified during scoping. If we determine that information is lacking, we will request the applicant to provide the additional information. Once we have determined that sufficient information is available to evaluate the effects of the proposed project and alternatives on developmental and non-developmental resources, we will issue the REA notice and request final terms, conditions, recommendations, and comments.

Cumulative Effects

Comment: National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) requests that the EIS and EIR address the potential cumulative impacts of the project in conjunction with the potential Eagle Mountain Landfill, including potential cumulative effects on the desert tortoise and biotic communities, wilderness values, and groundwater. Kaiser states that the effects of the project must be examined alongside its interaction with other effects in the region and in the upcoming years. The Districts insist that the environmental analysis clearly and completely describe the potential direct and cumulative effects to the design, construction, and operation of the landfill. The Districts point out that any simultaneity in the construction of the two projects would create potential additive traffic, air quality, noise, and biological impacts that would need to be described.

<u>Response:</u> We identify water resources, terrestrial resources, land use, recreation, and air quality as resources that could be cumulatively affected by the proposed project, and we have modified section 4.1.1 to include the Eagle Mountain Landfill among the reasonably foreseeable future actions that we will consider in the cumulative effects analysis.

Geology and Soils Resources

<u>Comment:</u> The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) recommends an assessment of the potential for Colorado River Aqueduct (Aqueduct) structural settlement due to hydrocompaction associated with potential rising groundwater levels from reservoir seepage. Also, Metropolitan recommends an assessment of the potential for Aqueduct settlement from subsidence due to groundwater pumping.

<u>Response:</u> We modified section 4.2.1 to specifically identify these potential effects.

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA requests that the EIS assess the potential for subsidence in the Pinto Basin of Joshua Tree National Park.

<u>Response:</u> To the extent we determine that the project would affect groundwater levels in the Pinto Basin, we will assess the potential for subsidence in the basin.

Comment: CCV requests comprehensive seismicity studies, including the effect on project facilities such as reservoir liners and brine ponds of potential ground movements. CCV also questions how the project's reservoir liners will perform over time in the face of eroding pit slopes. Kaiser recommends that design ground motions should be established that reflect the site's geologic conditions and seismic setting. Kaiser notes that these are essential input for design of the project facilities and for the evaluation of geologic hazards, such as soil liquefaction potential, seismically induced settlement, and slope stability. Kaiser is concerned that there will likely be seepage from the proposed reservoirs, which would raise groundwater levels and possibly increase the potential for soil liquefaction and induce seismicity.

<u>Response:</u> Our assessment of project effects on geology and soil resources (section 4.2.1) will include analysis of potential geologic hazards, such as increased soil liquefaction, project-induced seismicity, and slope instability. California's Class II surface impoundment siting and construction requirements require that these issues be evaluated for waste discharges to land and are applicable to the project brine ponds.

Water Resources

<u>Comment:</u> The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) explains that the Secretary of the Interior is required to monitor consumptive use of water extracted from the main stream of the Lower Colorado River, including groundwater. The project's proposed groundwater wells are within the boundary of the Lower Colorado River aquifer. Reclamation requests that the environmental analysis include a prediction of potential groundwater drawdown in relation to the accounting surface elevation of the project area so that Reclamation can determine if groundwater pumped for the project would be considered Colorado River water.

<u>Response:</u> We modified an existing Water Resources' issue to address this comment (see section 4.2.2).

Comment: NPCA states that the Pinto Basin aquifer within Joshua Tree National Park is hydrologically connected with the Chuckwalla Basin. Any drawdown effects in the Chuckwalla Basin could potentially affect groundwater resources in Joshua Tree National Park, potentially including subsidence. NPCA also comments that there is the potential for contamination from the project's residual ore bodies reaching the Pinto Basin aquifer. NPCA and CCV request that the geographic scope of the water resources analysis be expanded to include the Pinto Basin.

<u>Response:</u> We added an analysis of effects to the Pinto Basin under Geology and Soils Resources and Cumulative Effects.

<u>Comment:</u> Metropolitan recommends assessment of groundwater-level effects in the vicinity of the Aqueduct.

<u>Response:</u> We expanded a Water Resources' issue bullet to address this comment (section 4.2.2).

<u>Comment:</u> Metropolitan recommends an assessment of the effects of groundwater pumping on aquifer water quality.

<u>Response:</u> We added this issue to section 4.2.2, Water Resources.

<u>Comment:</u> Metropolitan recommends that the water quality assessment include analysis of the effectiveness of the proposed reverse osmosis method.

<u>Response:</u> We will evaluate the benefits and costs of the applicant's proposed reverse osmosis system, along with the benefits and costs of any reasonable alternatives.

Comment: Kaiser believes that there is a high likelihood of seepage from the project that could affect surrounding land uses, water supply sources, and habitat areas, including potential brine pond leakage effects on groundwater quality. The Districts request reliable reservoir and tunnel seepage estimates, assessment of seepage control systems, and identification of pollutants that would be generated by the project. Metropolitan recommends that the water quality analysis include the potential for leaching of heavy metals from the site and any potential impacts on water supplies traveling through the Aqueduct. CCV asks how the integrity of the Chuckwalla Valley aquifer would be affected by leachate from the combination of the pumped storage project and the landfill. CCV comments that any leakage from the pumped storage project reservoirs could affect the performance of the landfill's leachate collection system.

<u>Response:</u> We will evaluate the potential for seepage from the project and effects of such seepage on adjacent land uses, habitat, and water quality, including heavy metals. This will be done on both a site-specific and a cumulative basis. We clarified in section 4.1.1 that we will consider the potential Eagle Mountain Landfill as a reasonably foreseeable action in the cumulative effects analysis. California's requirements for waste discharges to land include corrective action for potential impacts to groundwater quality and are applicable to the brine ponds.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV indicates that, in the event the project is supplied water from the Aqueduct, there is a relationship between that use and the potential development by Metropolitan of an Upper Chuckwalla Valley Water Storage Project. CCV states that development of the conjunctive use water storage project would potentially result in the deposition of pollutants.

<u>Response:</u> Because we have no information in the record that indicates any direct relationship between the project water supply source and Metropolitan's potential water storage project, we will not assess this issue.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV recommends that the EIS address the potential colonization of the project reservoirs by aquatic organisms.

<u>Response:</u> We modified section 4.2.2 to include consideration of this potential effect.

Terrestrial Resources

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA and the Districts request that the EIS and EIR address the potential for the project reservoirs to affect opportunistic predators, such as coyotes, and their resultant prey species.

<u>Response:</u> We expanded the issue statement in section 4.2.4 to explicitly include effects on predator populations.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV suggests that any aquifer drawdown due to groundwater pumping would affect springs and the wildlife that use them.

<u>Response:</u> We modified section 4.2.2 to include groundwater pumping effects on springs, and we have added an issue statement in section 4.2.4 addressing the potential effects on wildlife.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV states that introducing the project reservoirs in an area where water is currently scarce will have significant impacts on the resources of Joshua Tree National Park. Similarly, Kaiser and NPCA recommend evaluation of the potential effects associated with the introduction of new water bodies in a desert setting. CCV further states that the EIS should address the colonization of the project reservoirs by birds.

<u>Response:</u> We identified the issue of introducing new surface water bodies in a desert environment (section 4.2.4), and we identified species potentially affected.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV requests an assessment of project facilities and operations on raven numbers.

<u>Response:</u> We added an issue statement in section 4.2.4 addressing this issue.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV expresses concern regarding the introduction of non-native vegetation via erosion control activities.

<u>Response:</u> We added an issue statement in section 4.2.4 addressing the potential spread of invasive species.

<u>Comment:</u> CCV recommends that project reservoirs and brine pond(s) be covered to prevent evaporation and to exclude birds and other species. Kaiser requests ecosystem analyses to identify adequate protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures for wildlife and wildlife habitat.

<u>Response:</u> We will evaluate, at a minimum, the measures proposed by the applicant and the recommended measures that are filed in response to our REA notice, as well as any additional measures identified by staff.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA requests that the EIS include an assessment of the potential effects on the desert tortoise due to any subsidence occurring in the Pinto Basin within Joshua Tree National Park.

<u>Response:</u> Our assessment of effects on the desert tortoise (section 4.2.5) will include the potential for effects in the Pinto Basin that may be associated with subsidence associated with groundwater pumping.

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA and CCV recommend that the environmental analysis address the potential for the project reservoirs to subsidize desert ravens, which could have effects on their prey, including desert tortoise.

<u>Response:</u> We revised section 4.2.4 to clarify that we will assess the project's effects on the raven population, and our assessment of potential effects on the desert tortoise will consider these and other predators (section 4.2.5).

<u>Comment:</u> The Districts suggest that the EIS and EIR disclose how the open reservoirs would affect the landfill's ability to comply with the biological opinion for the landfill.

<u>Response:</u> We revised section 4.2.5 to clarify that we will assess potential conflicts between the proposed project and the terms of Kaiser's incidental take statement for the Eagle Mountain Landfill Project.

Recreation, Land Use, and Aesthetics

<u>Comment:</u> Kaiser argues that the environmental analysis must look at the project's effects on existing and reasonably foreseeable adjacent land uses. Kaiser specifically mentions the planned Eagle Mountain Landfill, existing and planned energy facilities in the area, planned uses reflected in Riverside County's General Plan—Desert Center Area Land Use component, and current and potential future mining and mine reclamation activities at Eagle Mountain. Kaiser and the Districts express strong concern that the project and the landfill may be incompatible. The Districts list

potential areas of incompatibility, including potential regulatory, construction and operational conflicts.

With regard to the existing Aqueduct, Metropolitan recommends that the land use assessment include potential effects of project equipment crossing the Aqueduct conduit during construction and operation, potential effects of the project on Metropolitan's facilities, properties, and rights-of way, potential effects to accessibility and use of existing Metropolitan facilities, and potential effects to Metropolitan's operations, including access for repair and maintenance. Metropolitan requests that any design plans for project facilities in the area of Metropolitan's facilities be submitted to Metropolitan for review and approval. Metropolitan also recommends that certain restrictions be imposed to safeguard Aqueduct facilities and operations.

Response: We will address project-related effects on existing and reasonably foreseeable land uses in the project vicinity, on both a project-specific and cumulative basis, and will also evaluate growth-inducing impacts from the project. We expanded the issues list in section 4.2.6 accordingly, including areas of potential incompatibility between the proposed project and the landfill. If our analysis indicates that the project and landfill are not compatible, we will address the implications for solid waste disposal alternatives in other locations. In regard to Metropolitan's proposed restrictions for protection of the Aqueduct, we will evaluate, at a minimum, the measures proposed by the applicant and the recommendations that are filed in response to the REA notice, as well as any additional measures identified by staff based on the project record.

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA requests that the EIS address the potential for the project to degrade the wilderness values of Joshua Tree National Park, including potential degradation of dark night skies, natural soundscapes, and the visitor experience.

<u>Response:</u> We will assess the potential for project-related effects on the visitor experience and the park's wilderness values (sections 4.2.6 and 4.2.8).

Socioeconomics

<u>Comment:</u> CCV states that there will be adverse effects from depleted groundwater and requests assurance that adverse effects on Chuckwalla Valley groundwater users and Joshua Tree National Park will be avoided.

<u>Response:</u> We will address project-related effects on groundwater users (section 4.2.2), and we will assess any proposed and recommended measures to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects identified.

<u>Comment:</u> Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) commented that the proposed project will have a cumulative adverse impact on the RCFD's ability to provide an

acceptable level of service. RCFD states that the impacts include an increased number of emergency and public service calls due to the increased presence of traffic, structures and population. RCFD recommends that Eagle Crest participate in the Development Impact Fee Program as adopted by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors to mitigate a portion of these impacts.

<u>Response:</u> We will evaluate mitigation measures, as defined by the County of Riverside, to determine if the impacts can be reduced to a level below significance.

Developmental Resources

<u>Comment:</u> NPCA states that the EIS and EIR should address the need for the project, specifically assessing whether there is potential for the project to operate in conjunction with wind energy sources. Kaiser argues that the environmental analysis must include critical examination of the need for the project and its impacts on existing energy infrastructure and energy resources.

<u>Response:</u> Our developmental analysis will evaluate the need for the power to be provided by the project and will include an analysis of the cost of producing power at the project in comparison to the costs of other potential sources. The project will also be evaluated for contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and how it will meet California's renewable portfolio standards for green energy. The costs of implementing the project, including design, permitting, construction, resource measures, and operation and maintenance, will be used to calculate a unit cost of power for comparison of alternatives.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with NEPA and CEQA, our environmental analysis will consider the following alternatives, at a minimum: (1) the applicant's proposed action; (2) alternatives to the proposed action; and (3) no-action. CEQA requires that the levels of significance due to the proposed action be identified.

3.1 Eagle Crest Energy Company's Proposed Action

Eagle Crest is seeking an original license to construct and operate the Eagle Mountain Project. The Commission will consider whether, and under what conditions, to issue an original license for the project. The Water Board will consider whether, and under what conditions, to issue water quality certification for the project.

3.1.1 Description of Proposed Project Facilities

The proposed project would be a pumped storage project using two existing mining pits near the town of Eagle Mountain, California. Water would be pumped from

a lower reservoir to an upper reservoir during periods of low demand to generate peak energy during periods of high demand. The project would consist of the following facilities: (1) an upper dam and reservoir, (2) a lower dam and reservoir, (3) inlet/outlet structures, (4) water conveyance tunnels, (5) a vertical shaft, (6) surge control facilities, (7) an underground powerhouse, (8) a transmission line, (9) water supply facilities, (10) access roads, and (11) appurtenant facilities.

3.1.2 Proposed Project Operation

The project will use off-peak energy to pump water from the lower reservoir to the upper reservoir during periods of low electrical demand and generate valuable peak energy by passing the water from the upper to the lower reservoir through the generating units during periods of high electrical demand. The low demand periods are expected to be during weekday nights and throughout the weekend, and the high demand periods are expected to be in the daytime during week days, especially during the summer months. The project will provide an economical supply of peaking capacity, as well as load following, system regulation through spinning reserve, and immediately available standby generating capacity.

The proposed energy storage volume will permit operation of the project at full capacity for 9 hours each weekday, with 8 hours of pumping each weekday night and additional pumping during the weekend to fully recharge the upper reservoir. The amount of active storage in the upper reservoir will be 17,700 acre-feet, providing 18.5 hours of energy storage at the maximum generating discharge. Water stored in the upper reservoir will provide approximately 22,200 megawatt-hours (MWh) of on-peak generation.

3.2 Staff's Modification of the Proposed Action

The Commission and the Water Board staffs will consider various alternatives, including environmental measures not proposed by Eagle Crest. We will consider and assess all alternative recommendations for operational or facility modifications, as well as protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures identified by the Commission staff, the Water Board staff, the agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the general public. To the extent that modifications would reduce power production from the project, the Commission and the Water Board staffs will evaluate the costs of providing an equivalent amount of fossil-fueled power generation, and the contributions of such generation to airborne pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

3.3 No-Action Alternative

Under no-action, the Eagle Mountain Project would not be constructed. We use this alternative to establish baseline environmental conditions for comparison with other alternatives.

3.4 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

At present, we do not propose to eliminate any specific alternatives from detailed and comprehensive analyses in the EIS or EIR.

SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESOURCE ISSUES

4.1 Cumulative Effects

According to the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Section 1508.7), a cumulative effect is an impact on the environment resulting from the incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time, including hydropower and other land and water development activities.

Under CEQA, a cumulative impact refers to two or more individual effects, which, when considered together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15355).

4.1.1 Resources That Could Be Cumulatively Affected

After reviewing the *DLA* and written and oral comments on SD1, we identify water resources, terrestrial resources (including federally listed threatened and endangered species), land use, recreation, and air quality, as resources that could be cumulatively affected by the proposed project and other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The latter could include residential and agricultural groundwater users, the Aqueduct, the proposed Eagle Mountain Landfill, proposed solar energy installations, and other actions that we identify during our analysis.

4.1.2 Geographic Scope

The geographic scope of the analysis defines the physical limits or boundaries of the proposed action's effect on the resources. Because the proposed action would affect the resources differently, the geographic scope for each resource may vary.

The geographic scope for water resources would be the Chuckwalla Valley Aquifer and potentially adjacent, hydrologically connected aquifers such as the Pinto Basin aquifer. This geographic scope was selected because the groundwater to be used for this project, as well as other reasonably foreseeable projects, would be withdrawn from the Chuckwalla Valley aquifer, and we may determine that groundwater-level effects may extend to adjacent basins. The geographic scope for other resources would

be that portion of the Chuckwalla Valley and I-10 corridor sufficient to encompass all project facilities, and construction and operation effects.

4.1.3 Temporal Scope

The temporal scope of the cumulative effects analysis in the EIS and EIR will include a discussion of past, present, and future actions and their respective effects on each resource that could be cumulatively affected. Based on the potential term of an original license, the temporal scope will look 50 years into the future, concentrating on the effect on the resources from *existing and* reasonably foreseeable future actions. The historical discussion will be limited, by necessity, to the amount of available information for each resource.

4.2 Resource Issues

In this section, we present a list of environmental issues to be addressed in the EIS and EIR. We identified these issues, which are listed by resource area, by reviewing the PAD, along with verbal and written comments on scoping. For convenience, the issues have been listed by resource area. Those issues identified by an asterisk (*) will be analyzed for both cumulative and site-specific effects. We have concluded that a detailed analysis of fish and aquatic resources related to licensing the Eagle Mountain Project is not needed.

4.2.1 Geology and Soils Resources

- Effects of project construction, *filling*, and operation on geology and soil resources in the project boundary, including assessment of potential geologic hazards such as soil liquefaction, project-induced seismicity, and slope instability.
- Effects of project construction, *filling*, *and operation* on soil erosion and sedimentation *in the project area*.
- Effect of project construction, filling, and operation on the potential for subsidence and hydrocompaction in the project area and associated Chuckwalla Valley groundwater basin, including potential effects in adjacent river basins (e.g., the Pinto Basin) and on the Aqueduct.

4.2.2 Water Resources

- Effects of construction activities on water quality in the project area.*
- Effects of reservoir and tunnel on seepage and on groundwater levels in the project area.*

- Effects of seepage from the reservoirs *and brine pond(s)* on groundwater quality *in the project area.**
- Effects of groundwater pumping on groundwater levels, including assessment of groundwater level changes in relation to: other groundwater users; local springs; the Aqueduct; and Reclamation's accounting surface elevation for monitoring use of Colorado River water.*
- Effects of groundwater pumping on groundwater quantity and quality in the project area.*
- Effects on long-term water quantity and quality in the reservoirs and brine ponds, including the potential for colonization by avian organisms.

4.2.3 Aquatic Resources

• No issues associated with aquatic resources have been identified.

4.2.4 Terrestrial Resources

- Effects of the reservoirs as a rare water source in the desert environment on the attraction of waterfowl and bats, attraction of predators (e.g., coyotes, badger, and ravens), and establishment and composition of riparian communities.
- Effects of project construction (i.e., disturbance and habitat fragmentation) and operation (i.e., lighting, physical and noise disturbance, and migration barriers) on desert bighorn sheep migration patterns, foraging habitat, and breeding and lambing behavior; *including an assessment of* consequences to desert bighorn sheep populations in the area.*
- Potential effects of the project's reservoirs on deer, big horn sheep, and desert tortoise drowning in the reservoirs, *and effectiveness of fencing*.
- Effects of the brine ponds on birds, and measures to minimize adverse effects.
- Effects of project construction and operation, including, but not limited to, construction of the access roads, water pipeline, transmission line, powerhouse, brine ponds and reservoirs, staging areas, transmission line pulling areas, and waste spoil and disposal sites on vegetation.
- Effects of changes in local springs on wildlife, including desert bighorn sheep.*

- Effects of project construction and operation on the spread of invasive species including the consequences of the spread of noxious weeds on vegetation species composition and wildlife habitat values.
- Effects of project construction and operation on special status species, including BLM sensitive species and state threatened and endangered species.
- Effects of project facilities and operations on raven populations.*

4.2.5 Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

- Effect of project construction and operation on federally threatened and endangered species: (1) desert tortoise and its critical habitat, (2) Coachella Valley milkvetch.*
- Potential conflicts between the proposed project and the terms of Kaiser's incidental take statement for the Eagle Mountain Landfill Project.

4.2.6 Recreation and Land Use

- Effects of project construction and operation on recreational use within the project area, including lands administered by the BLM for dispersed recreational use and, at the Joshua Tree National Park.
- Effects of project construction and operation on special designated areas, including BLM's Chuckwalla Valley Dune Thicket Area of Critical Environmental Concern, and Chuckwalla Critical Habitat Unit (an area designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as desert tortoise habitat), and federally designated wilderness areas within the Joshua Tree National Park.*
- Effects of project construction and operation on Aqueduct other land uses, including future mineral development, and solar farms.*
- Effects of project construction and operation on the proposed Eagle Mountain Landfill and Recycling Center, *including assessment of potential areas of incompatibility between the proposed project and the landfill.**
- Effects of project-related desalinization ponds (from the reverse osmosis system) and associated removal of an estimated 2,500 tons of salt from the upper reservoir on land use.

4.2.7 Cultural Resources

- Effects of construction and operation of the proposed project on historic, archeological, and traditional resources that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Effects of project's construction and operation on the project's defined area of potential effects.

4.2.8 Aesthetic Resources

- Effects of proposed project facilities on visitors who view the landscape (i.e., Riverside County has designated the section of Interstate 10 from Desert Center to Blythe as a scenic corridor).
- Effects of project construction *and operation* on visitors to the area, including visitors *to wilderness and non-wilderness areas within* the Joshua Tree National Park, *and effects on the park's wilderness values*.

4.2.9 Socioeconomics

- Effects of increased traffic and potential congestion on local roads due to *the combination of existing mining-related and landfill traffic* and project construction and operation.
- Effects of the proposed project on local, tribal, and regional economies.
- Effects of the proposed project on the Riverside County Fire Department's ability to provide an acceptable level of service.

4.2.10 Air Quality

- Effects of construction and operation of the project on air quality in the region.*
- Effects of the project on carbon production emissions.*

4.2.11 Developmental Resources

• Effects of the proposed project and alternatives, including any protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures, on economics of the project.

EIS PREPARATION SCHEDULE

At this time the Commission anticipates the need to prepare a draft and final EIS. The draft EIS will be sent to all persons and entities on the Commission's service and mailing lists for the Eagle Mountain Project. The draft EIS will include our recommendations for operating procedures and environmental protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures that should be part of any license issued by the Commission. Recipients will have 60 days to review the draft EIS and file written comments with the Commission. All comments filed with the Commission on the draft EIS will be considered, and as appropriate, incorporated into the analysis for the final EIS.

The major milestones, including those for preparing the EIS, are as follows:

Major Milestone	Target Date
Scoping meetings	January 2009
Comments on SD1	February 2009
Scoping Document 2	June 2009
APEA & License Application Filed	To be determined
Issue REA notice	4 months from filing of license application
Deadline for Filing Comments, Recommendations, and Agency Terms and Conditions/prescriptions	60 days from issuance of REA notice
Reply Comments from Applicant	45 days from comments date
Draft EIS issued	7 months from reply comments
Comments on the draft EIS	60 days from issuance of draft EIS
Final EIS issued	7 months from comments on draft EIS

If Commission staff determines that there is a need for additional information or additional studies, the issuance of the Ready for Environmental Analysis notice could be delayed. If this occurs, all subsequent milestones would be delayed by the time allowed for Eagle Crest to respond to the Commission's request.

EIR PREPARATION SCHEDULE

At this time, the Water Board anticipates the need to prepare a draft and final EIR. The draft EIR will be made publically available for review and comment. The draft EIR will define the baseline environmental setting as the existing conditions, will include

findings for significant environmental impacts, and will provide an analysis of feasible mitigation or alternatives to avoid significant environmental impacts that should be part of the 401 water quality certification. Recipients will have 45 days to provide the Water Board with written comments on the draft EIR. All comments filed with the Water Board on the draft EIR will be considered, and as appropriate, incorporated into the analysis for the final EIR. The final EIR will be considered in any Water Board notice of determination and water quality certification.

The Water Board preliminary schedule for preparing the EIR and making a certification decision is as follows:

Action	Target Date
Request for water quality certification	September 2008
Water Board determination that application for water quality certification is complete	October 2008
Release Notice of Preparation	November 2008
Scoping Meetings	January 2009
Submit Applicant-Prepared EIR	June 2009
Draft EIR	To be determined
Comments on draft EIR	45 days from issuance of draft EIR
Final EIR	2 months from comments on draft EIR
Water Quality Certification	January 2010
Notice of Determination	January 2010

EIS OUTLINE

The preliminary outline for the Eagle Mountain Project EIS is as follows. The EIR will follow a similar outline, but with additional sections added to address specific requirements of CEQA, which will include identification of growth-inducing and climate change impacts, and levels of significant project impacts. The Water Board will adopt the mitigation measures or will adopt a statement of override.

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Section 10(a)(2) of the FPA requires us to consider whether or not, and under what conditions, licensing the project would be consistent with relevant comprehensive plans on the Commission's Comprehensive Plan List. Those plans currently listed on the Commission's Comprehensive Plan List which we consider to be relevant to this project are listed below. We ask agencies to review this list and to inform us of any changes (additions/subtractions) that are needed. If there are plans that should be added to the list, agencies should file the plans according to 18 CFR 2.19.

California

- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1998. Public opinions and attitudes on outdoor recreation in California. Sacramento, California. March 1998.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1980. Recreation outlook in Planning District 2. Sacramento, California. April 1980. 88 pp.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1980. Recreation outlook in Planning District 3. Sacramento, California. June 1980. 82 pp.

- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1994. California outdoor recreation plan (SCORP) 1993. Sacramento, California. April 1994. 154 pp. and appendices.
- California Department of Water Resources. 1983. The California water plan: projected use and available water supplies to 2010. Bulletin 160-83. Sacramento, California. December 1983. 268 pp. and attachments.
- California Department of Water Resources. 1994. California water plan update. Bulletin 160-93. Sacramento, California. October 1994. Two volumes and executive summary.
- California State Water Resources Control Board. 1995. Water quality control plan report. Sacramento, California. Nine volumes.
- California The Resources Agency. Department of Parks and Recreation. 1983. Recreation needs in California. Sacramento, California. March 1983. 39 pp. and appendices.
- State Water Resources Control Board. 1999. Water Quality Control Plans and Policies Adopted as Part of the State Comprehensive Plan. April 1999.

United States

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Undated. Fisheries USA: the recreational fisheries policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Canadian Wildlife Service. 1986. North American waterfowl management plan. Department of the Interior. Environment Canada. May 1986.
- National Park Service. 1982. The nationwide rivers inventory. Department of the Interior. Washington, D.C. January 1982.
- U.S. Forest Service. 1986. Cleveland National Forest land and resources management plan. Department of Agriculture, Corona, California. February 1986.

LITERATURE CITED

Eagle Crest (Eagle Crest Energy Company). 2008. Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project draft license application. Eagle Crest Energy Company, Palm Desert, CA. June 16, 2008.

MAILING LIST

The list below is the Commission's official mailing list for the Eagle Mountain Project. If you want to receive future mailings for the Eagle Mountain Project and are not included in the list below, please send your request by email to efiling@ferc.gov or by mail to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. All written and emailed requests to be added to the mailing list must clearly identify the following on the first page: Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Project No. 13123-000. You may use the same method if requesting removal from the mailing list shown below.

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