June 3, 2019

STRAUSS DSEIR TALKING POINTS

Rev. 1

Background

See the SBAS website for a brief description of the Strauss Wind Energy Project (SWEP).

Santa Barbara County is soliciting public comments on the adequacy of the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (DSEIR). The public's comments should address the adequacy of the DSEIR and what the County can do to improve it. At this time, the County is less interested in whether the public is for or against the project.

The County is soliciting written comments from the public on the DSEIR. These comments must be emailed or mailed to the County by 5 PM on Friday, June 14. Please submit your comment letter – it will have an influence on the County! You can write your own letter or use the talking points below. Also, SBAS has posted a sample letter on its website. You can use that letter as is, sign it, and send it in. Or you can modify the sample letter, sign it, and send it in.

Talking Points

The applicant has designed the project solely to achieve maximum electrical output from the wind farm. Reducing avian mortality by strategically locating the wind turbine generators (WTGs) was not even considered. This approach contradicts the State and Federal wind energy guidelines.

Most wind farms that have been designed in the last few years in the United States have been designed to reduce avian mortality by properly locating WTGs. Strauss should be designed that way too!

The County should change the project design to be more similar to the Lompoc Wind Energy Project (LWEP) that was approved 10 years ago. The County should devise an Environment-Friendly Alternative that would move some of the generators off of ridgetops and adjust the number and type of generators to meet the project's energy production goals. The County should require the use of more of the smaller 1.79-MW wind turbine generators already proposed for use by the applicant. Using smaller WTGs would mean smaller blades that could be transported by helicopter or airship. Then San Miguelito Road would not have to be modified, eliminating the destruction of 158 mature oak trees. The County should hire an expert to help with the design who has experience in designing wind projects that protect birds and produce adequate power.

The project as proposed would destroy 607 mature oak trees. I would support the Modified Project Alternative that would substantially reduce the destruction of oaks, but my first choice would be the Environment-Friendly Alternative.

The County should change the transmission line design to that which was proposed for LWEP. That alone would eliminate the destruction of 62 mature oak trees. The DSEIR claims that the

proposed project is consistent with the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan Conservation Element. It is not. The mitigations proposed in the DSEIR would not reduce the project impacts to the maximum extent feasible. Constructing an Environment-Friendly Alternative, as previously mentioned, would.

The discussion in the DSEIR of the closure of San Miguelito Road to public travel beyond Sudden Road is vague, and fails to adequately describe potential impacts to public access and recreation. This stretch of road is regularly used by birdwatchers, runners, bicyclists, and sightseers. The road's quiet, isolated, rural character creates a significant recreational resource. The DSEIR does not discuss the circumstances that might lead to this part of the road being closed to the public during the operational phase of the project. There is no discussion of the closure's likelihood or of the adverse impact such a closure would have on public access and recreation. The DSEIR should state definitively whether or not this section of San Miguelito Road will be closed. If so, the impacts to Public Access and Recreation should be designated as "Class I".

The County should do a more thorough investigation of the possibility of transporting the turbine blades by air (heavy-lift helicopter or blimp). The analysis of this option in the DSEIR appears to have been rushed and is inadequate. Transporting the blades by air would drastically reduce the damage to the environment adjacent to San Miguelito Road, including the destruction of 158 mature oak trees. In 2017 Lockheed Martin announced that they had developed a heavy-lift "hybrid airship" which would have a payload capacity of more than 40,000 lbs. This would be more than enough to transport the Strauss turbine blades and would reduce environmental impact significantly.