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United States Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

**Proposed Plan Amendment &  
Final Environmental Impact Statement/  
Final Environmental Impact Report  
for the  
Ocotillo Wind Energy Facility**

For the

**El Centro – El Centro Field Office**  
El Centro, California

**February 2012**

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

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[www.blm.gov/ca/elcentro](http://www.blm.gov/ca/elcentro)



In reply refer to:  
CACA 51552

March 2012

Dear Reader:

Ocotillo Express, LLC (Applicant) is proposing to develop the Ocotillo Wind Energy Facility (OWEF), an up to 465-megawatt wind energy generation facility, in Imperial County, California, on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). In connection with Applicant's right-of-way (ROW) application for the OWEF, I am pleased to announce the availability of the Proposed Plan Amendment (PA) to the California Desert Conservation Area Plan, 1980, as amended (CDCA Plan), and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/ Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the OWEF. The BLM prepared the Final EIS/EIR in consultation with cooperating agencies, taking into account public comments received during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. The proposed decision on the PA would add the OWEF project site to those identified in the current CDCA Plan, as amended, for wind energy production. The BLM has identified its preferred alternative as the Applicant's recently proposed 112 turbine configuration, and is considering approval of the ROW grant for the Project with 112 wind turbines. Since the 112 turbine configuration was developed using a subset of the turbine locations analyzed under the existing action alternatives, the BLM has determined that the impacts associated with the installation and operation of this configuration have been disclosed and analyzed under in this EIS/EIR.

The Final EIS/EIR was prepared in accordance with the NEPA and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), which establishes the land management authority of the BLM and provides guidance for how public lands are to be managed. In addition, the County of Imperial (County) has discretionary authority to issue conditional use permits for the project, and the County is a cooperating agency with BLM in the preparation of the Final EIS/EIR. Consequently, this document was also prepared in accordance with the CEQA. The County intends to use this Final EIS/EIR to provide environmental review required for its consideration of the conditional use permit application under CEQA. The Final EIS/EIR for the OWEF contains the proposed plan and project description, written comments received during the public review period for the Draft EIS/EIR, and responses to these written comments.

Pursuant to BLM's planning regulations at 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.5-2, any person who participated in the planning process for the PA and has an interest that is or may be adversely affected by the proposed CDCA Plan amendment may protest such amendment within 30 days from the date the EPA publishes its NOA for the PA and Final EIS/EIR in the Federal Register. Issuance of the proposed ROW grant is an implementation decision that is not subject to protest under the BLM planning regulations.

For further information on filing a protest, please see the accompanying protest regulations in the pages that follow (Attachment I). The regulations specify the required elements in a protest. Protesting parties should take care to document all relevant facts and, as much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents or available planning records (e.g., meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence, etc.). To aid in ensuring the completeness of the protest, a protest checklist is attached to this letter (labeled as Attachment 2).

All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:  
Director (210)  
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams  
P.O. Box 71383  
Washington, D.C. 20024-1383

Overnight Mail or Other Delivery:  
Director (210)  
Attention: Brenda Hudgens-Williams  
20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM  
Washington, D.C. 20003

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Emailed and faxed protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, the BLM will consider the emailed or faxed protest as an advance copy and will afford it full consideration. If you wish to provide the BLM with such advance notification, please direct faxed protests to the attention of Brenda Hudgens-Williams, BLM Protest Expeditor, at 202-912-7129, and emailed protests to [Brenda.Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov](mailto:Brenda.Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov).

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on each valid protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior. Responses to protest issues will be compiled in a Director's Protest Resolution Report that will be made available to the public following issuance of the decisions.

Upon resolution of a protest, the BLM may issue a ROD adopting the Proposed PA and making a decision regarding issuance of the ROW grant for the OWEF. Copies of the ROD will be mailed or made available electronically to all who participated in this NEPA process and will be available to all parties through the "Planning" page of the BLM national website (<http://www.blm.gov/planning>), or by mail upon request.

Sincerely,



Margaret L. Goodro  
Field Manager – El Centro Field Office

## **Protest Regulations**

[CITE: 43CFR1610.5-2]

TITLE 43--PUBLIC LANDS: INTERIOR  
CHAPTER II--BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PART 1600--PLANNING, PROGRAMMING, BUDGETING--Table of Contents  
Subpart 1610--Resource Management Planning  
Sec. 1610.5-2 Protest procedures.

- (a) Any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of a resource management plan may protest such approval or amendment. A protest may raise only those issues which were submitted for the record during the planning process.
- (1) The protest shall be in writing and shall be filed with the Director. The protest shall be filed within 30 days of the date the Environmental Protection Agency published the notice of receipt of the final environmental impact statement containing the plan or amendment in the Federal Register. For an amendment not requiring the preparation of an environmental impact statement, the protest shall be filed within 30 days of the publication of the notice of its effective date.
  - (2) The protest shall contain:
    - (i) The name, mailing address, telephone number and interest of the person filing the protest;
    - (ii) A statement of the issue or issues being protested;
    - (iii) A statement of the part or parts of the plan or amendment being protested;
    - (iv) A copy of all documents addressing the issue or issues that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party or an indication of the date the issue or issues were discussed for the record; and
    - (v) A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong.
  - (3) The Director shall promptly render a decision on the protest.
- (b) The decision shall be in writing and shall set forth the reasons for the decision. The decision shall be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

## **Resource Management Plan Protest Critical Item Checklist**

**The following items *must* be included to constitute a valid protest  
whether using this optional format, or a narrative letter.**

**(43 CFR 1610.5-2)**

BLM's practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment--including your personal identifying information--may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

**Resource Management Plan (RMP) or Amendment (RMPA) being protested:**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone Number: ( )**

**Your interest in filing this protest (how will you be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of this plan?):**

**Issue or issues being protested:**

**Statement of the part or parts of the plan being protested:**

**Attach copies of all documents addressing the issue(s) that were submitted during the planning process by the protesting party, OR an indication of the date the issue(s) were discussed for the record.**

**Date(s):**

**A concise statement explaining why the State Director's decision is believed to be wrong:**

**El Centro Field Office  
Ocotillo Wind Energy Facility  
Proposed Plan Amendment &  
Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report**

NEPA & CEQA Lead Agencies:	Bureau of Land Management El Centro Field Office El Centro, California	County of Imperial Planning & Development Services El Centro, CA
Cooperating Agencies:	U.S. Department of Energy	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
For further information, contact:	Cedric Perry, Project Manager California Desert District Office (951) 697-5388 cperry@blm.gov	Angelina Havens, Planner II Planning & Development Services (760) 482-4236 angelinahavens@co.imperial.ca.us

**Abstract**

This Proposed Plan Amendment (PA) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)/Environmental Impact Report (EIR) addresses the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposal to issue a right-of-way (ROW) grant to Ocotillo Express, LLC (Applicant), for the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of a utility-scale 465-megawatt (MW) wind energy facility on public and private lands in Imperial County, California.

The Proposed PA & Final EIS/EIR analyzes six alternatives: (1) the BLM would grant the Applicant a ROW for the project as proposed with 155 wind turbines; (2) the BLM would grant the Applicant a ROW for a modified project design with 137 wind turbines; (3) the BLM would grant the Applicant a ROW for a modified project design with 105 wind turbines; (4) No Action, in which the Applicant's application would be denied and current management of the site would be maintained; (5) No Project, in which the Applicant's application would be denied and the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan would be amended to declare the site unsuitable for wind development; and (6) No Project, in which the Applicant's application would be denied and the CDCA Plan would be amended to declare the site suitable for wind development.

The Agency Preferred Alternative is referred to as the Refined Project and includes construction and operation of 112 wind turbines at the project site. The Refined Project would not result in effects that are outside the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the EIS/EIR because the Refined Project configuration utilizes turbine sites that are already part of the existing alternatives analyzed in the EIS/EIR. Therefore, the impacts associated with the construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning of wind turbines at those sites are fully disclosed and analyzed in the EIS/EIR. Many of the adverse impacts associated with implementation of the project can be avoided or substantially reduced based on compliance with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations and standards, and compliance with measures provided in this Proposed PA & Final EIS/EIR.