

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

1516 NINTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5512



February 15, 2005

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CALIF ENERGY COMMISSION

FEB 15 2005

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Mr. R. Austin Wiswell, Chief
Division of Aeronautics
Department of Transportation
1120 N Street, MS #40
Sacramento, CA 94273-0001

RE: Blythe Power Plants' Impact on Aviation Safety

Dear Mr. Wiswell:

Since your last correspondence of March 24, 2004, the Energy Commission has received two additional reports of moderate to severe turbulence from pilots on approach to Runway 26 at the Blythe Airport. The turbulence is generated by the cooling tower and heat recovery steam generator plumes at the existing Blythe 1 power plant. We discussed this issue and potential mitigation measures at the October 4, 2004 workshop in Blythe. Subsequently, we have been working with your office, the FAA, the Blythe Airport manager, the power plant owner, and others to implement measures discussed at the workshop. In addition, the Energy Commission has continued its analysis regarding the proposed Blythe 2 project, which would be located adjacent to the existing Blythe power plant, if its application is approved. As the state agency in California with the responsibility and expertise for examining issues related to airport safety, we are soliciting your current position on aviation safety issues and appropriate mitigation related to these projects.

Blythe 1

Staff has been working on implementing the following mitigation:

1. A remark has been added to the Airport Facility Directory (AFD), advising pilots to avoid low-altitude direct overflight of the Blythe 1 power plant;
2. We have been working with your staff to have the FAA add a remark to the Airport Surface Observing System, similar to that noted in the AFD (we anticipate this will occur by the end of February 2005);
3. The Blythe Airport manager is supportive of switching from a left-hand to a right-hand traffic pattern; and
4. We are working with the Blythe power plant owner to determine the costs of purchasing and installing a new Instrument Landing System (ILS) for Runway 17 and anticipate subsequently requesting that the Blythe Airport manager de-activate the ILS for Runway 26.

Mr. R. Austin Wiswell
February 15, 2005
Page 2

In your opinion, are these four mitigation measures sufficient to reduce potential adverse aviation safety impacts to an acceptable level? If not, what else would you recommend be done to mitigate these impacts?

Blythe 2

In your March 24, 2004 letter, you recommended that the construction of Blythe 2, at the proposed location, should not take place because it would exacerbate existing concerns identified by pilots using the airport. In light of the four mitigation measures outlined above for Blythe 1, does your recommendation of not permitting Blythe 2 at the proposed site remain the same?

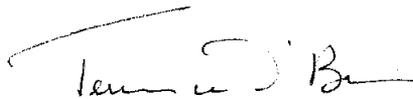
Please indicate if this recommendation is based on aviation safety principles, airport planning documents, and/or planning policies promulgated by the Department of Transportation or the FAA. As you know, the Riverside Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) made a similar recommendation in their ALUC Development Review of July 18, 2002.

The Energy Commission will be conducting an evidentiary hearing on the Blythe 2 Application for Certification later this year, perhaps as early as April, and we request that you or a representative from your division, attend to offer your recommendations to the Committee. Your written response to this letter could serve as your testimony in the hearing.

We appreciate your interest and assistance in the effort to improve and maintain aviation safety with respect to power plants in the vicinity of the Blythe Airport. To meet our schedule for publication of the Blythe 2 Final Staff Assessment, I would appreciate your written opinion and recommendations by March 10, 2005.

Please feel free to contact me at 654-3933, if you have any questions or have your staff contact Dale Edwards (654-5319) or Jim Adams (653-0702) if there is a need for additional information regarding this request.

Sincerely,



TERRENCE O'BRIEN, Deputy Director
Systems Assessment & Facilities Siting