



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

Promoting the wise use of land Helping build great communities

Order of Hearing Topics

February 5, 2015

- Response to issues raised at 1-22-15 hearing
- Draft and Final EIR
 - Discussion of impacts
 - Review of Class I impacts
 - Comments on the Draft EIR
 - Responses to comments
 - Changes to the Draft EIR
- Planning Commission Questions/Discussion

PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA ITEM: 4

DATE: 2/05/14

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ECONOMIC STRATEGY PROJECT

Energy Cluster

Project managed by the Economic Vitality Corporation of San Luis Obispo County

Cluster Home Page:

<http://www.sloevc.org/slo-county-business/green-energy-.php>

February 3, 2015

PLANNING COMMISSION

Board of Supervisors
County of San Luis Obispo
County Government Center, Room D-430
San Luis Obispo, CA 93408

AGENDA ITEM: 4
DATE: 2/5/14

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Re: **Renewable Energy Streamlining Program and Environmental Impact Report**

Dear Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of the Energy Cluster, of the Economic Strategy project, managed by the Economic Vitality Corporation's ("EVC"), we provide the following comments and express our support of the Renewable Energy Streamlining Program ("RESP") and Environmental Impact Report.

As background, the mission of the Energy Cluster is to establish San Luis Obispo County as a world-class leader in renewable energy through the implementation of a diversified portfolio of key initiatives, which includes energy efficiency, distributed generation and utility scale generation. Raising awareness of the benefits of solar energy in conserving our natural resources, protecting our environment, and supporting the vitality of our economy, is a key component in achieving these goals.

In the 2013 economic update, completed by Collaborative Economics¹, the green energy sector, specifically energy generation, experienced substantial growth as a key economic driver. This translates to head of household jobs and increased sales revenues, strengthening our economy and funding necessary public services.

¹ Economic Strategy Update 2013, produced by the Economic Vitality Corporation, Update on the Economy, prepared by Collaborative Economics.

The Renewable Energy Streamlining Program strives to increase predictability, adding a level of certainty and allowing for mitigation through project design, rather than the extremely costly and time consuming discretionary review process. Streamlining the permitting process reduces burdens on county staffing resources, the cost of renewable energy projects overall and results in broader implementation. In addition to these economic benefits to both public and private sector, environmental goals are also achieved, through increased utilization of clean energy resources and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We commend the County for defining a clear pathway, for those renewable energy projects which meet established criteria, to expedite approval. By establishing separate tiers based upon facilities and project size, defining the Renewable Energy Combining Designation, environmental thresholds and mitigation measures, appropriate projects in the right locations can now be streamlined.

The program protects valuable agricultural soils and other environmental assets, aligning renewable energy and economic goals with established long-term regional planning goals.

We recognize that those projects which are outside of the RESP criteria will continue to undergo a thorough environmental and design review, which will now receive benefit from the outcomes of the environmental and planning analysis completed for this program. This program is not broadly applicable, in order to benefit from streamlining, a proposed project would need to:

1. Be located on an allowable land use category;
2. Meet the criteria of the appropriate "tier" of energy generating facility; and
3. Meet applicable Renewable Energy Streamlining Program performance standards.

The Energy Cluster would also like to express support for benefit to agricultural producers and other landowners who own multiple properties, allowing them to aggregate contiguous or adjacent sites for energy generation purposes.

**Board of Supervisors
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The energy sector is an important contributor to a sustainable future in San Luis Obispo County, both from an environmental and economic standpoint. Taking a long-term proactive view will ensure we maximize these resources for future generations.

Sincerely,

**Dawn Legg, Co-Chair
Distributed Generation
EVC Green Energy Cluster**

**Eric Linkugel, Co-Chair
Energy Efficiency
EVC Green Energy Cluster**

**cc: EVC Board of Directors
Jim Bergman, Planning and Building Director
Trevor Keith, Division Manager, Policy and Programs
James Caruso, Senior Planner**