NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Date: July 31, 2018

To: Interested Parties
    All Recipients on the Distribution List

Lead Agency: County of Humboldt Planning & Building Department

Contact: Cliff Johnson, Senior Planner
         County of Humboldt Planning & Building Department
         3015 H Street
         Eureka, CA 95501

Project Title: Humboldt Wind Energy Project

BACKGROUND

The County of Humboldt (County) Planning & Building Department has received an application from Humboldt Wind, LLC (Applicant) for a conditional use permit (CUP) to construct and operate the Humboldt Wind Energy Project (Project), a wind energy generation facility in Humboldt County, California. The issuance of the CUP is a “project” as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and subject to environmental review. After examining the application, the County determined that an environmental impact report (EIR) is required and released this notice of preparation (NOP) consistent with the requirements outlined in Section 15063(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

Once the decision to prepare an EIR is made, the lead agency must distribute an NOP for a 30-day comment period to inform all responsible and trustee agencies and interested persons that an EIR will be prepared (State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15082). The intent of an NOP is to provide stakeholders with sufficient information describing a proposed project and its potential environmental effects to enable responsible and trustee agencies and the public to make a meaningful response related to the scope and content of information to be included in the EIR.
The purpose of this notice is twofold:

(1) to solicit input, by **August 30, 2018**, from interested individuals, groups, and responsible and trustee agencies about the desired content and scope of the draft EIR to be prepared by the County of Humboldt for the proposed Project (see attachments); and

(2) to announce public scoping meetings for the proposed Project, to be held at the following times and locations:

   a. August 14, 2018: 2–4 p.m. Regulatory agency only consultation at Sequoia Conference Center, 901 Myrtle Avenue, Eureka
   b. August 14, 2018: 6–8 p.m. Public meeting at Sequoia Conference Center, 901 Myrtle Avenue, Eureka
   c. August 15, 2018: 6–8 p.m. Public meeting at Winema Theater, 125 Main Street, Scotia

**DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW**

The NOP and related Project documents are available for public review at the following location:

    County of Humboldt Planning & Building Department  
    3015 H Street  
    Eureka, CA 95501

The documents are also available for public review online at: [https://humboldtgov.org/2408/Humboldt-Wind-Energy-Project](https://humboldtgov.org/2408/Humboldt-Wind-Energy-Project).

The County Planning & Building Department welcomes input from responsible and trustee agencies during this review. Written comments should be postmarked no later than **5 p.m. August 30, 2018**. Please indicate a contact person in your response and send your comments to:

    Cliff Johnson, Senior Planner  
    County of Humboldt Planning & Building Department  
    3015 H Street  
    Eureka, CA 95501  
    CJohnson@co.humboldt.ca.us
PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The Project traverses land bisected by U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101), roughly 12 miles southeast of the city of Fortuna and 20 miles north of the community of Garberville (Figure 1). The community of Scotia is located adjacent to the northern edge of the Project alignment.

Vegetation along the alignment is primarily evergreen woodlands and the topography is steep, with elevations ranging from nearly sea level to almost 3,100 feet above sea level. A portion of the area’s woodland acreage is under timber production or subject to Williamson Act contracts. The alignment for the proposed general transmission line (Gen-Tie) for the Project would require crossing the Eel River (Figure 2a). Boring under the river is planned for this segment to reduce visibility and minimize potential impacts to marbled murrelet. The point of interconnection with Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s (PG&E’s) transmission grid would be the Bridgeville Substation (Figure 2b) through one of three optional routes under consideration.

Table 1 lists the assessor’s parcel numbers for lands along the Project alignment.

Table 1 Project Assessor’s Parcel Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor’s Parcel Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10213204, 10301204, 10619110, 10619111, 10619112, 20502105, 20502106, 20502114, 20502115, 20502117, 20502119, 20502121, 20502122, 20502123, 20502124, 20505101, 20505108, 20505109, 20505110, 20505111, 20505112, 20505122, 20506102, 20506107, 20506111, 20522101, 20531102, 20531104, 20532132, 20532133, 20532134, 20533103, 20533106, 20533107, 20534106, 20534108, 20534111, 20534113, 20534118, 20534119, 20535112, 20535126, 20535130, 20626207, 20707427, 20712405, 20712604, 20718015, 20718116, 20718119, 20718209, 20718211, 20718303, 20718304, 20718404, 20718406, 20718502, 20718503, 20718605, 20718607, 20718609, 20718613, 20721101, 20721102, 20721202, 20721301, 20721302, 20721303, 20722101, 20722103, 20722601, 20723103, 20723107, 20723201, 20723202, 20731102, 20734101, 20811109, 20811114, 20811402, 20812101, 20812107, 20812110, 20813106, 20813501, 20813503, 20813504, 20813505, 20814101, 20814111, 20908122, 20919101, 20919102, 20919103, 20919112, 20919113, 20920102, 20920103, 20920107, 20920108, 20920110, 20921108, 20921109, 20921110, 20921111, 20921112, 20925102, 20926102, 20926103, 20928104, 20940101, 20940102, 20940110, 20940115, 20940116, 20940123, 21101104, 21101202, 21101301, 21102302, 21145302, 21145303, 21146101, 21146204, 21147101, 21147201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LAND USE PLANS

The Humboldt County General Plan land use designations along the Project alignment consist primarily of Timberland, with Industrial, Agricultural Grazing, and Urban Development Area overlay where the Gen-Tie crosses U.S. 101.

Lands crossed by the Project are primarily zoned Agriculture Exclusive (AE) and Timber Production Zone (TPZ), except for limited intermittent segments of the Gen-Tie. The land is currently in timber production. Under the AE and TPZ designations, wind energy facilities require a CUP from the County. Constructing and operating electrical distribution and transmission lines are permitted uses in the TPZ;
however, a CUP is required in the AE zone. Accordingly, the applicant is submitting a CUP application pursuant to County Code Section 3.1.2, which, if approved, would cover all Project related activities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project would construct and operate 60 wind turbine generators (WTGs) and associated infrastructure with a nameplate generating capacity (i.e., theoretical maximum energy generation) of up to 155 megawatts (MW). In addition to the wind turbines and transformers, the Project would include ancillary facilities such as temporary staging areas, access roads, 34.5-kilovolt (kV) collection lines (collection system), an operations and maintenance (O&M) building, a substation with energy storage infrastructure, utility switchyard modification, and a 115-kV Gen-Tie.

Figure 2a and 2b shows the representative locations of Project infrastructure based on the information available at the time this NOP was released. The Applicant is conducting studies along the planned alignment to collect information regarding the resources present. Data gained from these studies will be used to inform the Project’s design, with the intent of avoiding and minimizing environmental impacts. Therefore, the Project layout depicted in Figure 2a and 2b illustrates a development corridor within which Project infrastructure would be sited, and is subject to refinement.

The Project would include the following elements:

- up to 60 WTGs depicted in Figure 2a and 2b, ranging between 2.2 and 4.5 MW, erected on tubular steel towers set on concrete foundations, and associated turbine pads, temporary staging areas, and transformers;
- new roads, including temporary access roads required for construction and permanent service roads for O&M, and improvements to existing public roads to facilitate turbine delivery;
- a 115-kV Gen-Tie connecting the Project with the existing PG&E transmission system, with a below-surface crossing of the Eel River (Figure 2a);
- a substation to connect to the Gen-Tie;
- a collection system linking WTGs to each other and to the substation;
- a communication system (fiber optic cable) adjacent to the collection system;
- an O&M facility, including an operations building and an outdoor storage area;
- permanent meteorological towers;
- a 10-acre temporary staging area and a construction trailer and parking area located within the O&M facility; and
- three, 5-acre temporary staging areas distributed throughout the Project site, including as many as two, temporary cement batch plants operating at two of the three staging areas.
Figure 1. Project Vicinity
Figure 2a. Project Area and Plan (Sheet 1 of 2)
Figure 2b. Project Area and Plan (Sheet 2 of 2)
Table 2 identifies the typical dimensions and disturbance areas for each Project component.

**Table 2: Project Components and Associated Disturbance Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Typical Disturbance Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>During Construction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turbines and pads(^a)</td>
<td>Maximum of 60</td>
<td>Approximately 4 acres per turbine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection system(^b)</td>
<td>Maximum length of 19 miles</td>
<td>30-foot width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modified utility switchyard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access roads</td>
<td>Up to 17 miles of new roads</td>
<td>Turbine string roads: 24-foot gravel surface with 50-foot width for crane access and 200-foot width for grading and matching slopes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;M facility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Within temporary construction area; no additional disturbance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary construction areas (trailer and parking)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary staging areas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 acres per staging area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary cement batch plant</td>
<td>Up to 2</td>
<td>Within temporary construction area; no additional disturbance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meteorological towers</td>
<td>4 (2 would be permanent)</td>
<td>1.5 acres per tower</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NA = not applicable; O&M = operations and maintenance
\(^a\) Includes temporary staging areas
\(^b\) Portions of the collection system would be constructed within access roads; no additional permanent impacts would occur in these areas. Note that acreage includes collocated underground fiber-optic communications cable.
Construction Activity and Schedule

Construction would last between 16 and 18 months. The sequence of construction activities would generally be as follows: site preparation/grading, tree clearing, access road construction, turbine foundation construction, collection system installation, substation construction, Gen-Tie installation, switchyard installation, turbine installation, final testing and turbine commissioning, O&M facilities installation, and cleanup and restoration.

The project requires creation of a temporary staging area, construction trailer area, and associated parking area on an approximately 10-acre compacted gravel pad. During construction, the staging area would be used to store large equipment and materials, to refuel equipment, and to collect and temporarily store construction waste. It also would serve as a place to park vehicles, set a temporary mobile for use as construction office space, and temporary (portable) sanitary facilities. A vendor-supplied fuel truck that would make daily or weekly deliveries to fill approved storage tanks that would be used to refuel construction vehicles. Following construction, this area would become part of the Project’s O&M facility (Figure 2a).

Three smaller staging areas would also be needed along the alignment. Each would consist of five acres that would be used to stage construction equipment, materials and contractor trailers (Figures 2a and 2b). The temporary staging areas would be cleared of vegetation, compacted to support construction equipment, and may be graveled depending on soil conditions.

The applicant is in the process of determining the point of delivery for the Project’s wind turbines and related equipment. It is anticipated that equipment would be shipped to Field’s Landing in Humboldt Bay, and would be delivered by truck via U.S. 101 to the temporary staging area(s) located near the Jordan Creek off-ramp (Figure 1). Upon arrival at the temporary staging area(s), the equipment either would be offloaded or stored, or would be hauled directly to the worksite and installed. Access roads would be used to transport equipment from the temporary staging area to the worksite.

To facilitate the delivery of Project components along the U.S. 101 corridor, modifications to existing roads may be required. Such modifications could include but would not be limited to creating temporary off-ramps to bypass portions of U.S. 101; temporarily relocating obstacles such as fences and street signs; temporarily relocating or extending overhead utility poles; and removing or pruning vegetation within existing road rights-of-way. If needed, Project-specific traffic controls would allow for equipment delivery while maintaining ingress and egress for emergency service providers. The Applicant is determining the scope of the temporary modifications and traffic controls and will submit a transportation plan to the County and the California Department of Transportation.

SUMMARY OF KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

Pursuant to Section 15064 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the discussion of potential Project effects on the environment in the EIR will concentrate on those impacts that the County has determined may be potentially significant. The detailed analysis will evaluate the Project; however, the EIR will also describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed Project that are capable of meeting most of the Project's objectives, and that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the Project, consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6. The EIR will also evaluate the cumulative impacts of the Project when considered in conjunction with other related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects.
The following topics will be evaluated in the EIR:

- **Aesthetics**—The EIR will characterize the visual setting through use of photographs and computer modeling. Through use of photo-realistic visual simulations, impacts of Project construction and operation on scenic resources and vistas will be described. Avoidance and mitigation measures would be imposed where significant impacts are identified.

- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources**—The EIR will evaluate the potential direct and indirect impacts to timberlands and land designated Agricultural Preserves that are subject to Williamson Act contracts.

- **Air Quality**—The Draft EIR will consider direct and indirect impacts to regional and local air quality because of project construction and operation. Emissions of criteria air pollutants will be estimated using computer models and methodology approved by the North Coast Unified Air Pollution Control District (NCUAPCD). Project consistency with adopted plans or policies intended to address air quality will be evaluated and avoidance measures identified.

- **Biological Resources**—The Project area is covered in managed forestlands, mixed with evergreen and deciduous forest types. Shrub/scrublands, annual grasslands, and developed roads make up the remaining land cover in the Project area. The EIR will characterize the existing resources found along the project alignment and analyze impacts of the proposed Project on these biological resources. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.

- **Cultural Resources**—The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the proposed Project on cultural and tribal cultural resources based on the findings of a Phase 1 cultural resources survey. In addition, consultation with representatives of the Yurok and Wiyot, Karok, Hoopa, Chilula, and Whilkut tribes, and other Native American tribe interests, may need to be conducted in compliance with Assembly Bill (AB) 52, which requires such consultation as part of a project’s CEQA review.

- **Geology and Soils**—In general, the Project area is susceptible to ground shaking. Slope stability in the Project area ranges from moderate to highly unstable. The EIR will programmatically evaluate impacts from landsliding and unstable soils that could result from grading, roads, and new development. It is anticipated that site-specific geotechnical investigations would be conducted before construction.

- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**—In the North Bay Air Basin, North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (NCUAQMD) regulates greenhouse gas emissions through its Rule 111 (Federal Permitting Requirements for Sources of Greenhouse Gases). The EIR will evaluate the Project in terms of its consistency with Rule 111, California’s Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction goals, recommendations contained in the AB 32 Scoping Plan, and other recent guidance documents regarding Project-generated GHG emissions. Avoidance measures or permits may be identified in the Project EIR.

- **Hazardous and Hazardous Materials**—The EIR will assess hazards and hazardous materials impacts from wind energy sites by considering storage, handling, and application practices of hazardous materials, and will review the hazards of permitting new and wind energy activities in
areas of wildland fire risk. The EIR will also analyze specific requirements for the Project based on the turbine heights. Site-specific aviation conditions will be developed in conjunction with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and turbine lighting would be consistent with all FAA requirements.

- **Hydrology and Water Quality**—Rivers, creeks, and drainages within the Project boundaries could be subject to disturbance during construction. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on hydrology and water quality in the area. Avoidance measures to minimize impacts on water quality, including boring under the Eel River, have been identified and are included in the Project design. To support the EIR, a delineation of wetlands and waters will be conducted to determine jurisdictional water features on the Project site.

- **Land Use and Planning**—The Project site is located within lands designated for agricultural and timber production by Humboldt County. The EIR will evaluate the proposed Project for consistency with existing local land use policies and regulations, including applicable habitat conservation plans, local coastal plans, and airport land use plans. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.

- **Mineral Resources**—Humboldt County is one of 16 counties within California where the State Geologist has not classified the land based on the known or inferred mineral resource potential of that land, pursuant to the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) classifications. The location of some of the proposed wind turbines and the Gen-Tie would overlap some of the SMARA parcels. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on mineral resources in Humboldt County. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.

- **Noise**—The Project site lies in undeveloped area of the county where noise levels are very low, limited to noise from cattle grazing and occasional vehicles. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on ambient noise levels, with emphasis on changes experienced by noise-sensitive receptors. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.

- **Population and Housing**—The Project site lies in an unincorporated and largely undeveloped area of the county, and there is no housing on the Project site or in the immediate vicinity. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on population and housing.

- **Public Services**—The Project site travels across land containing a High or Very High Fire hazard designation. The EIR will examine the potential for construction and operation to increase demands on local firefighters. The California Highway Patrol is responsible for enforcing traffic laws on roadways in unincorporated areas and on state highways throughout the county. The sheriff’s office has mutual aid agreements with cities and the California Highway Patrol. The EIR will examine the potential for construction and operation to increase demands on law enforcement.

- **Recreation**—Humboldt Redwoods State Park, Grizzly Creek State Park, and Van Duzen County Park lie within 5 miles of the Project site. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on recreational resources.
• **Transportation and Traffic**—The roadway network in the unincorporated parts of the county is primarily rural in character, serving small communities through a system of federal and state freeways and highways, county roads (including arterials, collectors, and local streets), and private roads. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the Project on the circulation system. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.

• **Utilities and Service Systems**—The Project alignment is located on rural hillsides in an area that is not provided with municipal services such as potable-water delivery or wastewater systems. The EIR will identify and analyze impacts of the proposed Project on existing utility systems and services. No avoidance measures or permits have been identified at this time, but such measures may be included in the Project EIR.