

H. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

This section outlines the scoping and public participation program completed by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) before issuance of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

H.1 EIR Scoping Process

The scoping process for the Sacramento Natural Gas Storage (SNGS) Facility EIR consists of three elements listed below. Each element is described in more detail in the following sections:

1. Publication of a notice of preparation (NOP) of an EIR and notice of public scoping meetings soliciting comments from affected public agencies and members of the public, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code (PCR) 21000 et seq.)
2. Public scoping meetings and meetings with agencies
3. A scoping report to summarize scoping comments.

In order to maximize agency and public input on the SNGS Facility, the CPUC established a website (http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/dudek/sngs/SNGS_Home.htm) and local EIR information repositories. The NOP, scoping report, public notices, and other project information were posted to the project website for review by the public and interested parties. The website will also be used to post all public documents during the environmental review process and to announce upcoming public meetings

H.1.1 Notice of Preparation

In accordance with PCR Section 21092.2 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15082 (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), the CPUC completed distribution of the NOP and public notice for EIR for the Proposed Project on November 14, 2007, and distributed it as discussed below. The official public review period was between November 17 and December 18, 2007. Public notification included direct agency and public notification, newspaper announcements, and posting on the project website.

Agency, Private Organization, and Interest Group Notification

The State Clearinghouse and federal, state, and local trustee agencies that may be affected by the Proposed Project, and agencies previously requesting notice in writing to the CPUC were included on the distribution list. The NOP was sent to 6 federal agencies, 21 state agencies, and 41 local agencies and planning groups. The NOP was also distributed to private organizations, Native American groups, and three local libraries.

Public and Property Owner Notification

The public notice was also sent to 749 private citizens, including property owners within 300 feet of the Proposed Project, as well as any party previously requesting notice in writing to the CPUC.

Public notification for the Proposed Project and scoping meetings entailed a newspaper announcement and the mailing of the NOP and public notices. Notice for the public scoping meeting was published in the Sacramento Bee on November 16, 2007. Concurrent with the distribution of the NOP, Public Notices regarding the project and CEQA scoping process were distributed.

The NOP was also made available to the public on the CPUC's environmental website for the Proposed Project.

H.1.2 Public Scoping Meetings

As part of the EIR scoping process, one public scoping meeting was conducted to solicit comments regarding the scope and content of the EIR, as well as the alternatives and mitigation measures that should be considered as part of the analysis. As indicated in the sign-in sheet, 15 individuals not part of the project team attended the meeting. The public scoping meeting was held on Thursday, December 6, 2007, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Conference Center at Depot Park, 8215 Ferguson Street, Sacramento, California.

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H.1.3 Scoping Report

In December 2007, a comprehensive scoping report was issued summarizing concerns received from the public and various agencies and presenting copies of comment letters received. Nine letters were received from public agencies and private organizations during the NOP scoping period. One letter was received after the scoping period. Commenting agencies and scoping meeting attendees were provided a copy of the scoping report. Agencies, private organizations, interested groups, and adjacent property owners were also notified via public notice that the scoping report was posted on the Proposed Project website at http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/dudek/sngs/SNGS_Home.htm and available for review.

The following summarizes the scoping comments received from federal, state, and local agencies, local planning groups, private and public organizations, and the general public.

Comments are organized by issue area. Within each issue area, written comments provided on the NOP by agencies and organizations are summarized first, followed by additional comments provided during the scoping meeting. Verbal comments presented during the scoping meeting are incorporated below as well. Reference should be made to the scoping report for full copies of NOP comment letters and written comments provided during the scoping meeting.

The specific issues raised during the public scoping process are summarized below according to three major themes: project description and objectives, alternatives, and environmental issues.

Project Description and Objectives

Public comments requested that the EIR should fully disclose all aspects of the project. Several comments requested that further explanation and detail of project components should be provided.

Alternatives

Comments from government agencies and private organizations suggested alternatives, including alternative non-urban locations to minimize impacts to public health and safety.

Environmental Issues

Public and agency comments raised concerns regarding the potential impacts of the SNGS Facility on the environment, most often expressing concerns with conflicts with planned uses and public health and safety. Other concerns dealt with traffic and transportation, land use compatibility, noise, public services and utilities, air quality, hydrology and water quality, geologic hazards, biological resources, and cultural resources impacts.

H.1.4 Follow-Up Agency Consultation

On April 23, 2008, CPUC staff and the EIR project team met with members of the staff of the City of Sacramento Planning Department to discuss the Proposed Project at the city's Planning Division Offices. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the city's concerns with the project based upon their scoping comments and the role of the city as a responsible agency for the Proposed Project. It was tentatively determined that the city would use the document for the city permitting process.

H.2 Public Notice and Participation

This section summarizes the CPUC's program of public notice and participation to maximize agency and public input on the Proposed Project. It consisted of three elements: public notification, public review period, and EIR information and repository sites.

H.2.1 Public Notification

H.2.1.1 -Notification for Scoping Meeting

As described in Section H.1.1, the NOP and public notice was mailed on November 14, 2007, to the State Clearinghouse and federal, state, and local trustee agencies that may be affected by the Proposed Project as well as agencies previously requesting notice in writing to the CPUC.

H.2.1.2 Notice of Release of Draft EIR

A notice of availability of the Draft EIR ~~was~~ will be sent to property owners and occupants on or adjacent to the SNGS project at the time the EIR ~~was~~ is released on ~~April 8, 2009~~. The notice ~~will~~ included information about how to access the EIR and ~~will identify the environmentally superior alternative(s) and the dates and times and locations of any informational workshop(s), as well as the CPUC's public participation hearings.~~ The CPUC made the decision to extend the original end of the Draft EIR review period from May 25, 2009, to June 22, 2009. There were two unusual circumstances that existed to support this extension. First, numerous questions were raised at the April 28, 2009, public meeting concerning the potential for groundwater contamination near the reservoir cap rock in the Florin Gas Field. Second, the State Clearinghouse decided not to distribute the Draft EIR to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), a potential trustee agency.

H.2.2 Public Review Period

In compliance with PCR Section 21091(a) and CEQA Guidelines Section 15105(a) (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), the CPUC provides a public review period of 45 days for the EIR. The public review period was extended by the CPUC to 75 days (-from April 8, 2009 through June 22, 2009) at the request of due to: (1) numerous questions raised at the public participation hearing meeting held on April 28, 2009; and (2) that the State Clearinghouse's had decided not to distribute the Draft EIR to the Department of Water Resources (DWR), a potential trustee agency.

Following the release of the Draft EIR, an informational meeting was held on April 28, 2009, at a similar the same location to as the scoping meeting. The purpose of the informational meeting was to help affected communities understand the Proposed Project, the Draft EIR, and how to participate in the CPUC decision-making process, including commenting on the Draft EIR. At the informational workshop meeting, the EIR team and CPUC staff were available to respond to questions and provide clarification regarding the impact analysis and conclusions presented in the Draft EIR.

Immediately after the informational workshop meeting, a public participation meeting hearing was held at the same location for formal comments on the Draft EIR where the public spoke formally on the record on any issues of concern related to SNGS, LLC's CPCN Application.

-The comments received by the CPUC during the public review period for the Draft EIR and at public participation hearings are reproduced in Volume 1 to this Final EIR along with responses to comments.

H.2.3 EIR Information and Repository Sites

Providing copies of documents associated with the Proposed Project in “repository” sites local to the project area is an effective way to make ongoing project information available to concerned citizens. The repository sites listed below are where citizens may view the documents and make copies. In addition, copies of documents have been made available at the CPUC office in San Francisco and on the project website (which is http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/dudek/sngs/SNGS_Home.htm). EIR-related documents, including the Scoping Report, the Draft EIR, and the Final EIR have been made available upon their release to the public. Copies of the EIR will be available to the public at the following locations:

City of Sacramento Public Library
828 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814

Southgate Public Library
6132 66th Avenue, Sacramento, California 95823

Colonial Heights
4799 Stockton Boulevard, Sacramento, California 95820

H.2.4 Final EIR Release and CPUC General Proceeding A.07-04-013

There is no public comment period following release of the Final EIR. The CPUC's general proceeding A.07-04-013 will receive the Final EIR into the record for certification ~~will commence~~ after the Final EIR is issued, and may conduct further hearings, as necessary.

H.3 References

14 CCR 15000 et seq. CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) Guidelines.

PRC (California Public Resources Code) 21081.6. California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq. CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act).

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