Renewable Energy Update

an Allen Matkins market intelligence publication

Allen Matkins
attorneys at law

August 31, 2010

Final decisions near on mega-solar power plants in California deserts

Sunpluggers - Aug 23

A California Energy Commission committee has recommended approval of another desert solar power project, raising to about 2,100 MW the rated peak capacities of solar power plants now awaiting final endorsement by the full commission. That is approximately equal to the entire U.S. solar electric production capacity at the end of last year, which totaled an estimated 2,108 MW, including photovoltaic and concentrating solar technologies, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association's "Year in Review 2009."

Renewable Energy Focus

California to launch next-generation feed-in tariff for solar energy

BusinessWire - Aug 25

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) issued a proposed decision to launch a new renewable incentive program designed to drive mid-sized renewable energy development. This next-generation feed-in tariff program will require investor-owned California utilities to purchase electricity from renewable energy systems between 1 and 20 MW in size. The CPUC proposal establishes a 1 GW pilot program for power from eligible mid-sized renewable energy systems. The program requires California's three largest investor owned utilities to hold biannual competitive auctions into which renewable developers can bid. Utilities must award contracts starting with the lowest cost viable project and moving up in price until the megawatt requirement is reached for that round.

Utility-scale geothermal turns 50

Renewable Energy World - Aug 23

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the first large-scale geothermal power plant in the U.S. – a development that spawned a multi-gigawatt industry for heat and power. Half a century ago, just north of San Francisco, construction began on The Geysers, the first commercial geothermal site in the U.S. The Geysers, which began as an 11-MW plant, set both the state of California and the nation on a path toward geothermal growth and now produces enough electricity to power a city the size of San Francisco. The Geysers now provide 5% of the state's electric power. The Geothermal Energy Association is using this anniversary to promote its upcoming geothermal conference in Sacramento this Oct. 24-27.

DOE offers $15M geothermal heat recovery opportunity

EERE - Aug 25

DOE's Geothermal Technologies Program announced a $15 million funding opportunity to research and develop innovative methods of extracting heat from geothermal resources. DOE is promoting the advancement and commercialization of technologies for heat recovery with environmental, technical, and financial risks that are potentially lower than currently available methods are. The funding opportunity announcement (FOA) seeks applicants to expand geothermal power generation into geologically diverse environments, such as permeable sedimentary formations that minimize the risk of rapid drawdown of a reservoir's heat.

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Upcoming Events

Energy in California
San Francisco, CA
September 13-14, 2010

San Francisco's Ocean Beach may be center of harnessing wave power

San Francisco Examiner - Aug 22

San Francisco is reviewing the environmental impacts of a planned project that would place underwater devices off Ocean Beach to harness wave power. The review and its approvals are expected to wrap up within a year. City leaders think that construction of the wave power project could help them assess the viability of a wind farm. Ocean Beach was found by UC Berkeley professor Ronald Yeung to have good potential for a powerful wave energy farm. The finding was confirmed last year by city contractors, who determined a facility could provide up to 30 MW of electricity — enough power for 30,000 homes.

PG&E pushes 'pumped hydro' for energy storage

CNET - Aug 23

Pumped hydro storage -- essentially pumping water uphill and releasing it through a generator later -- remains one of the cheapest ways to store bulk electricity on the grid. Pacific Gas & Electric filed a request with state regulators to fund a feasibility study for adding a pumped hydro facility which could store as much energy as a power plant can supply. The Helms pumped hydro storage facility operated by PG&E which has 1,050 MW of capacity. PG&E has identified the Mokelumne River watershed in Amador County as a location. The utility wants to study placing a pumped hydro facility sized between 400 MW and 1,200 MW. Pumped hydro and storing compressed air underground are well-suited for storing large amounts of energy which can be supplied for many hours.

California's transmission future examined

Renewable Energy World - Aug 25

This feature outlines the obstacles that California faces in order to meet transmission goals. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have established Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) and six more states have renewable portfolio goals to increase renewable energy capacity in the coming years. California was among the first states to adopt a RPS, but the state faces many issues to get there: there is little available capacity on existing transmission and many of the best resources are dispersed throughout remote regions. The state regulatory agencies saw the need for a new transmission planning initiative early, and in 2007 the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) was formed to identify major upgrades to California's electric transmission system needed to access the most cost effective and environmentally sensitive zones of renewable resources sufficient to meet the state's energy targets.

Grid parity for solar power in U.S. by 2015

Energy Matters - Aug 25

While solar energy sources in the country currently generate less than 1% of the nation's electricity, Recovery Act investments have seen more money going into solar power in the last three years than in the previous three decades. According to a recently released U.S. Government report, the cost of solar power could attain parity with fossil fuel based electricity generation in many states as early as 2015, due to deployment and research and development programs working towards the goal of bringing down the cost of solar by half over the next five years. The report states if breakthroughs in technology can bring costs down to USD $0.06/kWh by 2030, solar power will be cheaper than retail electricity from the grid, even without government incentives.

Proposed decision recommends license for Imperial Valley solar project

California Energy Commission - Aug 26

A California Energy Commission siting committee is recommending approval of the planned Imperial Valley Solar Project in Imperial County. In its presiding member's proposed decision (PMPD), the committee adopted the proposed 709

Renewable Energy Finance Forum (REFF) West
San Francisco, CA
September 29-30, 2010

ICSC RetailGreen Conference & Trade Exposition on Sustainability, Energy & Environmental Design
Scottsdale, AZ
October 12-14, 2010

Solar Power International 2010
Los Angeles, CA
October 12-14, 2010

FutureBuildLA 2010
Los Angeles, CA
October 19, 2010

2011 VerdeExchange
Los Angeles, CA
January 23-25, 2011

Recent Opportunities

NEW Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District's Request for Bids for Oakland Photovoltaic Solar Power System

NEW National Renewable Energy Laboratory Solicitation for Letters of Interest for PV Technology Incubator

Southern California Edison Company's Renewables Standard Contracts Program Request for Offers from Generating Facilities Not Greater than 20 MW

Pacific Gas and Electric's 2010 Solar Photovoltaic Program Power Purchase Agreement Request for Offers

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Request for Qualifications for Design-Build Solar Photovoltaic Projects

MW project alternative preferred by the federal Bureau of Land Management. The project, even with mitigation measures, will have significant environmental impacts to biological resources, cultural resources, land use, and visual resources. The project will also be inconsistent with a land use provision in the Imperial Valley General Plan. However, the benefits of the project would override those impacts. In addition, the committee determined that the project complies with all other applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards.

Notable Renewable Energy Projects and Deals

California approves first new U.S. thermal solar plant

New York Times - Aug 25

California regulators have approved a license for the nation's first large-scale solar thermal power plant in two decades. The licensing of the 250-MW Beacon Solar Energy Project after a two-and-a-half-year environmental review comes as several other big solar farms are set to receive approval from the California Energy Commission in the next month. In March 2008, NextEra Energy Resources filed an application to build the Beacon project on 2,012 acres of former farmland in Kern County. Long rows of mirrored parabolic troughs will focus sunlight on liquid-filled tubes to create steam that drives an electricity-generating turbine.