UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

JUN 27 2012

Dr. Jerry Pell
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
OE-20
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Energia Sierra Juarez U.S. Transmission Line Project, San Diego County, California (CEQ# 20120179)

Dear Mr. Pell,

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Energia Sierra Juarez U.S. Transmission Line Project. Our review and comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and our NEPA review authority under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement on November 1, 2010. We rated the DEIS as *Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information* (EC-2) due to concerns regarding biological resources, air quality, and mitigation measures. Since we considered the ESJ Wind Park in Mexico relevant to this project, we also requested more detailed information regarding potential impacts to biological resources, in particular raptors, migratory birds, and bats.

We appreciate the efforts of the Department of Energy, the applicant, and its consultants to address our DEIS comments, and we commend the applicant, State, and federal agencies for working together to develop alternatives and mitigation measures that support environmentally preferable outcomes. In particular, we are pleased to see that the FEIS has expanded its discussion on golden eagles, California condors, migratory birds and other wildlife species for the proposed Project and the ESJ Wind Farm in Mexico. We commend the applicant's commitment to meet or exceed the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee's suggested practices for transmission line designs to prevent bird/power line electrocutions and collisions with additional separation of lines to accommodate the wingspan of California condors. The San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research's recommendations for eagles regarding the ESJ Wind project and the potential future mitigation measures that may be used to address avian impacts have also been incorporated into the FEIS.

We note that the potential impact analysis for the East County Substation switchyards and Southwest Powerlink loop-in has been incorporated into the FEIS. We also acknowledge that

BLM has, where appropriate, revised and updated mitigation measures to address our air quality recommendations.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. When the ROD is signed, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at 415-972-3521, or contact Anne Ardillo, the lead reviewer for this Project. Anne can be reached at 415-947-4257 or ardillo.anne@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Martyn Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Office (CED-2)