

1 INTRODUCTION

NextEra Energy Montezuma II Wind, LLC (the Applicant) proposes to develop the Montezuma II Wind Energy Project, a new 78.2- megawatt (MW) wind energy facility in southeast Solano County, California (see Figure 1-1, Regional Map). The Project would be located in the middle of an existing wind resource area in the Montezuma Hills region south of State Route 12, approximately 15 miles southeast of Fairfield, on leased, privately owned land. Surrounding communities include Bird's Landing located approximately 1.7 miles west of the project boundary, Collinsville approximately 1.5 miles south of the project boundary and Rio Vista approximately 5.7 miles east of the project boundary.

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Montezuma II project would include installation of 34 Siemens 2.3-MW wind turbines for a total generation capacity of 78.2 MW. The Applicant has obtained landowner authorization for the 12 parcels in the project area; the entire project area is approximately 2,539 acres. The proposed project components, including the turbine pads and access roads, underground power collection lines, substation and switchyard with interconnection lines, operations and maintenance (O&M) facility and permanent laydown area, temporary laydown area; and meteorological towers as identified in Chapter 3 (Project Description), would temporarily disturb 8.3 percent of the total project area during construction but occupy only 1.9 percent of the total project area permanently.

The Applicant would construct a 6-acre O&M facility with a 5,000 square-foot building, parking, and permanent laydown and storage area in the northeast corner of the project area. The proposed O&M facility would connect to the existing High Winds O&M building just outside the project area by a new 1,230-foot underground power line and, together with certain other project components, would be accessed from the adjacent High Winds project area.

The Applicant also proposes to construct a substation and a 230-kilovolt (kV) switchyard adjacent to the existing Montezuma I and High Winds substations near the PG&E transmission lines in the central portion of the project area. The Applicant would reconfigure the interconnection to the PG&E system so that the Montezuma I, Montezuma II, and High Winds substations each would connect to the new switchyard and the switchyard would connect to the existing 230-kV overhead gen tie line to the existing PG&E Birds Landing switchyard. The Birds Landing switchyard connects to the Vaca Dixon-Contra Costa 230-kV regional transmission line and the PG&E system grid, controlled by the California Independent System Operator Corporation (CAISO). CAISO is a not-for-profit public benefit corporation that operates the State's wholesale power grid. Electricity would be sold via power purchase agreement and delivered to the power-consumer market in California through utilities, municipalities, and cooperatives.

In addition to existing agricultural use, the Montezuma Hills region surrounding the proposed project area currently has seven existing wind energy facilities: the enXco V, High Winds, Montezuma I, Sacramento Municipal Utilities District (SMUD)-Solano Wind Phase 1 & 2, Shiloh I, and Shiloh II projects. Two additional approved wind projects are expected to be under construction in 2011: Solano Wind Phase 3 and Shiloh III. The County is reviewing applications for two new wind energy projects: the proposed Montezuma II project and the Shiloh IV project.

U.S. Windpower constructed the enXco V (formerly U.S. Windpower Montezuma Hills Wind Park) project in two phases in 1989 (Phase I) and 1990 (Phase II), under separate use permits, which will expire in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The enXco V project originally consisted of 600 Kenetech KCS-56-100 turbines, now considered old turbine technology, but as a result of a partial repowering in 2006, currently has 510 older generation wind turbines and 6 new generation wind turbines. The enXco V use permits require decommissioning (removal) of the project's older turbines and related facilities prior to expiration unless Solano County grants an extension. The owner of the enXco V project, enXco, plans to decommission the older enXco V turbines in phases, beginning with the portion within the Montezuma II project area, comprising 1,377 acres and containing approximately 200 older turbines, prior to expiration of the respective use permit and construction of Montezuma II. enXco also plans to remove another approximately 200 older enXco V turbines in anticipation of construction of the proposed Shiloh IV project in 2012. Solano County has not received plans for the decommissioning of the remaining balance of older enXco V turbines. The decommissioning of the older enXco V project turbines is not part of the proposed Project, but the environmental analysis considers the cumulative impacts of these actions.

1.2 USE PERMIT AND CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The Applicant submitted a Development Permit Application for a Use Permit (U-10-04) to the Solano County Department of Resource Management (the County) in June 2010, revised the application in August 2010 and again in October 2010, and made additional changes to the project in January 2011. The Use Permit would authorize the installation, operation, and eventual decommissioning of 34 Siemens 2.3 MW wind turbines and related facilities, including the pads and access roads, underground power collection system, substation and 230-kV switchyard with interconnection lines, O&M facilities and permanent laydown area, temporary laydown area; and two permanent meteorological towers. The Project would tie the existing High Winds and Montezuma I substations into the new switchyard and connect the new switchyard to the existing PG&E Birds Landing Switchyard.

The County reviewed the Development Permit Application and sent it to several regulatory agencies for early review and comment regarding application completeness. The County received five letters commenting on the Development Permit Application. The County determined that the Project has the potential to significantly affect environmental resources and that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The County circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on October 22, 2010 and hosted a public scoping meeting on November 10, 2010, in Fairfield, near the project area. One oral comment was made at the scoping meeting, and eight letters were received in response to the NOP. The Applicant responded directly to one NOP response letter.

Table A-1 in Appendix A summarizes the comments received in response to the Development Permit Application, NOP, and scoping meeting, and identifies the locations in this document where environmental issues raised by agencies and the public are addressed. Copies of the comment letters received are also included in Appendix A.

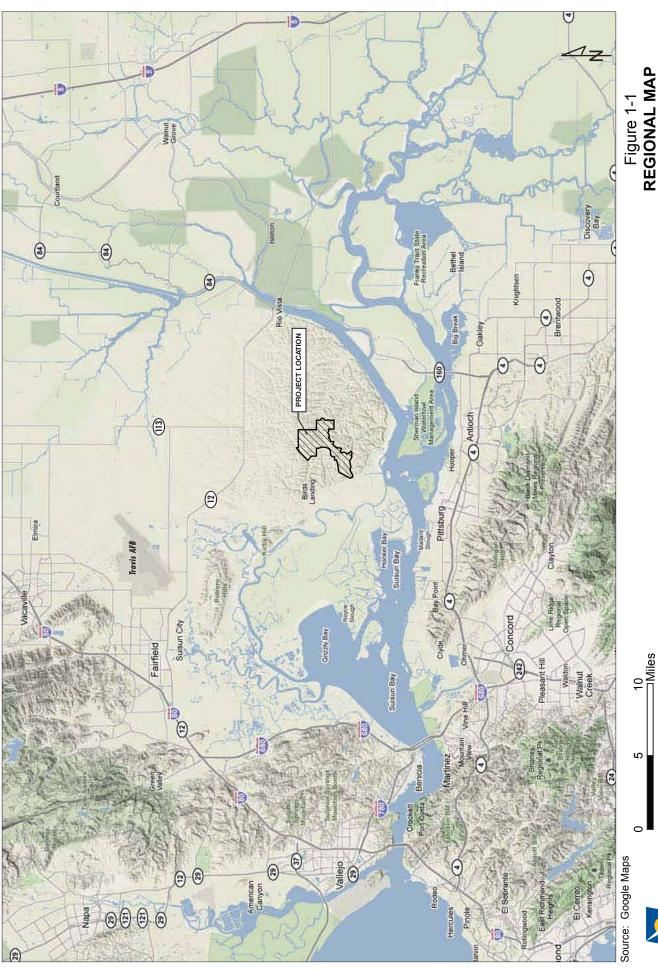


Figure 1-1 **REGIONAL MAP**

Montezuma II Wind Energy Project Solano County, California

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF DRAFT EIR

The County contracted Point Impact Analysis, LLC (Point Impact) to prepare this Draft EIR in accordance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines, and the Solano County EIR Guidelines. This Draft EIR contains the following chapters:

- Chapter 1—Introduction to the proposed Montezuma II Wind Energy Project;
- Chapter 2—Summary of the Draft EIR, including Project impacts and mitigation measures;
- Chapter 3—Detailed description of the Project, including objectives, location, facilities, life span, and the approval process;
- Chapter 4—Introduction to Environmental Analysis, presenting the methodology and impact analysis employed in this Draft EIR;
- Chapters 5 through 19—Existing conditions in the project area and evaluation of potential impacts on aesthetic/visual resources; agriculture and forest resources; air quality; biological resources; cultural and paleontological resources; geology, soils, mineral resources, and seismicity; greenhouse gases; hazardous materials; hydrology and water quality; land use; noise; public utilities and services; recreation; safety; and transportation. These Chapters also include mitigation measures for the identified significant impacts;
- Chapter 20—Presentation and evaluation of alternatives to the Project;
- Chapter 21—Cumulative impacts of other activities in the project vicinity;
- Chapter 22—List of the Draft EIR preparers; and
- Chapter 23—Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Project.

Technical reports prepared and used to support preparation of this Draft EIR (e.g., air calculations, noise studies, etc.) are provided as appendices and noted as appropriate in Chapters 5 through 19.

1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW OF THE DRAFT EIR

Solano County will circulate this Draft EIR for the 45-day public review period beginning on the date of publication, as noted on the public notice of availability of the Draft EIR. During this public review period, the County will hold a public hearing to receive oral and written comments, which will be addressed in the Final EIR. Written comments will also be accepted during the public review period at the County's Department of Resource Management, 675 Texas Street, Suite 5500, Fairfield, California, 94533. The Final EIR will be made available to the public at least 10 days before the Planning Commission hearing on EIR certification and decision on issuance of the Use Permit for the Project.