



News

Avenal power plant receives recommendation by state regulator

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A proposed Avenal power plant project cleared a major hurdle Tuesday.

A state regulator has proposed approval of a 600-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant being developed in Avenal by a Houston-based company.

First proposed in February 2008, the project has been undergoing a certification process with the California Energy Commission.

The \$530 million combined-cycle power plant would have heat recovery steam generators designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The plant would also use treated wastewater from the city of Avenal and a cooling mechanism that would recycle water through the "zero-discharge system," according to the commission.

The Avenal Energy Project plans to sell the output to Pacific Gas and Electric Co., which is expanding its Gates Substation in Fresno County to accommodate the connection of the power plant to PG&E's transmission grid.

If licensed, the project could begin construction in April 2010, with commercial operation starting by June 2012.

In his proposed decision released Tuesday, California Energy Commission member Jeffrey Byron wrote that the project would meet all regulations and standards and have no significant negative impact on the environment once mitigation measures are taken. Byron wrote that the Avenal project was the first power plant to be evaluated in greater detail for greenhouse gas emission impacts.

The proposed decision issued by Byron's committee, which is assigned by the commission to review the project, is not a final decision. The release of the document triggers the 30-day public comment period.

The committee will subsequently consider public comment before bringing the proposed decision to the full commission.

The entire document is available on the Commission Web site:
www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/avenal/documents/index.html.

Project owner Avenal Power Center, LLC plans to build the plant on 34 acres of a 148-acre industrial site just south of the Fresno County line and two miles east of Interstate 5. The project is six miles from Avenal's residential and commercial areas.