



ALAMEDA COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

**Chris Bazar**  
Agency Director

September 15, 2014

Albert Lopez  
Planning Director

224  
West Winton Ave  
Room 111

Hayward  
California  
94544

phone  
510.670.5400  
fax  
510.785.8793

[www.acgov.org/cda](http://www.acgov.org/cda)

**FROM:** Sandra Rivera, Assistant Planning Director  
Alameda County Community Development Agency  
224 W. Winton Avenue, Suite 110  
Hayward, CA, 94544

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Preparation (Notice) of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Modifications to Existing Conditional Use Permits – Altamont Winds Inc. (AWI) (PLN2014-00028)

### SUMMARY

The County of Alameda (County) is issuing this Notice of Preparation to inform agencies and interested parties that the County will prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for proposed modifications to 16 existing Conditional Use Permits (CUPs), for turbines owned and operated by Altamont Winds Inc. in the Alameda County portion of the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (AC/APWRA). Altamont Winds Inc. (the Applicant, together with its operating subsidiary WindWorks Inc., and collectively, AWI) has submitted an application requesting that these CUPs, set to expire on October 31, 2015 under modifications approved in 2013, be extended through October 31, 2018 under specified conditions, for operation of its estimated 828 turbines, which have a rated capacity of approximately 85.8 MW.

The SEIR is intended to supplement an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), certified in July 2013, that evaluated the application made by AWI in 2011 to modify these same CUPs as they had been approved in September of 2005. Although the current proposal for operations through 2018 was evaluated in the prior EIR as an alternative (Alternative 3), it was only at a limited level of analysis, as provided for in the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15126.6(d)), to provide “sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project.” The County made the following finding in 2013 when it certified the EIR regarding this alternative: “Alternative 3 would better serve the project objectives of renewable energy, but would also very substantially increase the avian mortality impacts compared to the project and all other alternatives. For the purpose of meeting the project objectives and minimizing significant impacts on special status avian wildlife, Alternative 3 is considered infeasible.” On the basis of this determination, it is necessary to provide additional information, which this SEIR is intended to provide, together with the same kind of notice and public review as provided for a draft EIR under Section 15087 of the CEQA Guidelines. The SEIR will supplement the prior EIR with additional analysis beyond that included in the Alternatives analysis to provide a basis for making the findings required by CEQA.

The 2011 application sought to replace the schedule adopted in 2005 for phased decommissioning (shut down and removal) of existing turbines in anticipation of repowering (replacement with current generation turbines), beginning with 10% removal by September 2009, 35% by 2013, 85% by 2015, and 100% by the end of the CUP term in 2018. The schedule proposed in 2011 and approved in 2013, eliminated the phased decommissioning and provided for operation of the wind farm through October 2015, subject to new and revised conditions. Other changes were also requested by AWI, such as cessation of the winter seasonal shutdown imposed by the County through the administration of the CUPs, but these changes were not approved by the County.

The CUPs as approved in 2005 required that an EIR be prepared to evaluate ongoing operations, proposed decommissioning and repowering. The EIR certified in 2013 served this purpose in part by evaluating the environmental impacts of ongoing operations and anticipated decommissioning, but did not evaluate any repowering project. The SEIR that is the subject of this Notice will not evaluate a repowering project, but will evaluate the environmental impacts of the requested change to the scheduled expiration of the CUPs under which AWI's turbines are operated. A separate CEQA document (an Addendum or Supplemental EIR) 'tiered' from the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area Repowering Program EIR that is currently in the form of a Draft Program EIR, will address the repowering proposal by AWI.

The County will serve as the Lead Agency for the SEIR, which will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, 1970, as amended) and in accordance with relevant federal, state and local regulations. The County has determined that a Supplemental EIR is required to evaluate the three-year CUP extension requested by AWI, which is a substantial change to the Project compared to the Project as evaluated in the prior EIR. Although the three-year extension was evaluated in the prior EIR as an Alternative, the adoption and implementation of the extension will result in a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects and will require important revisions of that EIR, pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. The County is preparing a Supplemental EIR, rather than a Subsequent EIR, based on its determination, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15163, that only minor additions and changes are necessary to make the previous EIR adequate to apply to the Project for the changes proposed by the applicant.

Based on the substantial evidence contained in the prior EIR, which included the currently-proposed extension of the CUPs through 2018 as an Alternative, and the evidence represented by the current application, in light of the whole record, the County considers the changes to the Project, from how it was defined for the prior EIR (operations through 2015, with conditions and required mitigation measures) to the current definition of operations through 2018 (with anticipated additional conditions and similar mitigation measures), would increase the severity of previously identified significant effects. For example, full operations (i.e., without phased decommissioning, although with seasonal shutdowns) for an additional three years will increase the total projected number of avian fatalities due to Project operations.

The County does not anticipate that major revisions to the EIR are necessary to identify new environmental impacts that were not disclosed in the prior EIR. Additionally, although there have been some changed circumstances since 2013, the County does not find that there are substantially changed circumstances that would result in new or substantially different significant impacts on the environment. Furthermore, no new information of substantial importance shows that the CUP extension to 2018 would have significant impacts not discussed in the prior EIR. However, to the extent new information has become available since the prior EIR, the County intends to incorporate that information into the SEIR.

The SEIR will be used by the East County Board of Zoning Adjustments in its consideration of approval of the proposed CUP modifications. The County is soliciting the views of agencies, organizations and interested parties as to the scope and content of the environmental resources and topics to be evaluated in the SEIR. In accordance with CEQA, agencies are requested to review the content of this NOP and provide comments on any environmental issues related to the statutory responsibilities of the agency.

CEQA sets the review and comment period for an NOP to end 30 days after publication. The County therefore requests comments on this NOP be received no later than the close of business on Wednesday, October 15, 2014. Provide a name for a contact person in your agency. Send written comments to:

Sandra Rivera, Assistant Planning Director  
ATTN: AWI Permit Modification Supplemental EIR  
Alameda County Community Development Agency  
224 W. Winton Avenue, Suite 110  
Hayward, CA, 94544

Comments can also be sent via e-mail with subject line "AWI Permit Modification Supplemental EIR" to [sandra.rivera@acgov.org](mailto:sandra.rivera@acgov.org). Please include a return address and contact name with your written comments.

## Project Location

The proposed project would extend numerous CUPs for 828 existing wind turbines that are widely distributed within an approximately 14,000-acre portion of the 50,000-acre Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area (APWRA) in eastern Alameda County, California (**Figure 1**). The project site is bisected by Interstate 580. The portion of the site lying southerly of I-580 constitutes approximately 7,700 acres, with the remainder lying northerly of I-580. The lands are currently under permit by AWI or its affiliates either solely or as a shared arrangement with other wind farm operators. In preparation for repowering, AWI is in discussions with another wind farm operator in the APWRA regarding a contemplated wind turbine exchange, whereby AWI would exchange some of its wind turbines for an equal number of wind turbines owned and operated by another wind farm operator. Such an exchange would result in AWI operating wind turbines on different parcels of land than those on which it presently operates (**Figure 2**). Under no circumstances, however, will any such exchange increase the capacity or quantity of AWI’s operating turbines. **Table 1** below outlines existing CUPs, landowners, Assessor’s Parcel Numbers (APNs), and approximate acreage for the lands that may be included either in whole or in part in the project, including lands on which AWI may operate following an exchange scenario as contemplated above. Partial inclusion of some parcels is necessary because AWI does not have control of all turbines on all parcels.

**Table 1. Existing Conditional Use Permits (As of the time of this Notice)**

CUP No.	Landowner	Assessor’s Parcel Numbers	Approximate Acres
C-8036	Costa (was Frick)	99B-5680-15	207.12
C-8037	Pombo	99B-6300-2-1, 99B-6300-2-2, 99B-6425-1-6, 99B-6325-2-4 and 99B-6400-1-7	224.26
C-8134	Rooney	99B-6125-2	160.21
C-8137	Mulqueeney	99B-7900-1-5, 99B-7900-1-7, 99B-7890-2-4, 99B-7890-2-5, 99B-7890-2-6, 99B-7925-2-4, 99B-7925-2-1, 99B-7925-2-5, 99B-7950-2, 99B-7975-1, 99B-7980-1, 99B-7985-1-6, 99B-7985-1-4, 99B-7985-1-3, 99B-7985-1-5, 99A-1800-2-4, 99A-1800-2-3 and 99B-8050-1	4,447.50
C-8191	Mulqueeney	99B-7910-1-1	592.84
C-8243	ACWMA	99A-1780-1-4, 99A-1770-2-1, 99A-1770-2-2, 99A-1770-2-3, 99A-1810-1 and 99A-1790-3	1,324.83
C-8216	ACWMA	99A-1810-1 (parcel acreage included in C-8243)	240.81
C-8232	Egan	99B-6125-3	160.47
C-8233	Elliott	99B-6125-4	157.54
C-8235	Corbett	99B-5650-1-4 and 99A-1785-1-14	284.96
C-8236	Dunton	99B-5680-1	330.46
C-8237	DeVincenzi (was Valhalla)	99B-5610-1 and 99B-6075-3	665.98
C-8238	Ralph (north)	99B-7300-1-5 and 99B-7375-1-7	766.57
C-8241	Walker	99B-6100-2-10, 99B-6100-2-11, 99B-6100-2-12, 99B-6100-3-10, 99B-6100-3-15, 99B-6100-3-11	1,314.55
C-8242	Gomes (north)	99B-6150-4-10, 99B-6150-3 and 99B-6150-2-7	635.48
C-8244	Gomes (south)	99B-6425-2-3, 99A-1790-2 and 99A-1795-1	1,049.48
<b>TOTAL ACREAGE</b>			<b>14,195.64</b>

**Notes:**

1. The above table includes those parcels and CUPs on which AWI currently has installed wind turbines, as well as those parcels and CUPs on which turbines owned by other wind companies are presently installed and whose wind turbines may be obtained in exchange on a turbine-for-turbine basis with turbines currently owned by AWI.
2. Many of the wind farms in the APWRA overlap, with different wind energy facility operating companies on a single parcel of land. Therefore, other wind companies beside AWI currently operate wind farms within the project area described above.
3. Two CUPs, C-8231 and C-8239, that previously applied to turbines owned by AWI or its affiliates, are no longer operated by AWI or its affiliates.

**Proposed Project**

The proposed project consists of operational modifications to AWI’s existing CUPs, as amended in July 2013, for continued wind power operation and maintenance activities within the Alameda County portion of the APWRA through October 31, 2018.

The project facilities consist of 828 existing, operating wind turbines on concrete foundations, plus support facilities, occupying approximately 155 acres within a 14,196-acre area. The turbines have a nameplate capacity of 85.8 MW and rest on lattice and tubular towers that range in height from 60 to 82 feet, generally sited in strings along ridgelines. Support facilities include existing gated, graveled access roads, a power collection and transmission interconnection system, meteorological towers ranging from 60 to 100 feet in height, communication systems, maintenance equipment areas, and offsite facilities including AWI’s wind farm main service yard (located near Tracy), and the main wind farm control center, shared with other wind farm operators (located in Livermore). The power collection and transmission interconnection system consists of pad-mount transformers, underground cables, overhead conductors on poles, circuit breakers and switches, electrical metering/protection devices, and the existing Dyer, Frick, Ralph, and Midway substations. Electrical power is collected from the turbines and transmitted to the substations, where its voltage is increased for interconnection with Pacific Gas and Electric’s (PG&E) transmission lines.

The existing project operations consists of 828 turbines and ancillary facilities, with a maximum combined generation capacity of 85.8 MW, through October 31, 2015. After this point, operations would be extended for three additional years, through October 31, 2018, on the condition that AWI has diligently pursued development of a repowered wind farm on the project site, but where circumstances beyond AWI’s control have delayed completion of the repowered project. Mitigation for impacts resulting from operation of the project through October 31, 2018 will be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures prescribed in the 2013 EIR.

**Probable Environmental Effects**

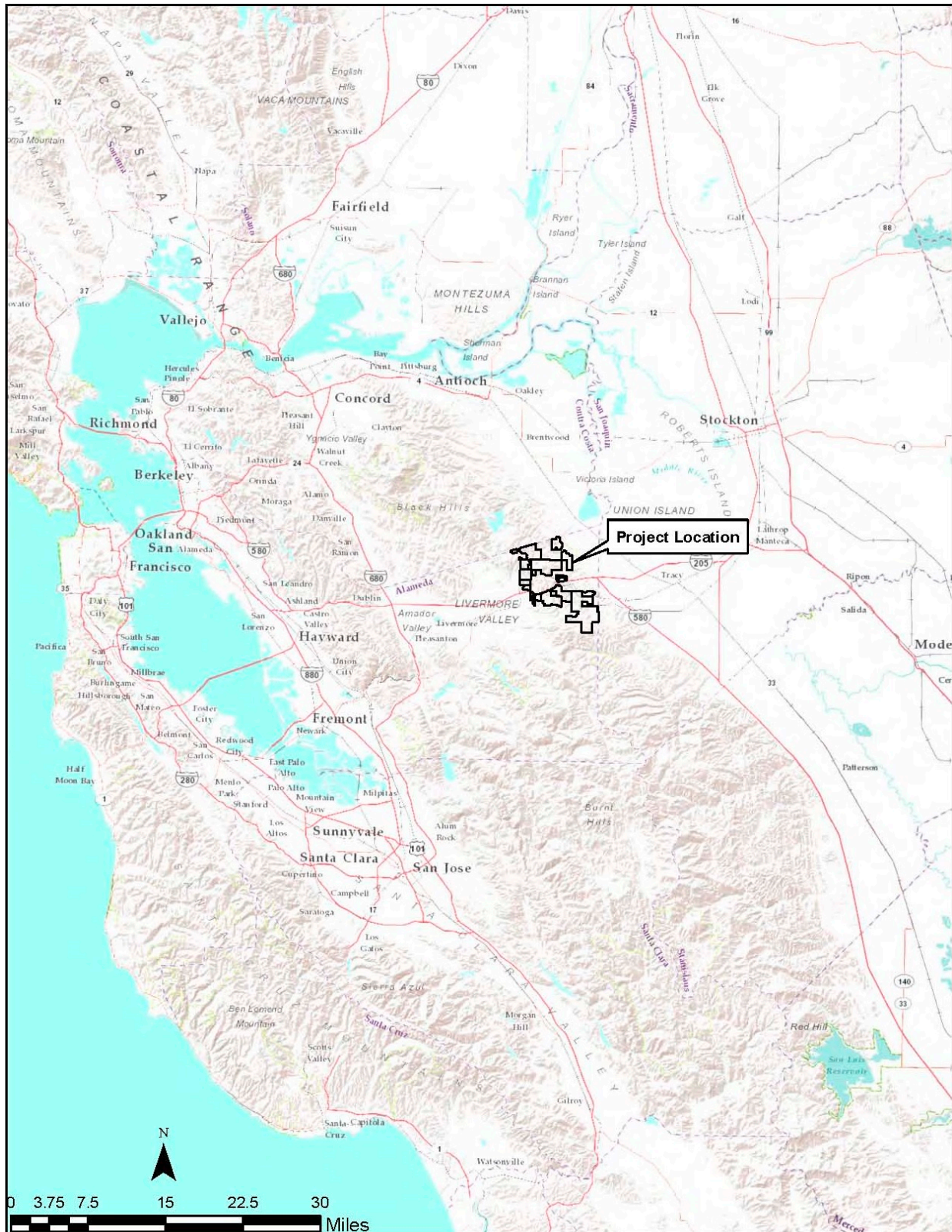
In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15161, the AWI Permit Modification SEIR will examine the environmental impacts of the requested CUP modifications, focusing primarily on the changes in the environment that would result from the proposed extension of the wind farm’s operational schedule.

Based on the project description and the County’s understanding of the environmental issues associated with the project, the Draft SEIR will evaluate the impacts the proposed CUP modifications may have on biological resources, paying particular attention to impacts to avian species associated with the project’s proposed extended operation of wind turbines.

**Project Title** Modifications to Existing Conditional Use Permits  
**Project Applicant** Altamont Winds Inc.  
**Date** September 15, 2014  
**Signature**   
**Name** Sandra Rivera  
**Title** Assistant Planning Director  
**Telephone/e-mail** 510-670-5400 / [sandra.rivera@acgov.org](mailto:sandra.rivera@acgov.org)



**FIGURE 1**  
**Project Location Map**





**FIGURE 2**  
**Project Site Plan, Including Parcels Subject to Potential Asset Exchange**

