

MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. C68 was approved as Minute Item No. 68 by the California State Lands Commission by a vote of 3 to 0 at its 08/21/96 meeting.

**CALENDAR ITEM
C68**

A 34
S 15

08/21/96
W 24777
PRC 7811
S. Sekelsky

**CONSIDER APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT
TO GENERAL PERMIT - PUBLIC AGENCY USE
FOR THE DUST MITIGATION PROGRAM ON OWENS DRY LAKE**

APPLICANT:

Great Basin Unified Air Pollution
Control District (GBUAPCD)
157 Short Street, Suite 6
Bishop, California 93514

AREA, TYPE LAND AND LOCATION:

Approximately 13,960 acres of State-owned sovereign lands in the bed of Owens Lake, Inyo County.

LAND USE:

Mitigation and dust abatement projects to reduce particulate pollution from the dry bed of Owens Lake.

CONSIDERATION:

The public's health and safety; with the State reserving the right at any time to set a monetary rental if the Commission finds such action to be in the State's best interest.

BASIS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Pursuant to 2 Cal. Code Regs. 2003.

APPLICANT STATUS:

Applicant has jurisdiction over the implementation of emission limitations, rules and regulations, and enforcement procedures to maintain state and federal ambient air quality standards in the Owens Valley Basin.

PREREQUISITE CONDITIONS, FEES AND EXPENSES:

Filing fee has been paid.

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STATUTORY AND OTHER REFERENCES:

- A. Public Resources Code: Div. 6, Parts 1 and 2; Div. 13.
- B. Cal. Regs.: Title 3, Div. 3; Title 14, Div. 6.

AB 884:

N/A

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

- 1. At its May 5, 1992 meeting, the State Lands Commission (SLC) adopted Calendar Item Number 57 which approved a General Permit- Public Agency Use and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with the Great Basin Unified Air Pollution Control District (GBUAPCD) for experimental dust mitigation programs on Owens Dry Lake.
- 2. The GBUAPCD is now interested in expanding the approved vegetation pilot program to include the following project:

Proposed Project

The project consists of a series of investigations designed to further develop methods for dust control on the Owens Lake. To date, research projects relating to flooding and to vegetation establishment have taken place on the sand sheet environment north of the town of Keeler. The soils on the east and south part of the Owens Lake are dominated by clay, which provides a very different substrate for both plant growth and shallow flooding. In addition, these clay soils have the potential for being tilled, whereby large clods of clay are brought to the surface using a plow. These clay clods provide a non-erodible surface that could prevent the emission of PM-10. Experimentation needs to be conducted on these soils to understand the particular soil-water-plant relationships on this portion of the lake. There are four components proposed for the project. Component I will take place within the lease area in the vicinity of the existing South Flood Irrigation Project (SFIP), where water spreading experiments have been conducted during 1995-1996. It is proposed to expand the use of this site to include till and vegetation experiments. Activities in this area would include installation of small diameter (2"-6") surface pipe to supply water to vegetation and till projects, surface disturbance associated with tilling for dust mitigation as well as for soil

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preparation for vegetation, and the creation of shallow surface water storage basins and conveyance ditches. All activity will be confined to an area of approximately 100 acres. All water used for these projects will come from the existing well that was drilled to supply the SFIP; this well utilizes artesian flow only, and no pumping is proposed. Existing artesian flow rate is approximately 250 g.p.m. Component II is for a large-scale till plot located about 5 miles southeast of Keeler within the lease area. This plot will measure 1000' x 1000' and will be constructed in clay soils. Activities at this location will be limited to the tilling taking place in the plot itself.

Component III is located on the Owens Lake plays about 2 miles south of Keeler on the bed of the lake. This component involves a test plot of approximately 640 acres (1 square mile) designed to test the effectiveness of larger scale vegetation strategies, water circulation, irrigation of till plots to allow for their continued effectiveness, and irrigation efficiencies. Activities in this area would include surface disturbance associated with the construction of 16 subplots of approximately 40 acres each in size, the installation of a 14" diameter temporary above-ground pipeline extending from the existing north flooding project, the construction of a water conveyance and recirculation system using berms composed of earth only, and tilling associated with till plots and with vegetation plots. Water for this project will be taken from an extension of an existing pipeline that conveys water from to production wells known as the River Wells. These wells are located to the west of the Owens River delta, and have been in production to supply the north flood project since January 1994. Operation of the wells has already been approved through the CEQA process (Negative Declaration May 1992). All water used on this project will be confined to the project site itself by berms and ditches. One of the purposes of this research is to optimize water use by recapturing and reusing through water from the plots themselves. The only water from the project will be released to the playa will be saline waste water confined in a ditch extending well beyond the wetland area associated with the Sulfate Well.

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Also associated with this component will be vegetation studies investigating the use of water and of plants themselves as agents of soil reclamation. Vegetation projects implemented to date on the bed of Owens Lake have used only locally-adapted genotypes of native species, such as saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata* var. *Stricta*). For the studies proposed here, saltgrass will continue to be used; but other species useful for reclamation are also proposed. Criteria used to determine which species will be useful for reclamation purposes include germinability at high soil salinities, rapid growth of sturdy above-ground structures, production of a prolific, woody root, and the potential for production of a high quantity of humic acid. Species proposed for reclamation purposes include non-native species widely used in agriculture, and also native species that it may be possible to harvest locally. Where harvest is difficult or unduly expensive, it is proposed to purchase seed from appropriate sources that deal in native plants. This is the process utilized by revegetation projects elsewhere in the region that use native plants.

If approved, the existing lease would be amended to include trials of additional plant materials as follows:

- a. Domesticated agricultural grain, forage, or other crop species. Trials may include the following species*:
 - Oats (*Avena sativa*)
 - Crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*)
 - Desert crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron desertorum*)
 - Standard crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron sibericum*)
 - Meadow foxtail (*Alepocurus pratensis*) Barley (*Hordeum vulgare*)
 - Rice (*Oryza sativa*)
 - Samphire pickleweed (*Salicornia bigelovii* "SOS-10")
 - Hybrid sorghum - "Sordan" (*Sorghum* sp.)
 - Berseem clover (*Trifolium alexadrinum*)
 - Corn (*Zea mays*)
- * equivalent species or varieties may be substituted subject to prior approval of SLC staff

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- b. Native California species. Trials may include the following species*:
- Iodine bush (*Allenrolfea occidentalis*)
 - Yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*)
 - Parry saltbush (*Atriplex parryi*)
 - Arrowscale (*Atriplex phyllostegia*)
 - California goosefoot (*Chenopodium californicum*)
 - Slender wheatgrass (*Elymus trachycaulus*)
 - Mexican wirerush (*Juncus mexicanus*)
 - Salina wildrye (*Leymus salinus*)
 - Creeping wildrye (*Leymus triticoides*)
 - Inkweed (*Nitrophila occidentalis*)
 - Common reed (*Phragmites australis*)
 - Pickleweed (*Salicornia utahensis*)
 - Greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*)
 - Alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*)
 - Horned sea-blite (*Sueda calceoliformis*)
 - Bush seepweed (*Sueda moquinii*)
 - Pickleweed (*Salicornia bigelovii*)
- * equivalent species or varieties may be substituted subject to prior approval of SLC staff

3. GBUAPCD and SLC staff believe that these studies will provides sufficient data to determine if the identified species merits further study as a plant useful for dust mitigation, and if a species has potential as an environmental crop which would stabilize the lake surface and also provide an economic return as a cash crop.
4. A Negative Declaration, State Clearinghouse #96052053, was prepared and adopted for this project by the GBUAPCD. The State Lands Commission's staff has reviewed such document and believes that the proposed amendments to the previously approved program are consistent with and appropriate to the SLC Dust Abatement Program approved by the Commission.
5. General Permit - Public Agency Use, Lease No. PRC 7633, was replaced by Lease No. PRC 7811 by the State Lands Commission action on November 15, 1994.

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IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

1. FIND THAT A NEGATIVE DECLARATION, STATE CLEARINGHOUSE #96052053, WAS PREPARED AND ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF THE GREAT BASIN AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT AT ITS JULY 3, 1996, MEETING AND THAT THE COMMISSION HAS REVIEWED AND CONSIDERED THE INFORMATION CONTAINED THEREIN.

2. AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER, OR HIS DESIGNEE, TO EXECUTE AN AMENDED GENERAL PERMIT - PUBLIC AGENCY USE, LEASE NO. PRC 7811 BETWEEN THE STATE LANDS COMMISSION AND THE GREAT BASIN UNIFIED AIR POLLUTION CONTROL DISTRICT.