

One of county's largest solar projects moves forward

William Roller, Imperial Valley Press, 1-27-11

One of the largest planned solar projects has been given the green light for development.

The California Public Utilities Commission recently approved a renewable energy contract for San Diego Gas and Electric, said Andy Horne, Imperial County deputy executive officer of natural resources development. The CPUC approved a 20-year power purchase agreement with Centinela Solar Energy, operated by LS Power.

LS Power has constructed more than 20,000 megawatts of power facilities across the U.S. Its developments include a mix of natural gas, coal and renewable resources and it has invested \$13 billion in energy infrastructure during the past six years.

“They’ve got about 1,500 acres of land it will be built on,” Horne said. “This is one of the largest projects proposed.”

The project is still in the permitting process. But Horne has been meeting with the developer to assist in getting the plant built that will run over the Sunrise Power Link transmission lines now under construction, he said.

Centinela will be a 140-megawatt solar photovoltaic facility. The project could employ 400 workers during construction, which could begin at the end of this year or beginning of 2012, Horne said. Twenty permanent jobs are expected once in operation. Electricity deliveries are expected to begin about the end of 2013, he added.

In 2008, then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed an executive order requiring energy service providers to have 33 percent of their power generation be renewable sources by 2020. Last September, the California Air Resources Board also adopted a 33 percent renewable electricity standard by 2020.