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July 29, 2010

Mr. David E. Durant
Chair, Contra Costa Airport Land Use Commission
C/o Department of Conservation and Planning
County Administration Building
651 Pine Street
Martinez, CA 94553-1229

Re: Mariposa Energy Project, CEC Docket #09-AFC-03

Dear Chairman Durant:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 415,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots – including nearly 48,000 members in the state of California. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

We are writing to urge that the Contra Costa County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) issue a determination of incompatible land use for the above referenced project due to its close proximity to the Byron Airport (C83).

AOPA has serious concerns with the location of the proposed Mariposa Energy Project and its proximity to the RNAV (GPS) Runway 30 instrument approach to the Byron Municipal Airport. We are also extremely concerned with the impact the proposed facility will have on the airport's Visual Flight Rule (VFR) traffic patterns. More specifically, we believe that operation of this power generation facility will create plumes and associated turbulence from exhaust stacks that will pose flight hazards to aircraft operating over or near them.

The two most critical periods of flight are the takeoff and landing. During these phases of flight, the immediate areas surrounding airports should be free of hazards including facilities that create unstable air masses and turbulence. The proposed project would do just the opposite.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) recently issued an update to the Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM) that specifically brings attention to the flight hazards that exist around thermal plumes. The FAA encourages pilots to fly upwind of the plumes whenever possible and to exercise extreme caution when flying in the vicinity of the plumes. The FAA has identified several aircraft accidents that have been attributed to the effects of thermal plumes on aircraft operations. As a result, the agency is currently conducting additional studies to

characterize the effects of thermal plumes and identify necessary changes to current rules and policy. Publication of the study results later in the fall of this year may affect airports nationwide.

Because of the potential for significant changes to FAA policy regarding thermal plumes, AOPA respectfully requests that the Contra Costa County Airport Land Use Commission find that the Mariposa Energy Project is not compatible with the comprehensive land use plan. Even though thermal plumes are not expressly mentioned in the County-wide and Byron Airport Policies, the potential hazard represented by these plumes must be considered.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this subject. If we can be of further assistance please contact us at 301-695-2200.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Collins", with a large, stylized initial "J" and "C".

John L. Collins
Manager
Airport Policy