



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO CENTRAL PLANT EXPANSION; DROPS RIVERFRONT SITE OPPOSED BY SACRAMENTO

SACRAMENTO -- The California Department of General Services (DGS) announced today it is proceeding with a \$160 million, environmentally friendly project to upgrade the aging central heating and cooling plant that serves more than 22 State buildings in downtown Sacramento.

At the same time, state officials said they have ruled out an earlier option that would have placed a four-story water cooling tower on the downtown Sacramento riverfront just upstream from Pioneer Bridge where the current plant has an outflow. Instead, DGS will place the cooling tanks at the site of the new plant.

"This project is an important step forward in the state's use of new and more efficient smart energy technologies," said DGS Director Ron Joseph. "And it demonstrates Governor Schwarzenegger's strong commitment to upgrading California's often overlooked and worn public infrastructure."

Instead of being water-cooled, the new tower will be air-cooled, which is considered more environmentally friendly. Warm water from the Central Plant's open loop cooling system has long been discharged into the Sacramento River. But in March 2002, the Sacramento Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board issued a cease-and-desist order, saying the warm water discharges could interfere with migrating salmon and steelhead.

Today's announcement coincided with the State's signing of the final environmental impact report, which allows construction to proceed on the Central Plant expansion. Consistent with direction from the Schwarzenegger administration, the project has designed in many environmental benefits. They include electrical co-generation equipment that can operate independently of the state grid, state-of-the-art boilers that meet the state's strict air emission standards, a substantial reduction in groundwater needed by the plant's existing system, and new-technology chillers that use ozone-friendly refrigerants.

The project will also introduce the use of a six-million gallon chilled water storage tank that can keep state buildings comfortable even on Sacramento's hot summer days when the state's electrical grid is strained beyond capacity. Water will be chilled at night when electricity is more plentiful, stored and then circulated to state buildings the next day.

The new plant will be constructed on the site of the existing plant, bounded by P, Q, 6th and 7th Streets. Built in 1968, the Central Plant has cooled and heated State buildings for almost 40 years through an elaborate infrastructure that criss-crosses downtown Sacramento. But the existing system, decades behind modern standards of energy-efficiency, is nearing the end of its life-cycle. It is now operating well beyond its capacity and is unable to supply additional state buildings. On hot summer days, it is sometimes unable to cool state buildings to an optimum temperature.

In earlier versions of the EIR, DGS had considered three renovation alternatives for the Central Plant. But in response to community, maintenance, and cost concerns, Joseph directed staff to look at other alternatives to cooling towers on the river-front, placing them instead atop the new structure at the current site. Joseph said there was extensive public involvement in the environmental review process that served both the community and his department well, including active participation by city officials. He said the project was a departure from past state planning processes that some felt did not always engage the local community in the development of alternatives.

Construction will take roughly two and a half years, beginning later this year.

The final, approved EIR is available on the department's Web site at <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/>. Go to the home page and click on "Capitol West Side Projects."