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Inland Empire Utilities Agency Signs Agreement for Largest Fuel Cell System Fueled by Renewable Biogas in the World

Landmark Agreement Signed to Install a 2.8 Megawatt Renewable Energy Fuel Cell System between Inland Empire Utilities Agency and UTS

Chino, CA – Inland Empire Utilities Agency (IEUA), a water and wastewater service provider to 850,000 residents in the Inland Empire, signed a landmark 20-year power purchase agreement (PPA) with UTS to install, operate and maintain a 2.8 Megawatt (MW) fuel cell system, fueled primarily with renewable biogas, making it the largest unit of its kind in the world. The clean, efficient, renewable energy from the fuel cell system will provide power and thermal energy to IEUA's largest water recycling plant in Ontario, California.

"IEUA is very proud to augment its already successful renewable energy program with the addition of a combined heat and power fuel cell system" said Terry Catlin, IEUA's Board President. IEUA currently has 3.5 MW of solar power installed and 1 MW of wind power under design. Under the agreement, UTS will fund, design and construct the system, and maintain it over the duration of the contract term.

"The fuel cell allows IEUA to move closer to its strategic energy plan goal to go "Gridless by 2020" with almost no capital outlay by the Agency," said Catlin. "Our plan is to minimize IEUA's dependency on energy purchased from the grid, and to be able to operate completely off the grid during peak energy usage periods." Catlin continued. "Our staff is currently evaluating other renewable energy generation opportunities to reach the Agency's "Gridless" goal including a food waste-to-energy project as well as additional wind, solar and fuel cell generation."

IEUA will purchase power generated from the fuel cell plant at the agreed upon price over the next 20-years, and use the heat generated from the process to heat the biogas producing anaerobic digesters at the water recycling facility. The fuel cell plant is expected to be operational by late 2012.

Increasingly stringent emission permitting requirements by the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the local air pollution control agency, caused IEUA to evaluate alternatives to the existing biogas fueled internal-combustion engines used at their facilities. Fuel cells generate power and heat without combustion resulting in the generation of clean electricity. Due to the lack of combustion, the fuel cell emits virtually zero pollutants such as NO_x, SO_x, or particulate matter. The fuel cell electrical generation process is highly efficient which results in lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to combustion based power sources.

IEUA, formed in 1950, is a municipal water district located in western San Bernardino County, California. IEUA's mission is to supply imported drinking water, collect and treat wastewater, produce beneficially reusable compost and high quality recycled water to the 850,000 residents living within its 242-square miles service area. Shaping the Agency are the cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Fontana, Montclair, Ontario and Upland, as well as the Cucamonga Valley and Monte Vista Water Districts.