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Solar Energy Zone Plan Focus of Public Meetings in Washington, DC and Six Western States

WASHINGTON – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Secretary of Energy Steven Chu today announced a schedule of public meetings to gather comments on a comprehensive environmental analysis that has identified proposed ‘solar energy zones’ on public lands in the west most suitable for environmentally sound, utility-scale solar energy production.

The detailed study, known as the Draft Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, was compiled over the past two years as part of the Obama Administration’s efforts to create a framework for developing renewable energy in the right way and in the right places.

“Dialogue with the public is critical as we lay out the next phase of President Obama’s strategy for rapid and responsible development of renewable energy on America’s public lands,” Secretary Salazar said. “This comprehensive proposal and early planning is designed to help site solar projects in the right places and reduce conflicts and delays in developing our new energy economy.”

"By developing a smart and responsible strategy to expand the use of solar power on federal lands, we can grow our domestic solar industry and create jobs in this important sector," said Secretary Chu. "Expanding our use of renewable energy sources will help put our country on the path to a prosperous, sustainable energy future."

“The lessons learned from developing this Draft Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and the public input obtained during this crucial comment period will help make all solar development resulting from this process ‘Smart from the Start,’” said Bureau of Land Management Director Bob Abbey.

A Notice of Availability for the draft plan was published in the December 17, 2010 *Federal Register*, opening the 90-day public comment period. The Bureau of Land Management and Department of Energy will hold 13 public meetings, beginning with a

February 2 session in the Nation's Capital, to provide an overview of the document and the NEPA process and to take public comments at the following locations and times:

- Wednesday, February 2, 2011 at 1:00pm: Hilton Garden Inn Washington DC Downtown, 815 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005
- Monday, February 7, 2011 at 7:00pm: Imperial County Admin. Center, 940 W. Main Street, Suite 211, El Centro, CA 92243
- Tuesday, February 8, 2011 at 7:00pm: Hyatt Grand Champions Resort, 44-600 Indian Wells Lane, Indian Wells, CA 92210
- Tuesday, February 15, 2011 at 7:00pm: Ramada Las Vegas, 325 East Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89169
- Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 7:00pm: Esmeralda County School, 270 N. Euclid Avenue, Goldfield, NV 89013
- Thursday, February 17, 2011 at 7:00pm: Caliente Elementary School, 280 Lincoln Street, Caliente, NV 89008
- Tuesday, February 22, 2011 at 7:00pm: Hilton Sacramento Arden West, 2200 Harvard St., Sacramento, CA 95815
- Wednesday, February 23, 2011 at 7:00pm: Holiday Inn Express, 2700 Lenwood Road, Barstow, CA 92311
- Tuesday, March 1, 2011 at 7:00pm: Sheraton Crescent Hotel, 2620 W. Dunlap Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85021
- Wednesday, March 2, 2011 at 7:00pm: Pima Community College, 4905 E. Broadway, Building C, Room 105, Tucson, AZ 85709 (LOCATION TENTATIVE)
- Thursday, March 3, 2011 at 7:00pm: Hotel Encanto de Las Cruces, 705 S. Telshor Boulevard, Las Cruces, NM 88011
- Monday, March 7, 2011 at 7:00pm: San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center Education and Conference Center, 1921 Main Street, Alamosa, CO 81101
- Wednesday, March 9, 2011 at 7:00pm: Crystal Inn Hotel & Suites, 1575 West 200 North, Cedar City, UT 84720
- Thursday, March 10, 2011 at 7:00pm: Hampton Inn & Suites – Airport, 307 N. Admiral Byrd Road, Salt Lake City, UT 84116

The meeting site in each city will open one hour prior to the official start time of the scheduled public meeting, and will be closed after all individuals who wish to speak have been heard. Transcripts of public comments will be made.

Individuals may register to speak at a meeting in advance through the Solar PEIS project website (<http://solareis.anl.gov>), or may register during the hour prior to the public meeting. The public may also review maps and informational posters that will be on display. Additionally, computers for reviewing the project website or for submitting electronic comments will be available.

The Draft Solar Energy PEIS document and related maps and information are available online at the project website: <http://solareis.anl.gov>. Related maps are also available at <http://blm.gov/td5c>. Comments on the PEIS can be submitted through the project website (preferred method of submission), or written comments can be mailed to: Solar Energy Draft Programmatic EIS, Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 S. Cass Avenue – EVS/240, Argonne, Illinois 60439. All comments related to the draft must be postmarked or delivered by March 17, 2011.

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