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5 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND BUREAU  
OF LAND MANAGEMENT

6 SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

7

PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

8 (PEIS)

9 PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2011

12 BARSTOW, CALIFORNIA

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1           A P P E A R A N C E S

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C O N T E N T S

Public Scoping Meeting, 02/23/11

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1           P R O C E E D I N G S  
2           B A R S T O W , C A L I F O R N I A ; W E D N E S D A Y , F E B R U A R Y  
3 23, 2011, 7:33 P.M.

4           M S . C R A N E : Good evening. I'm Laura Crane,  
5 director of The Nature Conservancy's Renewable Energy  
6 and Desert Conservation Program in California.

7           And I'm pleased to be able to make comments  
8 on the Draft Solar Programmatic Impact Statement, PEIS,  
9 as Roxie said, as it affects the biodiversity and  
10 natural communities of the state.

11          The Conservancy has long supported increasing  
12 renewable energy. Solar energy development is part of  
13 the solution to the challenge of climate change through  
14 reduction of emissions from our use of fossil fuels and  
15 also in securing our Nation's energy independence.

16          However, if not located, built and operated  
17 responsibly, energy projects negatively impact  
18 biodiversity, harm wildlife and their habitats and  
19 diminish precious water resources, especially in  
20 fragile desert environments.

21          We believe it is possible to meet our  
22 renewable energy development goals while also  
23 protecting our desert plants, wildlife, ecosystems and  
24 water resources.

25          In order to achieve both, two factors matter

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1 greatly -- science and approach.

2       So, first, I'm going to discuss science. For  
3 over 50 years The Nature Conservancy has worked in  
4 California to preserve the plants, animals, and natural  
5 community that represents the diversity of life on  
6 Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to  
7 survive.

8       In particular, The Conservancy has expertise  
9 in conducting landscape-scale planning. Precisely the  
10 type of planning that can help inform wise renewable  
11 energy development.

12       In September of last year, The Nature  
13 Conservancy completed an eco-regional assessment of the  
14 Mojave Desert, which covers 31 million acres across  
15 parts of four states -- California, Nevada, Utah and  
16 Arizona. We have also completed a similar evaluation  
17 of the California Sonoran Desert.

18       These analyses concluded that the Mojave  
19 Desert and the California Sonoran are remarkable, not  
20 only because of the unique and diverse life they host,  
21 but also because they contain some of the most intact  
22 landscape in the lower 48 states.

23       Another striking conclusion was that BLM  
24 lands offer some of the most intact landscape,  
25 important wildlife corridors and ecological resources

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1 and represent significant conservation value.

2 In fact, close to half of the lands ranked as  
3 having the high-conservation value in the Mojave and  
4 the California Sonoran are under BLM management.

5 Giving these facts, BLM's preferred  
6 alternative would open up far too many acres of high-  
7 conservation value public lands, 22 million acres  
8 across the six states, and about 1.8 million acres in  
9 California alone.

10 In our state, this is roughly 13 times the  
11 138,000 acres BLM predicts will be needed to satisfy  
12 the 20-year demand for our utility scale solar power  
13 under California's aggressive renewable portfolio  
14 standards.

15 The more narrowly targeted solar energy zone  
16 alternative would open up almost 340,000 acres of  
17 California's desert public lands to solar development,  
18 still well more than double the needed acreage.

19 Which brings me to the next point I'd like to  
20 discuss: Approach. And I'll start with this simple  
21 statement: The approach that is used to develop solar  
22 energy on public lands matters a lot.

23 As someone who has been involved with and  
24 closely tracking renewable energy development in the  
25 California deserts over the last couple of

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1 years, I'd like to offer this observation:

2 Two years ago there were a million acres  
3 worth of applications for right-of-way permits to  
4 develop renewable energy just in the California deserts  
5 on public lands.

6 This is without a landscape-scale plan for  
7 how renewable energy should best be developed and which  
8 areas need to be conserved.

9 This situation did not benefit anyone. It  
10 certainly did not benefit the BLM and other permitting  
11 agencies which needed to process a massive number of  
12 applications with limited resources and under a tight  
13 timeline in an atmosphere that was often controversial.

14 Nor did it benefit the environmental groups  
15 who want to focus their resources on helping the best  
16 projects move forward while also protecting the most  
17 important conservation lands.

18 Finally, it didn't benefit the solar  
19 industries, not only because agency resources were  
20 stretched, but also because the overriding perception  
21 by desert stakeholders -- and there are many -- was  
22 that a massive and sprawling industrialization of our  
23 deserts was underway which meant inevitable challenges  
24 and costly delays.

25 So the initial stages of the solar

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1 development program on public lands has certainly not  
2 been easy or without pain. A key agency goal should be  
3 to reduce the tension and conflict.

4 In this case, less is truly more. By  
5 focusing on areas where projects have the greatest  
6 chance for success rather than wasting time and  
7 resources, BLM can ensure that good projects move  
8 forward, and our most critical areas of biodiversity  
9 are protected.

10 BLM should select the solar energy zone  
11 alternative to ensure that solar projects are built  
12 faster, cheaper, and in a manner that's better for the  
13 environment, developers and consumers.

14 And I have more to say, if there's more time  
15 later tonight.

16 --oOo--

17 MS. ESCALANTE: Good evening. My name is  
18 Linda Escalante. I'm here speaking on behalf of the  
19 National Resources Defense Counsel, known as NRDC.

20 NRDC is an international, nonprofit  
21 organization of scientists, lawyers, and environmental  
22 specialists dedicated to protecting public health and  
23 the environment with more than 1.5 -- 3 million  
24 members and online activists.

25 NRDC has a long history of protecting the

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1 Nation's federal lands, including those managed by BLM.  
2 And, in addition, we have a long history of advocating  
3 for energy efficiency and renewable energy to meet the  
4 Nation's needs -- energy needs while responding to the  
5 challenge of global warming.

6 I want to thank the Bureau of Land Management  
7 and the Department of Energy for their efforts in  
8 producing the Solar Programmatic EIS.

9 We strongly support the direction the  
10 agencies are headed with the development of a zone-  
11 based solar program.

12 Identifying appropriate zones for development  
13 is a much better way to approach solar energy than on a  
14 project-by-project basis.

15 This approach can help us avoid the mistakes  
16 of oil and gas development on public lands where we've  
17 ended up -- where we've ended up with projects  
18 scattered across the landscape in areas that are often  
19 severely damaging to wildlife -- I'm sorry -- wildlands  
20 and wildlife.

21 NRDC also firmly believes that to succeed  
22 with a guided-development approach, it is critical that  
23 development be limited to project-based selected zones.

24 The current preferred alternative in the PEIS  
25 will allow for development in zones. In addition --

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1 and, in addition, would open up an additional 22  
2 million acres for solar development.

3       The reasonable foreseeable development in  
4 areas within the PEIS project that will protect the  
5 demand and need for solar development will require a  
6 little over 200,000 acres. We do not believe that  
7 opening up an additional 22 million acres for  
8 development is justified under the scenario or is the  
9 right direction for solar energy development on our  
10 public lands.

11       The proposed acreage that would be open under  
12 the preferred alternative includes many lands that are  
13 completely inappropriate for solar development, thus  
14 defeating the purpose of the zone approach in the first  
15 place.

16       This includes areas, which have been  
17 proposed, wilderness areas, migration corridors, and  
18 important wildlife habitat.

19       It is clear to us that the preferred  
20 alternative would lead to continued uncertainty and  
21 conflict. It is almost certain to slow down rather  
22 than speed up our clean energy transition.

23       For this reason, we believe that BLM must  
24 select the solar energy zone alternative as the  
25 preferred alternative in the final PEIS.

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1 NRDC will be submitting detailed comments on  
2 the proposed energy zones in California, including  
3 recommendations for modifications to minimize resource  
4 conflicts.

5 We urge the BLM to remove the Pisgah and Iron  
6 Mountain zones from consideration.

7 We will be -- also be recommending that BLM  
8 consider lands identified by the conservation community  
9 in the West Mojave and Chocolate Mountain areas for  
10 potential solar development. These lands, to date,  
11 have not been evaluated in the PEIS.

12 In closing, I'd like to thank the BLM for  
13 undertaking the solar PEIS effort and to reiterate our  
14 strong belief that this program can only be successful  
15 if the BLM chooses the solar energy zones program as  
16 the preferred alternative in the final PEIS.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

18 --oOo--

19 MR. BROWN: Good evening. I'm Brian Brown, a  
20 resource advocate for the Amargosa Conservancy, a local  
21 nonprofit devoted to preserving the lands, waters and  
22 beauty of the Amargosa region.

23 Our bi-state area of interest is roughly  
24 defined by the extent of the Amargosa River drainage  
25 extending north -- from north of Beatty, Nevada, to

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1 Badwater in Death Valley National Park here in  
2 California.

3 And while we're heavily focused on the  
4 conservation of the region's water and land resources,  
5 we also support compatible human uses of those  
6 resources and local economic enterprise, which is  
7 principally founded on tourism now.

8 I also own and operate a small date farm,  
9 China Ranch, on a desert oasis that is wholly dependent  
10 upon flowing groundwater.

11 The Amargosa Conservancy does support a major  
12 increase in the proper siting and use of solar and  
13 other renewable energy generating technologies to  
14 replace fossil fuels.

15 We believe that unless greenhouse gases are  
16 significantly reduced our southwest deserts may  
17 experience an even more arid climate and a less  
18 hospitable environment for all life dependent on the  
19 Amargosa's scarce water supplies, including its small  
20 human communities.

21 However, we have several serious initial  
22 concerns about the content of the draft solar  
23 programmatic -- the draft PEIS.

24 I would like to report that I have read and  
25 understood all of its contents, but it's a massive

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1 document -- 11,000 pages. If you read a hundred pages  
2 a day for the entire 90-day comment period, you'd be up  
3 to 9,000 pages.

4 And more important, it's somewhat -- it's  
5 somewhat confusing exactly how the BLM intends it will  
6 apply to public land use for the solar plants in the  
7 Mojave Desert.

8 A couple of things, however, are clear to us.  
9 First, BLM's preferred alternative would open up far  
10 too large -- too much acreage, much of it with high  
11 ecological resource values -- over nine and a half  
12 million acres in Nevada, and almost 1.8 million acres  
13 in California.

14 Such an expansive change in land use is  
15 clearly not warranted. For example, the BLM's estimate  
16 of the reasonably foreseeable --

17 The first two speakers went through these  
18 numbers, so I'm not going to go through them again.  
19 But it's -- it's troubling.

20 Opening public lands beyond the SEZ would, in  
21 addition -- will be in addition to the ample public  
22 lands already committed to solar plant applicants  
23 outside of those zones.

24 BLM's preferred alternative would include  
25 many more times the most generous estimates of needed

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1 area and is simply irresponsible and patently

2 unreasonable.

3 The likely result is solar-generated

4 facilities scattered throughout the Mojave Desert

5 resulting in undue harm to natural and human

6 communities and cultural and scenic values.

7 In the Amargosa region, we have been unable

8 to assess with adequate specificity the additional

9 public lands that would be made available under the

10 preferred alternative. It's difficult to -- to work

11 with these maps, we found, in some regard.

12 However, it does appear from the map in the

13 PEIS that almost all significant acreage of public

14 lands in both California and Nevada, in the Amargosa

15 drainage, outside of wilderness areas and other

16 reserved lands would be open for such development.

17 We oppose this, since the agency has done no

18 detailed analysis of the ecological, cultural or scenic

19 values of these lands. Many of these lands are

20 adjacent to wilderness, areas of critical environmental

21 concern, and ecologically critical areas, such as the

22 Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.

23 Wild and untrammeled expanses of desert

24 scenery, such as the Silurian Valley, would be

25 potentially converted to industrial zones, losing their

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1 intrinsic scenic resources.

2 And one of our major concerns is water. The  
3 well-known problem of associating specific water  
4 withdrawals with long-term adverse effects in other  
5 locations, some distant, especially in arid areas with  
6 complex subsurface geology, warrants adoption of very  
7 stringent rules about water usage.

8 And the PEIS should be the vehicle in which  
9 these restrictions on water use be discussed and  
10 resolved for desert utility scale solar projects with  
11 special attention to the multi-state region like the  
12 Amargosa.

13 We are especially concerned that the BLM's  
14 rules for project applications across state borders  
15 will be inconsistent, resulting in adverse effects on  
16 the delicate groundwater-dependent ecosystem.

17 It is clear that deciding these issues on a  
18 case-by-case basis risks wildly different results with  
19 unacceptable adverse cumulative impacts which will then  
20 lead to almost certain challenges and litigation,  
21 risking long delays in the implementation of these  
22 projects.

23 I have more that I can submit, perhaps, to  
24 the court lady.

25 I want to thank you for the opportunity to

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1 speak tonight. And I look forward to resolving these  
2 things favorably. These are important issues.

3 --oOo--

4 CHARLES WOOD: Good evening. I'm Charles  
5 Wood, the chairman of Chemehuevi Indian Tribe.

6 First of all, I'd like to echo the comments  
7 of three speakers already. They've pretty much covered  
8 everything I was going to cover.

9 There are some other things, though, for  
10 tribes, in particular. In looking at the -- the  
11 corridors and the zones, it seems that tribes have been  
12 neglected.

13 And when I first came, I was encouraged to  
14 see the -- the corridor did include Chemehuevi. But  
15 when Karen and I started investigating, it's not on the  
16 maps that she was pulling up, and so we're kind of back  
17 into the same quandary again for tribes.

18 There are things that are a concern for us  
19 that have been mentioned already -- habitat, issues and  
20 things, Iron Mountain, Riverside East, which is the  
21 Blythe area, the giant intaglios, which my tribe was  
22 sworn to protect.

23 You know, the vast track of those now are  
24 endangering some of those intaglios, tortoise habitat,  
25 Pisgah, again another very critical area to Chemehuevi.

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1           So the zones and the corridors, I think, you  
2 know, they're controversial. And if they were directed  
3 back towards tribes, maybe a little bit, tribes are  
4 looking for those types of projects. It would bring  
5 employment and economic development to the reservation,  
6 you know, which are critical to us.

7           Some of the other things that are concerning  
8 to us are the amounts of land that are being talked  
9 about -- thousands of acres. And our concern is, do  
10 the water rights go along with those?

11          You know, are these projects really projects  
12 for solar, or are they water grabs? Will someone be in  
13 control of that land and then take the water rights?

14          And with the condition of the river, you  
15 know, what we're seeing is people are now trying to  
16 take the water before it gets to us, so they're going  
17 to take it out of the watershed.

18          Issues like mass and multiple development --  
19 Ivanpah Valley, for instance, they want to build an  
20 international airport. They want to widen that  
21 freeway. They want to build new power lines.

22          Well, now they're adding three solar projects  
23 into that same area. Again, where's the water going to  
24 come from?

25          And the congestion -- if you're going to

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1 build an airport, in ten years there will be a city  
2 around it. Where is all that water going to be coming  
3 from? And the destruction of the habitat.

4 I noticed that in the corroborating agencies  
5 the Bureau of Indian Affairs wasn't on there, and, you  
6 know, they would be speaking on my behalf -- or  
7 hopefully they would be speaking on my behalf.

8 And the last note I have was with just the  
9 broad oversight again. You know, that agencies are  
10 going to be looking at the broad oversight, not at  
11 particular projects. And as these projects start  
12 mounting and turning into others, suddenly we're in  
13 that situation of Ivanpah Valley, where you've got this  
14 massive development going on.

15 Like the gentleman just now said, you know,  
16 suddenly we're looking at, you know, industrialization  
17 of the whole, you know, the desert floor.

18 For Indian people this is all pretty  
19 intrinsic to us. You mentioned Ash Meadows, Phillip,  
20 my cousin, and I, our great, great grandmother was born  
21 in Ash Meadows, so a lot of these places have -- have a  
22 far more personal effect to us than -- than somebody  
23 who's, you know, going to come over on the boats, so to  
24 speak, whenever that might have been.

25 So, you know, it's a more personal issue to

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1 us, you know, in a lot of ways, because those are  
2 family places. Those are places that we still go to  
3 today.

4       You don't see us out there, but we're out  
5 there, and we go back to those places still to reclaim  
6 our heritage and our right and place upon the land.

7       I want to thank you. You know, by no means  
8 are we trying to stand in the way of solar. You know,  
9 we encourage it. We encourage it for ourselves.

10       We'd like to see some of these development  
11 opportunities coming our way.

12       Thank you.

13       --oOo--

14       MS. WILEY: My name is Carol Wiley. I'm from  
15 Victorville. I'm a member of The Mojave Group, The  
16 Sierra Club, but my comments tonight are my own, as a  
17 43-year resident of the Mojave Desert.

18       I just have a few comments, as I plan to do a  
19 more detailed submission later on.

20       It seems to me that the cart has been put  
21 before the horse on siting energy projects. Energy  
22 zones should have been determined before siting  
23 inappropriate projects like Ivanpah and Calico.

24       The rush to approve energy projects has  
25 caused inadequate studies on the impacts of habitat of

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1 desert wildlife and plants, putting projects in  
2 pristine desert areas and in cultural sites.

3       It also appears that not enough study has  
4 been done on the operations of the projects themselves.

5       It would be tragic to see huge pieces of  
6 desert ruined for projects that were not viable,  
7 leaving ghost-town-like blight across the desert.

8       I urge the choice of the solar energy zone  
9 program alternative, but without the inclusion of Iron  
10 Mountain and Pisgah zones, due to the significant  
11 impact on wilderness and threatened and endangered  
12 species, such as the desert tortoise.

13       When siting these projects, considerable  
14 attention should be placed on locating on disturbed  
15 sites, projects close to use destinations, and  
16 proximity to existing transmission corridors.

17       We must be smart about siting solar projects  
18 in appropriate areas, while protecting desert resources  
19 and choosing the best technology available and viable  
20 solar companies or there will be much irreparable  
21 damage done to the desert ecosystem.

22       We do need solar, so let's do it right.

23       --oOo--

24       MS. SHRIMPLIN: Thank you so much. I want to  
25 thank all of you for allowing for this public speaking

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1 on the issues.

2 My name is Charlie Shrimplin. I am a  
3 resident of the Mojave National Preserve with my  
4 partner Craig Genovese.

5 We have had the land for about 15 years right  
6 there smack dab in the middle of the Mojave National  
7 Preserve.

8 We came from the midwest. I'm a farmer's  
9 daughter, which I divulged that information at one of  
10 our last meetings. And growing up, being a farm kid in  
11 western Kansas, coming out to the Mojave, it was a  
12 great leap.

13 It is beautiful out there, the solitude. The  
14 differences between western Kansas and the Mojave are  
15 the mountains are much bigger.

16 The reason why I wanted to speak just for a  
17 second tonight was, as a resident of Mojave, just to  
18 talk about, as a person living out in the middle of the  
19 Mojave National Preserve in the Mojave Desert day in  
20 and day out, what kind of beauty I get to experience as  
21 I'm doing the dishes looking out my window or having to  
22 go outside to feed the birds and getting to see coyotes  
23 and mule deer and hawks, golden eagles, quail, lizards  
24 -- having breakfast with little lizards scampering  
25 across my deck and everything.

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1           We live off the grid out there in the Mojave,  
2 so we live day in and day out with what the  
3 implications of using renewable resources and not using  
4 renewable resources.

5           We do have to use some fossil energy as well  
6 getting to and from town, and we do use some propane,  
7 but we do live off the grid.

8           And so, in my heart, renewable energy is the  
9 way to go. It is wonderful. But the realities of it  
10 and what we have experienced living out here in the  
11 Mojave -- and then in my childhood we were also  
12 building a home of renewable energy sources -- is that  
13 it's complicated. It does take a lot of work.

14          And I would like to say, along with all the  
15 other groups that have spoken prior to myself, that  
16 they're very correct in the issues of -- that there  
17 does need to be a lot of studies and taking many things  
18 into consideration.

19          For my family that gets to live out in the  
20 Mojave, we get to reap the benefit that there was  
21 wisdom in setting aside areas of wilderness and  
22 beautiful land so we could appreciate the beauty of  
23 Mojave and the ancient aspects of the Mojave and that  
24 it is not getting destroyed.

25          So I would please encourage and ask that all

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1 groups do look at all the issues and reduce the damage  
2 to this delicate area to reduce the chance of  
3 destroying it as much as possible.

4 So thank you so much.

5 --oOo--

6 MR. COFFEY: Good evening. I'd like to thank  
7 the BLM for this subsequent opportunity to speak.  
8 They've heard from me before, so anything I say today  
9 is not going to be new to them.

10 My name is John Coffey, C-o-f-f-e-y. I live  
11 in Yermo. I'm a member of helphinkley.org, and I was  
12 specifically requested to come here tonight by The  
13 Defenders of Wildlife, of which I am an ardent  
14 supporter.

15 I've lived here since 1995. I came from San  
16 Diego. The relocation has been a good one. I lived in  
17 the east part of Hinkley for a while and then moved to  
18 the edge of Yermo, Newberry Springs. And my friend  
19 said, why did you bother? Because there isn't a whole  
20 lot of difference between the two.

21 I've been the veteran of the litigation  
22 involving the bio solvents with helphinkley.org. And  
23 so far we haven't lost one yet. We've had to take on  
24 the Mojave Desert Air Quality Control District, and  
25 they haven't come back for more.

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1           The County of San Bernardino owes the  
2 organization \$265,000 in court costs and attorneys'  
3 fees, and we haven't seen the check yet.

4           But we also haven't seen 400,000 tons of  
5 sludge dumped in Hinkley to dry out and blow away in  
6 the name of recycling.

7           The reason I mention these other issues and  
8 the -- and there are a lot of other issues -- we've all  
9 seen and survived the rail cycle -- send people to jail  
10 that deserve to go to jail. There's probably twice as  
11 many more that should have gone and didn't.

12          We are under attack here in the desert. The  
13 residents are justifiably concerned and nervous by all  
14 of this sudden rush to develop what we have been  
15 enjoying in relative peace and quiet for some of us for  
16 a few years and for many more of us, perhaps, as long  
17 as 250,000 years, if you go out to the Calico Early Man  
18 Site.

19          We would like to preserve as much as possible  
20 our unique way of life and our treasures. And, indeed,  
21 the current state of laws requires it, the Endangered  
22 Species Act.

23          There are five endangered species in the  
24 Calico Project. There's probably that many if you go  
25 and look at all the areas that are projected for

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1 development.

2 I'm not entirely against this development. I  
3 think you can do whatever you want to do down there in  
4 New River, near the Mexican border. I think that's  
5 fine. That seems to be already disturbed agricultural  
6 land and pretty much abandoned by other folks for other  
7 purposes, so I feel that that is probably, of the sites  
8 mentioned, the most amenable to development.

9 The others are absolutely God awful. One  
10 reason we are so concerned is what is happened with BLM  
11 with the Tessera Calico project, also known as  
12 Hindenburg II.

13 Remember they wanted to have 29,000 pounds of  
14 compressed hydrogen gas sitting next to a freeway and a  
15 railroad track, and have these -- these things that  
16 would move heat from one part of the desert to stirling  
17 engines located somewhere else. It was a nightmare.

18 I'm going, am I the only one that's watched  
19 the old news reels about the Hindenburg? You know,  
20 hydrogen under pressure in 117 degrees in the summer  
21 and 40-mile-an-hour wind to blow whatever didn't burn  
22 right there elsewhere to burn elsewhere.

23 I want to -- I want to congratulate and thank  
24 the previous speakers because they have mentioned and  
25 brought to the front most of what I wanted to say and

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1 bring to the BLM's attention.

2 Except for one thing, the BLM has failed and  
3 refused to meet its statutory obligations to speak to  
4 the Native American communities and their authorized  
5 representatives. This is a matter of public record in  
6 the litigation. You didn't even bother to talk to  
7 these people.

8 There are 459 items of cultural significance,  
9 and you didn't even bother to talk to them. Even the  
10 federal judge figured that out. I guess he had a good  
11 clerk that probably told him this.

12 The position of the BLM, as far as the  
13 Tessera Calico, is just alarming. Oh, we got some  
14 conservancy land we'll throw in too. Somebody gave us  
15 the land a long time ago to -- you know, to take care  
16 of and protect endangered species and for people to  
17 enjoy. Oh, we'll let you build this hydrogen thing on  
18 there too.

19 Thousands of acres of donated land went right  
20 out the window with Mr. Salazar's signature. Not out  
21 the window, kind of like out into Tessera's backyard.

22 The way the private property owners have been  
23 treated out on the -- on that -- it's adjacent to that  
24 proposed project. They've been locked out. They  
25 bought -- they talked the railroad into putting up a

00027

1 private gate with a lock on it, and all -- about 50  
2 private property owners are just locked out. And that  
3 was okay with BLM. They didn't have a problem with  
4 that.

5 California Energy Commission, one of your  
6 proconspir-- I mean, fellow co-operators, they didn't  
7 have a problem with that.

8 Just one last point, please. To make it show  
9 how bad this project was, Tessera did not have an  
10 agreement with the railroad to go over their right-of-  
11 way. It didn't happen.

12 And the California Energy Commission approved  
13 the project. And there's the BLM folks going, yeah.  
14 That sounds good. You don't have a real agreement and  
15 there's no technology that's proven this, but go ahead  
16 and build it anyway.

17 That's what our Native American friends are  
18 concerned about. That's what Brian Brown is concerned  
19 about. That's what all the other speakers have been  
20 concerned about. It's the snake-oil salesman, slash  
21 and burn.

22 Let's get some federal stimulus money out  
23 here, and then we'll all go home, and we leave people  
24 like our friends off the grid and our Native American  
25 neighbors, and we'll let them try and pick up the

00028

1 pieces.

2 Well, that's why they have federal courts,  
3 ma'am. I've seen the BLM there before, and I feel like  
4 I'll be seeing them there again.

5 Thank you.

6 --oOo--

7 MR. MALONE: Good evening. I'm Tony Malone.  
8 I'm a long-time resident of the High Desert and a  
9 member of the Sierra Club, although I'm not  
10 representing the Sierra Club tonight.

11 I've recently retired from the Mojave Desert  
12 Air Quality Management District -- thank you -- and the  
13 Lucerne Valley Municipal Advisory Counsel, which I was  
14 part of for about 20 years, and I teach renewable  
15 energy at the Victor Valley College, so you might say I  
16 represent the students who are trying to get  
17 employment.

18 One question I may ask -- one question I ask  
19 my students is, what is the difference between a desert  
20 tortoise and a turtle? They usually give me the  
21 obvious answers. But my answer is between 1.5 and 5  
22 million dollars a piece.

23 Now, these are not my figures. They are the  
24 values placed on the desert tortoise by the United  
25 States Fish & Wildlife Service, which I don't see here

00029

1 tonight.

2 Is there anybody from the Fish & Wildlife

3 Services? Oh, man.

4 And in their control plan for the Calico

5 solar project, you'd think that they'd just entered the

6 Cash Cab and were asked a question, how much money do

7 you want? That's the way I feel about it.

8 I get a laugh from my students, but I'm sure

9 Tessera and other developers of solar and wind

10 technology don't think this is much of a joke.

11 In this desert, tortoises walk miles in

12 search of the hottest, most isolated place they can

13 find away from possible predators and from human

14 interaction.

15 For thousands of years, an area like the

16 Pisgah region offered these tortoises the safe homes

17 they needed to survive.

18 Now that man is encroaching on their habitat

19 with tanks, trucks, homes -- and these homes feed

20 coyotes with cats and small dogs, as well as providing

21 revenue -- I'm sorry -- ravens with carrion and dog

22 food. I know that. That's a fact.

23 Man has changed the safe environment of the

24 tortoise to one of eminent danger. There's no question

25 about it. The more people we have in this area, the

00030

1 desert tortoise is doomed.

2       There's so much eminent danger that the  
3 desert tortoise is doomed to extinction if man keeps  
4 expanding their cities into the deserts of California.  
5 No question about it.

6       This is why I support Dianne Feinstein's  
7 Desert Protection Act. Not only will it protect our  
8 deserts by literally drawing a line in the sand, but  
9 generations from now it -- we will be able to enjoy  
10 this beautiful desert.

11       My complaint is with the process that was, in  
12 my opinion, mishandled by the BLM and U.S. Fish &  
13 Wildlife Service.

14       The BLM opened the region for permits to  
15 install these solar projects without regard to the  
16 tortoise, the fringed-toed lizard, rare plants and  
17 desert stream beds. They -- they stopped giving  
18 consideration to new projects when they reached the  
19 magic number of 150.

20       The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service wanted --  
21 waited for years until these projects were almost  
22 shovel ready with the equipment, suppliers and  
23 manufacturing facilities standing by for final  
24 approval. Then they gave Tessera, Bright Source and  
25 other companies the bad news. They needed millions of

00031

1 dollars to fund the removal of a few desert tortoises -  
2 - five desert tortoises in the Pisgah region. That's  
3 incredible -- and implement raven control.

4       You know, that -- you know, and this is  
5 something that man has put forth.

6       People, we have a really big problem. And  
7 this is one that's coming on our horizon. And this  
8 problem is that Lake Mead is almost out of water -- a  
9 lot of people aren't paying attention to that. Boy,  
10 that's a big one -- and in a few years will not be able  
11 to supply sufficient water to generate electricity for  
12 Hoover Dam. That's a big one.

13       This is one gigawatt of energy -- that is --  
14 that is distributed only to southern California. The  
15 other gigawatt gets sent -- goes to the other states.

16       The Calico project would have supplied 75  
17 percent of that energy during the day when we use it  
18 most.

19       Without this energy, what about electric cars  
20 and plug-in hybrids? What about our future? How will  
21 we obtain energy to replace gasoline-powered vehicles  
22 without this source of energy?

23       Are we dooming ourselves? Is the constant  
24 turmoil in the Middle East going to continue to drive  
25 our economy?

00032

1           How about the 700 jobs that the Calico  
2 project would have supplied to an area hard hit by the  
3 current recession, not to mention the fact that it was  
4 95 percent American-made equipment being installed  
5 there.

6           By the way, that hydrogen escapes at a  
7 velocity of 35 miles an hour, and it goes straight up.  
8 So I wouldn't worry about hydrogen if I were you, and  
9 there's so little of it.

10          You know, this process isn't fair to Tessera,  
11 Bright Source or the communities of the High Desert  
12 that rely on jobs and those cities that rely on a  
13 reliable source of power. It isn't fair to the BLM.  
14 It isn't fair to any of the other people that have been  
15 working on it, including the AQMD. It isn't fair to  
16 any of us the way this was handled.

17          This is a really good way of looking at what  
18 went wrong. Okay? And I hope that -- you know, I know  
19 this needs fixing, and I hope that we can do this.

20          I'm out of time. Okay. Thank you.

21          --oOo--

22          MR. LAMFROM: I'm David Lamfrom from NPCA,  
23 510-235.

24          Before I start with my comments, I just want  
25 to take a moment to present some thoughts.

00033

1 I've traveled around, and I've talked a lot  
2 about renewable energy with a lot of folks, and a lot  
3 of folks in a lot of other places don't really  
4 understand why there's any issue with using desert land  
5 for renewable energy.

6 I think for a lot of people the desert is  
7 hard to digest. It's rugged. It's rough. It's  
8 extremely hot or cold. You -- you might not know that  
9 you've been in the desert unless you've got sunburned  
10 and snowburned in the same day. That's the nature of  
11 where we live.

12 And that nature for a very long time has  
13 protected where we live. And the Mojave contains many  
14 of the most remarkable landscapes on Earth, many of the  
15 most truly connected landscapes on this Earth.

16 What I've noticed tonight is that the one  
17 thing I'm not seeing here is trust. And I think that's  
18 something that we have to think about how we repair.

19 I don't see people with trust in public  
20 agencies. I don't see people trusting the process.

21 And I think that beyond the specifics in the  
22 PEIS, that's part of where we've really gone wrong is  
23 that we haven't done this in a thoughtful-enough,  
24 inclusive-enough way.

25 That is our challenge, and I think that

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1 that's a challenge not just for agencies, but for  
2 everybody in this room and for all the people you talk  
3 to.

4 In looking at changes this grand, to think  
5 that there are 40 people in a room, I don't -- I don't  
6 think that this process is truly inclusive enough. I  
7 would like to see -- I think if people really  
8 understood the nature of the change, the sizes, the  
9 process, I think that things would be different. And  
10 with that, I'll go into my specific comments.

11 NPCA is supportive of the -- of the zones  
12 alternative. We recognize that work is needed to  
13 reduce conflict in specific zones.

14 Iron Mountain and Pisgah contain remarkable  
15 natural and cultural resources which deserve  
16 protection. Riverside East has significant acreage  
17 adjacent to Joshua Tree National Park.

18 We continue to voice our concern about  
19 compromising our investments in national parks when  
20 better alternatives exist.

21 We ask that the Riverside East Pisgah be re-  
22 configured to avoid compromising value of Joshua Tree  
23 National Park.

24 We support not pursuing the opening of 22  
25 million acres. Lands found to be appropriate to solar

00035

1 development should warrant the creation of new zones,  
2 and these zones should be subject to environmental  
3 review and public comment.

4       These zones present an excellent opportunity  
5 for public/private partnership between landowners,  
6 counties and the federal government. We must ensure  
7 that incentives are equitable to individual landowners  
8 to ensure we capture the best locations for development  
9 while protecting the best places for conservation.

10       Large-scale solar projects can be water  
11 intensive. This is a major concern, especially in  
12 locations that are already over allocated or have major  
13 natural or cultural resources associated with water  
14 flow and ground water.

15       An example of this is the Amargosa Valley in  
16 southwest Nevada. Any drop to the water table could  
17 drive the Devil's Hole Pupfish to extinction.

18       Ash Meadows is the largest wetland in the  
19 Mojave Desert. It gives life to more species found  
20 only there than any other place in the continental U.S.

21       It is imperative that we offset the worse  
22 effects of climate change through a responsible  
23 production of solar power.

24       Projects will get off the ground faster if  
25 they're placed in the lowest conflict areas possible.

00036

1 The cost will be less, as -- I'm sorry. The cost will  
2 be less as well because, in many cases, litigation will  
3 not slow or stop the process, and mitigation will be  
4 less costly.

5 We must also be smart about how and where we  
6 site transmission corridors as these soft landscapes  
7 can fragment habitats into biological islands.

8 Finally, we must do a better job of  
9 consulting with Native American nations. All legal  
10 compliance must occur, and we should be thoughtful  
11 about building relationships that help build trust with  
12 our first Americans, rather than compromise the little  
13 trust we have.

14 ELI's recent internal-guidance memos to BLM  
15 are a good first step at identifying conflict zones and  
16 helping industry site in the right places.

17 We want to see more leadership like this to  
18 help us get to where we need to be without sacrificing  
19 the best of what we have left.

20 Thank you very much.

21 --oOo--

22 MR. BANIS: My name is Randy Banis, B-a-n-i-  
23 s. I'm the editor of deathvalley.com, a website about  
24 Death Valley. I also represent the public at large on  
25 the Desert Advisory Counsel of the Bureau of Land

00037

1 Management.

2 I'd like to speak today regarding recreation  
3 and the impacts on the recreation through the plan.

4 What I'd like to speak about is the impacts  
5 to recreation. You've ignored the possible impacts of  
6 the acquisition and protection of compensatory habitat.  
7 You only analyze the effects on recreation directly  
8 where the projects are sited.

9 Places that will be acquired and set aside as  
10 compensatory habitat will likely be restrictive or will  
11 likely be places that had considerable conservation  
12 opportunity. Those places are regularly used by people  
13 who enjoy the desert for recreation.

14 Those recreation activities may be motorized  
15 -- motor dependent or non-motor dependent. These are  
16 activities such as back-country touring, bicycling,  
17 camping, collecting and trapping, cultural site  
18 stewardship, educational enrichment, equestrian  
19 staging, gem and mineral collecting, hunting, model  
20 rocketry, even dog mushing and carting. Yes.

21 There's general OHV driving, and OH- -- and  
22 four-wheel drive touring, picnicking and photographs,  
23 rock climbing, solitude seeking, spiritual renewal.

24 All of these activities have -- can have a  
25 motor-dependent aspect to it.

00038

1           Our concern is that lands that are acquired  
2 and protected as compensatory habitat allow and  
3 recognize the designated motorized route network that  
4 is, in effect, on the ground.

5           And, therefore, I support the smaller solar  
6 energy zone program alternative.

7           Thank you.

8           --oOo--

9           MR. SMITH: I'm Phillip Smith. I'm a member  
10 of the Colorado River Indian Tribe, Parker, Arizona.  
11 But I don't speak on behalf of the tribe. I'm speaking  
12 on my concerns.

13          I'm concerned about the Ivanpah area because  
14 that's where our family came from. Charles talked  
15 about of Ash Meadows and all those areas. And I  
16 believe the place was Barwell at one time where our  
17 fathers were born, and then they moved to Piute  
18 Springs.

19          I noticed that the project at Ivanpah -- I've  
20 been there several times -- quite a few times. There  
21 is sacred sites out there and nearby -- nearby sites.

22          And I think the studies that BLM has been  
23 using have come out of books that have been written a  
24 long time ago, probably by David Earl, Art Johnson and  
25 Paul Dale, and Dr. Beam from Palm Springs, and the late

00039

1 Clairbet Lair.

2 I've seen the same things written down, but  
3 there's more than just that to that. If -- anyhow, I  
4 kind of learned that there's more to it. It's not --  
5 it's not written down in there.

6 I think that's what you guys are relaying to  
7 -- or the BLM studies are.

8 Very disappointed that we have been delect --  
9 there has never been -- we have never been notified  
10 there -- the government. There's never been a monitor  
11 -- an Indian monitor in these areas there in the  
12 studies.

13 Other projects that were put out -- that were  
14 done years and years ago, there were monitors put out  
15 by the company. But the solar companies seem not --  
16 they bypass us.

17 I can understand why they bypass us because  
18 they're funding in what you call fast track. If you go  
19 with an Indian study, it's going to stall. They've got  
20 to use this money before a deadline or lose that  
21 funding. So it's a fast-track project.

22 And what I heard tonight already -- a lot of  
23 it's already been mentioned or talked about. I would  
24 think that you may not think that we're still out in  
25 these deserts. This is where we came from. We came

00040

1 from the desert, but we were taken out of the desert by  
2 the government, and we were put on these reservations  
3 far -- somewhere else, not where we really belong at.  
4 We were taken to the boarding school, and our parents  
5 were taken to the boarding schools.

6 And a lot of these cultures were lost, so  
7 it's kind of hard to come back and backtrack these  
8 things, but we are gaining them back, putting them back  
9 to us. These lands do mean things to us.

10 And I would say Ivanpah -- I seen what you  
11 have here is -- you're trying to avoid the -- the  
12 pristine areas and protect the endangered species.  
13 That's not done at Ivanpah, not where the project is  
14 at.

15 The turtles are taken out of there the wrong  
16 time of the year. They're pulled out from their hole  
17 the wrong time of year. The babies are still there.  
18 They're gone for good.

19 The sickness, the illness that the -- you  
20 claim that some of these turtles have, you probably  
21 gave it to them. I -- I don't know what your true  
22 story is, the people that pulled the turtles out.

23 And somebody mentioned about it cost millions  
24 of dollars for five turtles, or something like this.  
25 The turtle specialist at Ivanpah, that I understood,

00041

1 was \$8,000 a day. That's what her wages are. Man,  
2 that's more than I ever make in two or three years.

3 And a specialist? I was out there. One of  
4 the Fort Mojave guys told me that, hey, Phil, this lady  
5 is having problems finding these turtles. She don't  
6 understand how to really get them or find them.  
7 Chemehuevis did that. Why don't you explain it. I  
8 did, in a way. But I'm sorry. I didn't know who she  
9 was. She's getting \$8,000. I don't get nothing.

10 But I didn't need to take no studies either.  
11 I didn't spend years and years going to university or  
12 college. It's in us. It's with us. It's been passed  
13 down from years -- thousands of years it's passed down,  
14 a lot of these things.

15 But these turtles, they took them to the  
16 Mojave National Preserve in a holding pen. What do  
17 they feed them out there? I've been -- I still don't  
18 know what they feed them out there. What are they  
19 eating?

20 Because we did studies there in Primm a year  
21 ago on a proposed airport for Las Vegas. And we had  
22 elders from Pahrump. He identified plants which the  
23 turtles eat, what keeps them going, keeps them alive.

24 I don't think -- I still don't -- it puzzles  
25 me. What are these guys feeding these turtles?

00042

1 Certainly it ain't certain plants that they need.

2 That's the most -- one of the things that  
3 bothers me today. Protected species, are they?

4 If they left the desert today as -- as I saw  
5 -- when I was young, it was a nice desert. But today  
6 it's crisscrossed with -- what? -- roads, highways,  
7 trains, underground cables, power lines, and all this  
8 and that.

9 Pristine desert? I mean, it's not the desert  
10 I used to know when I was a kid. And it's getting  
11 worse. Industrial desert? That's even worse. I don't  
12 know what to expect beyond that.

13 But I do realize that all of these things,  
14 like the power from dams years and years ago built by  
15 the river by our government, all the power went to the  
16 other side of the mountain when I'm living down this  
17 way. We don't get no power.

18 They build the aqueduct, take our river from  
19 -- our water from our river on the other side of the  
20 mountain. We don't even have water rights. I mean,  
21 the local cities -- the tribes do, the few of what's  
22 left. It all goes that way.

23 It seems like -- then they wanted to put a  
24 nuclear waste dump near Needles years ago. We fought  
25 that. We fought it. I'm one of the warriors that

00043

1 fought that. We fought it off because of the danger  
2 stuff they put in the desert, go down to the aquifer.

3 That's not only that too, but what about  
4 above-ground testing of atomic bombs in the 1950s and  
5 all that stuff fell down to the ground.

6 One valley they found tritium way down  
7 below. Where did it come from? That's when the county  
8 scientists were out there, and they wouldn't say  
9 nothing for a long, long time. It came from a bomb in  
10 1950s.

11 Tritium blew down all over the desert. That's  
12 probably why the desert turtles are dying because  
13 they've been around for 90 million years.

14 Nobody can't figure out -- and the thing is,  
15 I didn't understand why they moved these things too  
16 because I went to a turtle meeting on time, a special  
17 event, all the scientists and all of them throughout  
18 the nation went there.

19 But years and years of study -- and I only  
20 went back to 1920 or up to the present day, anyway --  
21 they said, and we still don't understand the desert  
22 turtle.

23 That's why I didn't understand why they would  
24 ease up.

25 My time's up. Sorry.

00044

1 --oOo--

2 MR. MADRIGAL: Good evening. My name is  
3 Anthony Madrigal. I'm the cultural resources director  
4 for the San Manuel Bands of Mission Indians.

5 You know, as Mr. Smith, who just spoke, and  
6 Charles Wood of Chemehuevi who spoke and -- you know,  
7 they made the point that desert lands are going to be  
8 affected or are impacted by all these renewable energy  
9 projects are, you know -- are our lands and places,  
10 places that Indian people still have a close spiritual  
11 relationship with. You know, they -- you heard them  
12 talk about their relationship with -- with the lands  
13 today.

14 And there are Indian people who go pray, do  
15 ceremonies, gather plants. There are places that are  
16 really very special for Indian people.

17 I'm Cahuilla myself. The San Manuel Band are  
18 Serrano people. The Chemehuevi, the Mojave, all desert  
19 people who still have this very close spiritual  
20 relationship. You know, there are places where their  
21 ancestors lived, where there are burials, very special  
22 places.

23 And, you know, the -- one of the problems has  
24 been, as several of the speakers have alluded to, this  
25 has all come too fast. Cultural resources are not --

00045

1 are usually not considered or they're the last to be  
2 considered.

3       You know, we have the biological. We have  
4 the environment. But, you know, what happens to the  
5 cultural resources?

6       The consultation with the Indian people has  
7 either not taken place or it's inadequate. You know, I  
8 noted the -- the plan that's put forth puts forward the  
9 SEZ, the energy zones to be developed, which I believe  
10 were taken from the RETI And I know -- you know, I  
11 was involved a bit with the RETI process, and cultural  
12 resources really weren't considered there.

13       So, you know, in the development of these  
14 SEZs and the excluded areas, I do not believe there's  
15 been much consultation with Indian tribes. There  
16 hasn't been a systematic evaluation of what sites are  
17 out there, whether they're going to be in the SEZs.

18       I know -- I don't know how the excluded areas  
19 were developed. But I can tell you there just hasn't  
20 been enough time taken to inventory and consider what's  
21 out there in terms of cultural resources. They're  
22 always at the bottom of the list.

23       So what I'd urge you to do is, I -- you  
24 mentioned the DRECP. I have been working with the  
25 DRECP in putting together a cultural sensitivity map.

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1 So I'm hopeful that that information can be integrated  
2 into -- into this plan, into the solar PEIS so that we  
3 can, at least, have information and know what cultural  
4 areas are most sensitive and should be avoided.

5 I don't know -- I don't have a solution. You  
6 know, I know there hasn't been adequate consultation.  
7 I would just urge that we slow down, take a step back,  
8 and let's get the cultural information assembled and  
9 try to protect cultural sites as best that -- as best  
10 that we can.

11 That's -- that's something that's sorely been  
12 lacking in all of these renewable energy projects and  
13 renewable plans.

14 So I'd urge you to do that. I'd urge you to  
15 consider the cultural sensitivity map the DRECP is  
16 developing.

17 Thank you.

18 --oOo--

19 MR. SILVA: All right. I'm Andrew Silva.  
20 I'm with the office of San Bernardino County Supervisor  
21 Brad Mitzelfelt, who represents a huge 17,000 square  
22 miles of deserts, and there's a huge chunk of these  
23 projects that are in our district.

24 The County, I'm almost certain, will submit  
25 written comments later on. We did submit on the

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1 scoping comments.

2 But one issue I just want to come at from a  
3 slightly different thing is, there is an impact --  
4 particularly a cumulative impact on BLM's multi-use  
5 mandate, and that's not just from the enormous  
6 footprint of these particular projects, but also from  
7 the mitigation requirements.

8 So if you have a five-square-mile project and  
9 you get away with only two-to-one mitigation, you need  
10 ten square miles of probably private land somewhere in  
11 the desert that's also good habitat.

12 The concerns are -- there's several concerns  
13 that go with those cumulative impacts. It isn't just  
14 on the renewable energy development side, you will -- I  
15 don't have the numbers to comment. Sorry. I don't  
16 have it on the top of my head -- where you're going to  
17 run out of possible mitigation.

18 A fairly small number of -- of -- of  
19 particular solar projects will chew up all the  
20 available mitigation land that might be available, all  
21 the private land that's also good tortoise habitat.  
22 That is very quickly going to disappear just because of  
23 the enormous geographic size of the solar projects.

24 There's an economic impact to that, as far as  
25 future economic development goes. If you have another

00048

1 economic activity that wants to take place in the  
2 desert, it may be impossible for them to mitigate their  
3 impacts on the tortoise or other endangered species.

4 And it has an economic impact which is not,  
5 of course, relevant to the PEIS, but it's a significant  
6 impact to the communities in the desert.

7 And Mr. Banis mentioned recreation. I just  
8 want to expand that to other economic activities that  
9 are part of BLM's multi-use mandate, including mining,  
10 livestock grazing -- livestock grazing. It's limited,  
11 you know, because it is the desert -- and all the other  
12 recreational activities that you mentioned.

13 You not only lose them on the footprint of  
14 the project itself, but, because of the mitigation  
15 requirement, you may be in a situation where there was  
16 public land that is now opened to back-country travel  
17 by vehicle or other recreational vehicles, and economic  
18 activities, and because we've lost so much valuable  
19 habitat, you could be in a situation where lands that  
20 are currently available may have to be shut down and --  
21 in further limiting and impacting on a cumulative level  
22 BLM's multi-use mandate because you lose the  
23 opportunities for those other activities because that  
24 habitat becomes the number one priority.

25 So I just wanted to . . .

00049

1 --oOo--

2 MS. CRANE: Thank you. Laura Crane with The  
3 Nature Conservancy. So just finishing my comments from  
4 before, I was talking about why we support the solar  
5 energy zone approach.

6 And I just wanted to point out that science -  
7 - our science also supports narrowing the open acreage.  
8 The solar energy zones are a better option because they  
9 overlap with significantly less acreage of important  
10 conservation areas.

11 Analysis by The Nature Conservancy has found  
12 that the SEZ approach reduces the area of biodiversity  
13 impacted by development by nearly 96 percent -- from  
14 more than five million acres to just over 200,000 acres  
15 across all six states.

16 The proposed solar energy zone approach  
17 identified by BLM allows for plenty of room for solar  
18 energy to grow responsibly over the next five years.

19 BLM should require that projects be built in  
20 these zones and create a system for designating  
21 additional zones as needed in the future.

22 BLM should create new zones only after  
23 landscape scale ecological assessment that identify  
24 converted or highly degraded lands for further  
25 evaluation as the preferred areas for solar energy

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1 development.

2       The good news is this: BLM is already in the  
3 process of conducting ecological assessments of public  
4 lands.

5       These assessments are exactly the type of  
6 analyses that should inform where additional solar  
7 development is appropriate.

8       In particular, it will be important that the  
9 BLM regional assessments identify lands with lower  
10 ecological resources, particular areas already degraded  
11 and disturbed lands.

12       This information, along with a clear set of  
13 criteria for identifying areas that are appropriate  
14 from a development perspective and has the least  
15 possible impact from an ecological perspective, will  
16 provide a long-term approach for BLM to evaluate the  
17 use of public lands for renewable energy development.

18       As an example, using our finer scale data set  
19 for the Mojave region and the California Sonoran  
20 Desert, The Nature Conservancy has found more than  
21 600,000 acres of land that meet solar development  
22 criteria identified in the PEIS, the slope, and the  
23 solar radiation, and are more suitable from an  
24 environmental perspective because they are in degrading  
25 or converted areas.

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1           And just so you know, we did remove the OHV  
2 open areas from that assessment, so that does not  
3 include OHV open areas in those numbers.

4           So while even some -- so while even some  
5 existing SEZ proposals should be modified or removed --  
6 and in California The Nature Conservancy agrees with  
7 the other speakers this evening that both the Iron  
8 Mountain and the Pisgah zones should be eliminated --  
9 our assessment found that these areas have very high  
10 conservation values; there are other places where  
11 development is likely very appropriate.

12          Furthermore, it's important to recognize that  
13 not all solar energy development will occur just on  
14 public lands.

15          In California we've seen a tremendous shift  
16 over the last year to development on private lands too.  
17 The Conservancy eco-regional assessment disclosed that  
18 a large fraction of the most disturbed land in the  
19 Mojave Desert, locations with high solar insolation  
20 that pose low risk to biodiversity resources, are in  
21 private ownership.

22          We think that BLM should look at its land in  
23 the context of adjoining private disturbed land and  
24 determine if there are opportunities to develop private  
25 and public combined solar energy development zones.

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1 I have one final point that I'd like to make  
2 before closing. This has been made by other speakers.

3 We are pleased that BLM has devoted  
4 significant attention of best management practice --  
5 practices in mitigation of impacts from solar energy  
6 development.

7 However, we believe one area in particular  
8 deserves more focused attention and stringent  
9 recommendations, water resources.

10 The long-term conservation and protection of  
11 water resources is critical to maintaining desert  
12 ecosystems, the species and habitat that depend on  
13 water to survive and the communities that live in the  
14 desert.

15 The PEIS must ensure that solar energy  
16 development does not impair the quantity, quality or  
17 delivery or function of surface and ground water  
18 resources.

19 So before any desert water use is authorized,  
20 we think the developer should be required to do an  
21 evaluation to minimize their water use and to -- to  
22 have an approach for monitoring and modeling affected  
23 ground water basin and to potentially link surface  
24 water systems.

25 As the programmatic environmental impact

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1 study recognizes, ground water pumping can have adverse  
2 effects on critical ecological systems that may not be  
3 fully apparent for a very long time.

4       So we believe that extreme caution on the  
5 part of the Agency when approving water use is  
6 necessary.

7       Thank you very much for the opportunity to  
8 comment tonight.

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1 State of California )

2 : SS.

3 County of San Bernardino )

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5 I, Amy P. Smith, a certified shorthand reporter

6 for the State of California, do hereby certify:

7 That I reported stenographically the proceedings had

8 and testimony adduced at the proceedings held in the

9 foregoing matter on the 23rd day of February, 2011;

10 that my stenotype notes were later transcribed into

11 typewriting under my direction, and the foregoing 52

12 pages contain a true and complete record of the

13 proceedings had and testimony adduced at said hearing.

14 Dated at Victorville, California, on the 8th day

15 of March, 2011.

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17 \_\_\_\_\_  
AMY P. SMITH

18 CSR No. 12154

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