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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND BUREAU  
OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
(PEIS)

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2011

EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA

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A P P E A R A N C E S

LINDA J. RESSEGUIE  
Bureau of Land Management

THOMAS F. ZALE  
Bureau of Land Management

JANE SUMMERSON  
US Department of Energy

KAREN P. SMITH  
Argonne National Laboratory

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C O N T E N T S

Public Scoping Meeting, 2/7/11

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P R O C E E D I N G S

EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2011

7:38 P.M.

MR. HARPER: I'm just getting my head wrapped around this document, too. I regret that we're not going to have more technical questions, because I have a lot of them, so I regret that I can't ask those questions. I think that would help me formulate my responses better.

So, the -- I'm also very concerned with what's going on with the desert tortoise. And the mitigation measures really aren't working. I think that whole process needs to be readdressed on all levels, and certainly I'm sure this document depends on some of that information.

I'm hearing, you know, reports on the annual death rate during relocations, 30 to 40 percent per year. I don't know if that's true or not, but that's pretty significant for a species that I believe only has a two percent death rate and lives for 60 years.

We're seeing the delisting of McCain Valley here in -- I think that's in Imperial County, where its status was lowered by the BLM to accommodate a wind farm. There seemed to be no other reason, then, to accommodate people. It didn't seem like any science went into that.

I really don't have much more prepared to

1 say at this point, but -- and I'll save it for my written  
2 comments, which I will be presenting.

3 Thank you.

4 MR. FROELICH: Good evening.

5 Like the previous gentleman, I don't feel  
6 prepared to speak. I just learned about this meeting in  
7 the paper this afternoon and just learned now that it's  
8 primarily environmental, which is good.

9 I was mainly wondering about the economic,  
10 and I don't know if anybody could speak on that. I  
11 understand with the geothermal there's some sort of a  
12 royalty that is collected, and it may benefit the  
13 community. I'm speaking as a resident of the community,  
14 and the needs of the community and the potential benefit.  
15 If anybody could speak how that works, if it's a per  
16 kilowatt hour or just a property tax, or what it might be.

17 And I understand we're not Alaska, but I  
18 know there's a resource up there that seems to benefit the  
19 state and I didn't know if there's any possible way we  
20 could benefit. There's certainly need for benefit here.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. HORNE: My name is Andy Horne. I'm with the  
23 County of Imperial, and I have a couple of comments  
24 regarding the project.

25 One of them has to do with -- and I talked

1 with Mr. Zale out in the hallway. I know there probably  
2 was some at least attempt in the survey of sites to  
3 avoiding -- it looks like there was quite a bit of work  
4 done in avoiding potential problems. And we just had a  
5 rather large solar project on BLM land, the Tessera/  
6 Stirling project, where they spent \$150 million getting  
7 the project permitted and encountered some opposition in  
8 one of the local tribes here.

9                   And looking at the solar zones that have  
10 been identified, it would seem like they are fairly --  
11 relatively small as compared to the 99 million acres of  
12 the BLM jurisdiction. It wouldn't seem like it would be a  
13 bad idea to me if some effort could be made to perhaps do  
14 a more thorough examination.

15                   I'm sure there will still have to be  
16 project-level EIS's prepared on any projects, but if you  
17 identify the zones as being areas -- especially if you  
18 took the one option of identifying the zones and excluding  
19 development on other land -- do perhaps a more thorough  
20 job of trying to get the local tribes, especially, to go  
21 out and try -- and look and see whether or not there might  
22 be problems there that could be avoided.

23                   If that's the area that you're going to  
24 point potential developers to and say, "There is where we  
25 want you to develop your project," it seems like it would

1 be a colossal waste of time, effort, and money, to get  
2 them to do that, go through all the process, as Tessera  
3 did, and find out that they had some obstacles there. So  
4 that seems like it might be a good idea.

5                   The second comment, following up on Chris  
6 Froelich's suggestion or comment about the revenue, he's  
7 right. Currently the County receives and the State of  
8 California also receives a portion of the geothermal  
9 royalties that are paid on geothermal projects located  
10 here in California and specifically in Imperial County  
11 from a portion of those royalties that are generated.

12                   There have been some efforts -- I think  
13 Senator Feinstein had some legislation or a draft of some  
14 legislation floating around that would have also dedicated  
15 some portion of the revenue generated, and I think BLM is  
16 contemplating charging some sort of right-of-way fee on  
17 these solar rights-of-way.

18                   As I recall doing the math on the Tessera or  
19 after the -- I think those rent schedules were just  
20 released about six months ago or something like that,  
21 maybe even less than that. It was around a thousand  
22 dollars an acre, or in that range. And it would seem like  
23 the -- and I think the Feinstein legislation, or at least  
24 the draft we saw, looked at 25 percent of that to go back  
25 to the local jurisdictions.

1                   As you may be aware, in California, solar  
2 projects, at least the improvements related to the  
3 production of the energy, are exempt from assessment for  
4 local -- for state and local property taxes. And it would  
5 seem like, especially in light of that, that it would be  
6 worthwhile looking at.

7                   I would suggest that the BLM look at the  
8 possibility of incorporating some sort of revenue sharing  
9 with these projects with local agencies, especially, of  
10 course, in California, because we're going to have to  
11 provide some fire and police protection and other public  
12 services to support those projects and without the  
13 corresponding revenue that we normally would expect to get  
14 from property taxes.

15                   There's a current sharing of license fees --  
16 I don't know what we're talking -- whether they call them  
17 the offroad vehicle stickers that BLM sells, some of the  
18 money comes back and is shared with the County to help the  
19 County provide law enforcement and emergency services to  
20 the recreational users in those federal lands, and it  
21 seems like that would be a good template to follow in this  
22 type of process as well.

23                   Thank you.

24                   MR. ZARATE: My name is Juan Zarate. The two  
25 previous speakers touched on sensitive issues that I just

1 want to reemphasize what they stated and make it a point.

2 In the process of you evaluating projects  
3 coming into the BLM, I would hope that you will look into  
4 these projects in a way that -- of what benefit are they  
5 contributing to the community. Break it down in two  
6 areas, the mitigation as well as corporate responsibility  
7 towards the community.

8 As you are aware, Imperial County has a 29,  
9 30 percent unemployment rate. Out of 180,000 population  
10 in the Valley, 130,000 people are receiving some sort of  
11 social services program or are enrolled in some sort of  
12 social services program. So the community is in need; the  
13 schools are in need. The schools and government are also  
14 in the straits as well as the state. The state is  
15 literally broke.

16 So in your evaluation of projects, I would  
17 hope that you would look into what benefits these  
18 particular projects contribute towards the community.

19 Thank you very much.

20 (Whereupon, at 7:50 p.m., the proceedings were adjourned.)

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1 STATE OF CALIFORNIA )

2 : SS.

3 COUNTRY OF IMPERIAL )

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5 I, Rene R. Keating, a Certified Shorthand Reporter

6 for the State of California, do hereby certify;

7 That I reported stenographically the proceedings

8 had and testimony adduced at the proceedings held in the

9 foregoing matter on the 7th day of February, 2011; that my

10 stenotype notes were later transcribed into type-writing

11 under my direction, and the foregoing 9 pages contain a

12 true and complete record of the proceedings had and

13 testimony adduced at said hearing.

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

15 of February, 2011.

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Irene Keating

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CSR No. 8143

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