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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(PEIS)*

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2012
7:15 p.m.

Inn of the Rio Grande
333 Santa Fe Avenue
ALAMOSA, COLORADO

Reported by:

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* This transcript has been modified by Argonne National Laboratory to correct any obvious grammatical and transcription errors.

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A P P E A R A N C E S

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 HEIDI HARTMANN: Is Adam Beal here?

3 Also, I forgot to tell you, when you get up
4 to the podium, please state your name.

5 ADAM BEAL: My name is Adam Beal. I work as
6 a land acquisition development manager for
7 Sun Edison.

8 I'm here speaking on behalf of myself, rather
9 than Sun Edison, or rather than the development
10 industry as a whole.

11 But, nevertheless, I've been spending quite a
12 bit of time over the last few months analyzing this
13 work, also working with others, one in the audience
14 included, on a couple of groups that are going over
15 this process and also a similar process in Arizona that
16 Shannon mentioned briefly.

17 I will just -- I got some notes here that
18 I'll read from. It's probably easier than reciting
19 from memory, but I definitely agree that workable zones
20 can help facilitate solar development in the Western
21 United States.

22 I agree that the development of land planning
23 tools to govern public lands is definitely appropriate.

24 I agree that appropriately located zones can
25 also facilitate transmission and distribution-level

1 projects.

2 Typically, this proposal is geared more
3 toward transmission-level projects, which is what we
4 think of as the very large-scale projects; typically,
5 over 20 or more megawatts.

6 One reason I find that interesting that 20
7 megawatts seems to be the bottom number being used
8 in this process, is that I do all of my work on utility-
9 scale projects. Very rarely do we work on projects
10 over 15 megawatts in size.

11 The vast majority, 95 percent of the projects
12 that I work on are distribution-level projects, are
13 much smaller projects that generally connect right
14 directly into local smaller substations.

15 And this process looks like it's, for the
16 most part, excluding the smaller distribution-level
17 projects, that's fine to one degree or another.

18 It's my opinion that with the incredible
19 difficulty in approvals of new transmission
20 infrastructure, obtaining rights of way through various
21 municipalities, that the future is probably going to
22 see more distribution-level projects, much smaller at
23 the source, feeding power where the power is needed, as
24 opposed to into the grid as a whole.

25 I think as time goes on, as population

1 increases and we move more into -- our cities grow
2 bigger, we are going to have a harder and harder time
3 approving new transmission infrastructure.

4 We are going to see much smaller projects
5 becoming the norm rather than the exception.

6 Another comment, the Supplemental PEIS takes
7 zones that I feel were already too small and too few,
8 and reduces them down even further.

9 The zones went from 677,000 acres down to
10 285,000 acres. When we subtract the acres in those --
11 that already have pending applications, the 285,000
12 acres goes down to 180,000 acres that are available for
13 new projects.

14 The 180,000 acres are generally not close to
15 load centers, which are major population centers, which
16 is where the electricity is really needed, or to
17 transmission.

18 Which in the eyes of myself, and probably
19 many of my peers in the development community, means
20 that they are somewhat limited or of little use to us.

21 New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado which compose
22 the majority of these acres, may someday be feasible,
23 but not in the near term.

24 Many of the areas that these zones are
25 proposed for, from what I can tell, most of them in

1 Colorado are not near areas that have had existing
2 transmission. Proposed transmission, but that could be
3 many, many years, or even decades before that
4 transmission infrastructure is in place.

5 It says that the variance lands comprised
6 20 million acres of land, that's true. But only 1.3
7 million of those acres are in California, where the
8 real load and transmission infrastructure is, and where real
9 the political will power is.

10 If all of the variance factors were
11 interpreted to be requirements for a variance, I
12 believe, that instead of the 20 million acres that are
13 currently available for variances, there would likely
14 be closer to zero.

15 If they are not requirements, we must know how these
16 factors are going to be applied. Some of these areas
17 should be eliminated regardless, especially those which
18 call for minimizing it, issues and the desert tortoise
19 option two.

20 Another comment, the exclusion area factors
21 are not mapped. So there really hasn't been much in
22 the way, from what I can see, of transparency,
23 regarding why certain lands have been excluded.

24 The BLM should not exclude lands based on
25 technical factors, including slope and insolation.

1 I think that should be up to the industry to
2 determine. If the industry feels that it truly can
3 build on land greater than a five percent slope, then
4 why exclude it?

5 Because we don't think that you can build on
6 land with more than 5 percent slope, for example. I think
7 that the requirements should be better primed.

8 The BLM pledges to participate in regional
9 transmission planning efforts but lacks a meaningful
10 commitment. The BLM should start studying the areas
11 surrounding the locations of leading transmission
12 proposals, so that it will be in a position to better
13 approve the development of projects as soon as
14 definitive decisions regarding transmission are made.

15 It looks like I have reached my time. Thanks
16 so much.

17 HEIDI HARTMANN: Our next speaker is Demetrio
18 Valdez.

19 DEMETRIO VALDEZ: My name is Demetrio
20 Valdez. I am close to Antonito. My place is only a
21 mile from the the Antonito Southeast proposed zone.

22 I am for harvesting the sun for energy. It's
23 good for the whole country. We depend a lot on
24 foreign oil, and this would reduce our dependence on
25 foreign oil.

1 Ranchers have always harvested the sun, but
2 the sun grows grass and land, and makes beef for land
3 or whatever.

4 It sure would be good for the local economy,
5 because it would create a lot of jobs. It would help -
6 - we have a bigger tax base. It would help raise the
7 land values.

8 And that land, you know, Los Mogotes east
9 of Antonito, that grows very little pasture. The public
10 has very little use from it. And the BLM would never
11 homestead it. It wasn't good for anything except
12 grazing. You can't graze a crop on it.

13 I think we can harvest the sun. It would
14 help the local economy and help the whole country.

15 Thank you.

16 HEIDI HARTMANN: This is Ms. Valdez.

17 OLIVE VALDEZ: My name is Olive Valdez.

18 We live just south of Antonito on the Valle
19 Escondido Ranch. It's an organic ranch, because we
20 really, really care about what happens to Mother Nature
21 and the land that has been given to us to ensure our
22 survival.

23 But first, I want to thank the Department of
24 Energy, and I want to thank BLM for listening to our
25 concerns.

1 It really is reassuring because, initially,
2 when you hear about the number of acres and the
3 operation, and how large it would be, it's
4 intimidating. And you think, "My gosh, who is going to
5 listen to us?"

6 Well, you know, you have proved who is going
7 to listen to us, and we really, really appreciate it.

8 I know, in case no one has noticed, those
9 lands are designated public lands. We are the public.
10 It's of major importance to us what happens to those
11 lands. Always that will be an impact on our daily
12 lives.

13 Our ranch, it lies just a little west of
14 Highway 285. I see that proposed site every time
15 I do my walk in the morning. And I had always thought,
16 "What a shame. That land is lying barren. It's not
17 producing anything."

18 Of course, you all remember Demetrio's
19 infamous rabbit that had to pack a lunch to cross it,
20 but I haven't seen any rabbits lately either.

21 But, anyhow, we care so much what happens.
22 And my concern has been, it should be used for the
23 public benefit. We need to use this land.

24 Well, at long last, there is a proposed
25 project. I can't tell you how happy we are.

1 Who is against clean solar energy? I don't
2 know of anyone who really cares for our environment
3 who would be opposed.

4 You know, we have talked about the culture of
5 the area but nothing is more devastating to the
6 culture of an area than to see the kids jump in a car
7 and head to the big city, because they are unable to
8 make a living wage in our area.

9 We want our children to be able to come back
10 home, you know, they are just about the brightest, the
11 most intelligent children you will ever encounter, at
12 least in our opinion. We want them to come home, and
13 we want them to stay there and absorb the culture that
14 only a family unit imparts to the young.

15 I have a grandson. We have a grandson who is
16 six years old. He's all thrilled that this summer he's
17 going to come down, and he and grandpa are going to
18 find all the gold in the world in back of the house in
19 the San Antonio River.

20 Now, no way on Earth would I let anything
21 infringe on the purity and organic quality of our ranch
22 and the ranches and land that belong to other folks and
23 their children.

24 We want to make sure that our county benefits
25 from this operation. And I have written letters to

1 Senator Udall and Senator Bennet asking that they look
2 into it, to make sure that our county can receive the
3 benefit according to the value of our lands.

4 Anyway, I want to thank you again. You can
5 count on our support. We are just about a 150 percent
6 in favor of solar development. And, you know, hardly a
7 day goes by that I don't run into someone at the post
8 office or at the grocery store, and it's always: "Olive,
9 what's going on with the solar? When is solar coming?
10 Olive, what is happening?"

11 I always tell them, it's coming. We just
12 have to be patient. It's going to be done right, and
13 it's going to be something that we can all benefit from
14 for ages to come.

15 I know that's what we are all working toward.

16 And, again, thank you, and you can count on
17 us for any support that you need from us. And, you
18 know what? Hallelujah, the solar is coming.

19 HEIDI HARTMANN: All right. The next speaker
20 is Ceal Smith.

21 CEAL SMITH: Ceal Smith. I am with the
22 San Luis Valley Renewable Communities Alliance.

23 I am also a founding member of Solar Done
24 Right.

25 I want to thank the BLM very much for putting

1 on this meeting. We did not think that Colorado was
2 going to have a chance to have a second review of the
3 Supplemental. So thank you very much for listening to
4 our comments.

5 I think we are often put in the position of
6 people thinking that we are against solar, but I have
7 to say that that couldn't be more wrong in terms of
8 where our group is coming from.

9 We have a different view of solar energy. We
10 think, actually, that solar is already here. We don't
11 have to wait for it. And the people in the
12 Valley have been working on solar issues since the
13 1970s. There are a lot of very innovative people
14 here.

15 HEIDI HARTMANN: Let me give you another mic.
16 Is that better?

17 CEAL SMITH: What I want to talk a little bit
18 about, since the '70s, there have been people coming to
19 the Valley to do solar energy, and we have a lot of
20 projects that have gone forward.

21 And one thing that we would like is for
22 people to listen to the solar innovators that are
23 already here and have been piloting lots of good
24 ideas.

25 One thing that I have been kind of concerned

1 about -- we have to make a choice, either between sacrificing
2 our intact public lands; or having, you know, devastating
3 climate change, or being -- staying dependent on oil.

4 I think that's a myth that we need to get rid of very
5 quickly.

6 There are two alternatives that are being
7 pretty much ignored by the Department of Interior, that
8 we are trying to get them to pay more attention to.

9 One of those -- is distributed
10 generation. And that, you know, rather than going and
11 targeting intact ecologically valuable land, I can
12 say that because I am a biologist, public lands first;
13 we think that's a big mistake.

14 It's wrong from the start. That's the last
15 place we should go.

16 If we need to, after we have used all of the
17 urban landscape that we have available to do solar, all
18 the rooftops, all the commercial buildings. We have
19 millions of acres of urban landscape that's very
20 suitable for solar development.

21 At the point of use, which avoids the cost of
22 long-distance transmission and all transmission losses
23 that are inherent in transferring energy two or three
24 or 400 miles from -- to where it's needed.

25 So while we have a great value, solar values

1 here, we lose everything that we gain by shipping it
2 200 miles, and that costs repairs. It pushes the cost
3 of solar energy up, I think, unnecessarily.

4 In addition to, you know, impacting wild
5 lands that, perhaps, there are some places like the
6 Valdez's speak to, that are not that ecologically
7 valuable.

8 All of these lands being proposed have
9 significant ecological values that should not be
10 overlooked.

11 You know, the other thing is distributed
12 generation can be implemented much faster.

13 Just a simple example is what Germany has
14 done.

15 In less than 10 years, it has installed
16 more than 10,000 megawatts.

17 I think some people like to say we have to
18 do the big giant projects because we don't have time.
19 But I think that Germany has proven we do have time.
20 And in the process, we create a lot more jobs. We
21 create a lot more value in the communities where the
22 solar is being built.

23 What it comes down to is the BLM plan is
24 solar energy for the one percent. It's going to be
25 owned by corporate, outside corporate interests.

1 It's going to, the projects are going to go
2 to those same investors. It will not help our
3 community very much.

4 Yes, we will get temporary jobs. But the
5 distributed model will develop more, up to three-and-a-
6 half times more local jobs. And I can go into much more
7 detail. I have handouts. I got the statistics on
8 that.

9 Let's see. The other alternative that I'd
10 really like to see BLM consider in a serious way is the
11 EPA Repower America Plan.

12 The EPA has done a lot of work in identifying
13 areas that are already hugely degraded and unusable for
14 other purposes. As a second step, if we are going to
15 do the big-scale utility, put it on lands that are
16 already ruined.

17 The EPA has done that work. And I am glad to see
18 that Arizona is sort of converging in that direction.
19 They have done that with their restoration design program,
20 they have also bidden the lands that are severely
21 impacted.

22 So I'd just like to encouraged BLM to implement
23 the Arizona model for all of the states.

24 We think that would avoid a lot of the
25 ecological costs that are in the current plan.

1 Now, we can't -- it's not clear to us why the
2 federal government is targeting these ecologically
3 valuable lands first.

4 We think it's backwards. As I said before,
5 that should be the last place we go.

6 I got into the solar energy issues because
7 I was working on oil and gas in the Baca area. I spent
8 some years fighting a proposal to drill in the Baca
9 Wildlife Refuge.

10 So it came as a huge surprise to me to
11 discover that the model being proposed by our
12 government is the same old energy, very destructive,
13 old energy model, only using solar.

14 So, ironically, for somebody who has been
15 involved for many years on energy issues, working
16 toward the environment, I had to come out against
17 industrial solar, because of the level of destruction
18 that we are actually now seeing on the land in
19 California where these projects are starting to be
20 built.

21 I know that BLM says that the 2005 Energy Act
22 is a mandate. But, in fact, when you look at that
23 language it says, "BLM shall implement." It doesn't
24 say, "must."

25 Does that mean I am out of time? Got one

1 more sentence. So just to end, I just to want urge BLM
2 to include a distributed energy alternative, even though
3 it's not directly in the purview, that does provide for
4 alternatives that are outside the legal jurisdiction to
5 be considered.

6 So we would really like to see BLM do that.

7 And then to adopt the solar model for all
8 of the states in their proposals going forward. So
9 thank you.

10 HEIDI HARTMANN: The next speaker is Joy
11 Hughes.

12 JOY HUGHES: Hi. My name is Joy Hughes.

13 And I am the founder of the Solar Gardens
14 Institute and Solar Panel Hosting Company.

15 I founded that company on the last day of the
16 Copenhagen Conference, when it became clear that our
17 government was not going to adequately address the
18 climate change issue. I was really inspired by a lot
19 of Ceal's work.

20 And I spent a lot of time in another Valley,
21 called Silicon Valley. So, you know, any time we had a
22 problem there at Silicon Valley we started another
23 company.

24 Solar came here to the Valley with a very
25 destructive solar project, a very noisy one. And at that

1 point I stood up and said I was going to start a
2 company to start developing solar the right way and to
3 host it on people's lands and to allow for community
4 ownership.

5 I helped get the Community Solar Gardens Act
6 passed here in Colorado to allow for small-scale
7 energy. And I set up the website Solar
8 Gardens.org.

9 Now we have 10 projects under development in
10 the State of Colorado.

11 These solar gardens are fairly small compared
12 to these. They go up to two megawatts maximum. I can
13 -- they can actually be a lot smaller than that.

14 So here in the Valley we have three
15 proposals, including one at the wastewater treatment
16 plant for the Town of Antonito.

17 We will -- our plan is to develop a factory
18 to create prefab racking systems located, probably, in
19 Center, since it's in the center of the Valley. And to
20 then ship those racking systems back out into each
21 point, within the
22 Valley, where we need to install a solar garden.

23 The Antonito Solar Garden, as Ceal pointed
24 out, will produce far more jobs per kilowatt than
25 an industrial-scale project on the BLM land.

1 So that's really important to note that this
2 would also be owned by the town and by the subscribers.

3 People there in that area would see a lot
4 more benefit from that electricity, from this solar.

5 So we take that and multiply that out, we start doing
6 that for every single city and town in the whole
7 county, we no longer need to use a single acre of
8 public land for industrial-scale solar.

9 And that's what I am asking for here tonight,
10 to take this proposal. Take it back to
11 Salazar. Take it and say, "We don't need this."

12 We don't need this at all. Because we can do
13 it all on private land. I put an ad in the paper and I
14 got over, gosh, 2,000 responses around the
15 Valley here. I have almost as many acres lined up as
16 the BLM does right now. All these different people who
17 brought sites for projects.

18 I have -- one of them wanted to comment -- he
19 couldn't be here tonight. I want to read his letter.
20 He says: "My name is Dave Crites. I am the owner of
21 Crites Construction, 11044 West
22 Highway 112, just outside of Del Norte. I'd like to
23 express my feelings about the BLM use of BLM land to
24 put in solar fields. I think it would pump more money
25 into the economy of the Valley if the solar fields are

1 on private property rather than BLM land." "The
2 Valley residents can use the money more than the
3 government, because we pay taxes on property, they
4 don't have to pay anything."

5 Really, when you look at it, the right-of-way
6 applications, rather than the lease applications are
7 really -- they don't return a lot of money to people
8 here in the Valley.

9 And having it on private land, having our
10 hosting fee, have free electricity for the solar hosts,
11 that's a way that solar can give back to this Valley.
12 Having local coops with installers, having factories
13 that we build here to make racking systems and,
14 ultimately, our own panels.

15 Bringing it right here to your home.

16 We have a start-up company here in the
17 Valley. The one I founded that can boost this
18 Valley's economy from doing community-based energy
19 development.

20 We just had a -- from our company from Forbes
21 Magazine, Renewable Energy World -- community solar as
22 one of the top three developments in the solar industry
23 this year. The other two were the expiration -- on
24 Chinese panels. We are the only good news in the solar
25 industry.

1 This company was founded right here in the
2 San Luis Valley. We are going national. We are right
3 out of the Valley. How about that? How about that?
4 This Valley can really do some great stuff.

5 What we are going to do here is push
6 everything we can, to do solar right, to do it on
7 private land, to give everybody a chance to own their
8 own solar panels, everybody with a piece of land to
9 host solar panels -- for the people that don't have a
10 place for them. Thank you very much.

11 HEIDI HARTMANN: Darius Allen.

12 DARIUS ALLEN: She asked me to start out with
13 one of my favorite numbers. I am just kidding.

14 My name is Darius Allen. I act as Alamosa
15 County Commissioner here in Alamosa, Colorado.

16 This is my 15th year as commissioner. And I
17 also farm a ranch. And I definitely know that solar
18 works, because every morning I drive by my cows, when
19 the sun comes up, it's amazing to see them face the
20 northeast broadside with the sun coming up.

21 We know they are absorbing something out
22 there that is good. It's kind of fun to see that.

23 In Alamosa County over the last few years we
24 have approved six different solar projects in our
25 county.

1 Of the six, they have been very, very good to
2 work with. We've also seen an income that's come to
3 our county that we would never have experienced before
4 without the solar farms.

5 We've also been able to put some people to
6 work on some jobs that are there. So some of the
7 concerns that I do have, when we talk about BLM
8 land, I do appreciate you all coming to listen to us,
9 and making the effort to get down here to visit with
10 us, too.

11 And some of the concerns I have are, some of
12 the impacts that we have experienced by having the
13 solar farms put in our county.

14 Some of those are roads. When you start
15 hauling the kind of equipment that goes in there, we
16 are -- something we negotiated with a contractor, with
17 our folks, is to make sure that we were able to
18 mitigate any road damage that was there through the
19 solar companies that came in.

20 Some of the other things that we looked into
21 were schools, the impact on schools on different
22 employees coming in, all of a sudden we were concerned
23 about the number of new children starting in our
24 schools. That's having to educate those kids.

25 Housing needs. When you, all of a sudden you

1 pick up 150, 200 employees into your area, that creates
2 a housing situation, a housing problem, even for the
3 residents who are here now who rent houses or rent
4 apartments. All of a sudden, those become few and far
5 between. You see the rent go up in those particular
6 areas, that's another concern of ours.

7 When we do talk about impact fees, when we
8 met with our a solar companies that we had here, we
9 visited with them about a community development fund.

10 We realize that when they come to our area,
11 they want to be part of our community. So we put
12 together what we call the Community Development
13 Fund. Each one of those companies contributes to that
14 fund.

15 And we can use those funds for scholarships.

16 We can use those for our local Junior
17 College, our local Trinidad College, to work with them
18 on people who want to get into the renewable energy field
19 and be trained in that area, we are offering and
20 sponsoring scholarships that are available; and working with
21 them on a curriculum toward that. Those are some of
22 the things that we are working toward.

23 One of the biggest things that we don't want
24 to forget, we also made note of this in every company
25 that we dealt with, it's been one of the biggest

1 concerns with all of our residents is a decommissioning
2 fund.

3 This is when the solar farm runs out, is not
4 useful anymore. It may never happen, but we did ask
5 them to ante up with a cash asset, or a letter, a
6 irreparable letter of credit that goes to the county at
7 the end of their 30 years, if they don't use the
8 project anymore, we have the money there to
9 decommission it. And take all of those particular
10 panels and dispose of them in a right and proper way.

11 We tried to cover all the bases. We just
12 hope that the BLM -- I'm not quite sure of the tax
13 ramifications as to how it is going to be set up.

14 That's something I'd be interested in
15 knowing, be it personal property or particular items
16 that are there, or how that will all be classified.

17 So what we do know is that in our county it
18 has increased our tax base just in property taxes.

19 We look up where the solar farms have been,
20 north here up in the Mosca area, there's three in
21 there, just from the solar farms, approximately
22 \$400,000 a year in property taxes.

23 But when you think about that,
24 probably 50 percent of that goes to the school district.
25 All of a sudden they increased their base by \$200,000 a

1 year. That's something that really does excite them.
2 They are happy to see they met half of their payroll up
3 there.

4 So we see really good things. I am concerned
5 about solar being put on BLM property, and we talked about
6 that. I think we did make a written comment that we
7 thought that this should be on a case-by-case basis;
8 where they looked to see where they are going to put
9 this particular project. We would like to be involved
10 in that.

11 We also -- I don't know how it's going to
12 come through with our planning process and our
13 application process, if we are still -- since it's
14 federal land, if this is something we have to work out
15 for public review. That's something we want to be
16 concerned about and make sure that happens.

17 The biggest thing is, we want to make sure we
18 have public input just like we have today where people
19 have an opportunity to come and voice their opinion and
20 concern. Thank you.

21 HEIDI HARTMANN: The next speaker is Andy
22 Cyrus.

23 ANDY CYRUS: Good evening. My name is
24 Andy Cyrus. I am the manager of Track
25 Construction for the San Luis Rio Grande

1 Railroad here in Alamosa.

2 The San Luis Rio Grande Railroad serves the San
3 Luis Valley here, the communities of Alamosa,
4 Monte Vista, out of Antonito. We interchange with
5 Class 1 railroads in Walsenburg over the La Veta Pass.

6 I'd like to point out, basically, there are four
7 items that the railroad has concerns with.

8 First off, we are in favor of the solar sun
9 project. We are advocates for this kind of
10 development. And on the record -- Wilderness
11 Solar publication.

12 Second point, we are in favor of sites in the
13 San Luis Valley, and particularly, to the south of
14 Antonito, the site that we are discussing tonight.

15 Thirdly, railroads are better for the
16 environment than trucks. We are good for business, and
17 we are a better fit for the Antonito zone.

18 My fourth item is actually a "but." The but
19 is that the current project language precludes any
20 surface use of the designated areas. That is a major
21 concern of ours for the following points:

22 It makes great sense to include a
23 transportation utility telecom corridor along
24 Highway 285 in order to preserve transportation
25 rights-of-way. I'd like to point out that historically

1 there was a rail line that ran adjacent to 285, on the
2 side where this project will be, clear into New Mexico.

3 The second item, we feel that it would make
4 sense to provide an obvious corridor for telecom and
5 utility passage; and it makes sense to allow surface
6 transportation, such as rail, to not only access the
7 site, but also pass along side it, in order to support
8 the solar zone, plus any other future projects that may
9 happen south of that.

10 And like I pointed out before, there is a
11 historical rail line there adjacent to 285, it is the
12 railroad's opinion that that should be maintained.

13 Thank you.

14 HEIDI HARTMANN: Alex Daue.

15 ALEX DAUE: Alex Daue. I work for The
16 Wilderness Society based out of our Denver office.

17 I want to thank the BLM for giving us the
18 opportunity to comment and for holding this meeting here in
19 Alamosa tonight.

20 And The Wilderness Society does support
21 responsible renewable energy developments.

22 It's -- we feel that it's a key -- for a
23 clean energy future. We need increased energy
24 efficiency and conservation of energy. We need
25 distributed energy generation like solar gardens,

1 rooftop solar. And we need some large-scale projects.

2 It's critical to us where these large-scale
3 projects happen. They need to be in the right places,
4 and they need to be done in the right way, and that's
5 true whether they happen on private land, state land,
6 or BLM lands.

7 We are really thankful for the BLM doing this
8 process and taking the time and trying to set up a
9 program that's intended to do this right.

10 And I don't have to tell you folks who live
11 here in the Valley, that it's important to do this
12 across the West. But it's especially important to do
13 this in the Valley.

14 I've learned that myself having spent time
15 here with friends in Alamosa, and Antonito, in Del
16 Norte. Back-country skiing on Wolf Creek Pass and elk
17 hunting on Poncha Pass.

18 This is a special place. And it's really
19 important that the way BLM approaches solar here is
20 done in the right way.

21 And that's why we were really pleased at The
22 Wilderness Society, when we started to dig into the
23 plan -- that we saw that they did take care in
24 identifying the proposed solar zones here in the
25 Valley.

1 As we started to do analysis of these areas
2 and look at potential conflicts of wildlife habitat,
3 we came out, walked the ground, talked to the agency
4 and the specialist within the agency. We really felt
5 that, for the most part, the four zones proposed here
6 in Colorado were appropriate places for solar.

7 But we had some recommendations, we wanted
8 them to be improved. And, again, we want to thank the
9 BLM for listening to us and other members of the
10 public; the 80,000 people who commented on the draft
11 plan and making changes to address them.

12 There have been changes to the actual zones
13 here in Colorado. They were generally good changes
14 that many have recommended. But the most important
15 change between the Draft and the Supplement has been
16 the true focus on these zones.

17 Because there are areas within the 20 million
18 acres outside the zones that are not appropriate for
19 solar development.

20 If we are going to have successful,
21 responsible renewable energy development -- that can
22 succeed, projects get built, people get clean jobs, and
23 we protect the wildlife habitat in places where people
24 can go and hunt and fish and spend time with their
25 family on public lands, we truly do need to focus on

1 these zones.

2 So we are asking the BLM to carry forward
3 this focus, that's proposed in the Supplement, into the
4 Final; and get this plan done and implemented, so
5 people can start to build solar projects in these low-
6 conflict zones and not go outside them as the rule.
7 That should be the exception, rather than the rule.

8 And much of what's proposed in the Supplement
9 does follow with that. We want to make sure that
10 that's carried forward in the Final. To get this plan
11 done in a timely way, so that we can start to reap the
12 benefits of clean solar energy.

13 I also want to reiterate the importance of
14 taking public input.

15 We saw the vast amount of interest in the
16 draft plan. 80,000 comments, the number of people here
17 tonight wanting to provide input into this plan.

18 It's great that you provided this meeting
19 here in Alamosa. It's great that you had other
20 meetings across the West and that you're taking
21 comments here now.

22 It's really important that the agency
23 continue to listen to what the people have to say.

24 What most people I am hearing say, "Yes, we
25 want solar. But we want you to do it right and to

1 focus on the zones, these low-conflict areas is the way
2 to do that."

3 So please do carry forward this plan.

4 Please continue to listen to what the public
5 has to say. When it comes to the areas outside the
6 zones, continue to refine those as well.

7 There are still wilderness-quality lands that
8 will be open for application in the Supplement.

9 There are wildlife areas that are not
10 appropriate for solar development.

11 We need to continue to refine this and make
12 sure that, one, the focus is on the zones; and the
13 exception outside the zone, does not become the rule.

14 And that we clean up those areas outside the
15 zones, so that we make sure that we don't end up with
16 lots of conflict and controversy. So thanks again.

17 HEIDI HARTMANN: Thank you.

18 So we have two speakers that are signed up
19 left. We will hear from others after that. Juan
20 Altamirano.

21 JUAN ALTAMIRANO: Good evening. My name is
22 Juan Altamirano. And I am here representing
23 Alamosa County. And my comments are concerning the
24 cumulative impacts, with the cumulative potential --
25 construction on both private and public lands.

1 Alamosa, like Commissioner Alan
2 spoke a minute ago, advocates and supports the
3 development of alternative energy within the San
4 Luis Valley.

5 We also advocate potential impacts dealing
6 with housing and roads.

7 Specifically on housing, based on our
8 experience in development of multiple solar generating
9 facilities in Alamosa County, we feel that we can
10 easily anticipate that a peak housing demand will be
11 created if multiple solar facilities are constructed
12 near or around the same time.

13 While we understand that pressure on the
14 local housing stock will be influenced in part by the
15 individual developers' housing policies, many in the
16 communities will be faced with the issue of having to
17 deal with temporary housing shortages.

18 Currently, Alamosa has the largest housing
19 distribution in the San Luis Valley. However, the
20 available housing stock is very tight, due to a growing
21 student population at Adams State College and Trinidad
22 State College.

23 Due to the relatively small, local rental
24 market, we feel that the cumulative construction and
25 influx of, and potential influx of temporary workers in

1 relationship to the overall housing market, could
2 potentially create temporary pressure on housing
3 availability.

4 In terms of the transportation network,
5 demand, again, based on our experience of road
6 maintenance, is going to be an issue that needs to be
7 mitigated up front. And we hope that as the
8 BLM moves forward with these proposals that they take
9 both the housing and transportation concerns into
10 consideration in your regional mitigation plans and
11 work with local governments to look at and study those
12 potential issues.

13 Again, the primary access to many of these
14 designed, designated solar sites will be from U.S.

15 and state highways, and through connections
16 with primary county access roads. And any cumulative
17 construction occurring around or near the same time,
18 again, can potentially create a collective generation
19 of road impacts.

20 Because construction movements may occur
21 using county roads and will last over a considerable
22 amount of time, more ongoing maintenance to
23 county roads may be needed; and at least until the
24 facilities are finally commissioned.

25 So those are my comments. And I hope that

1 the agencies work with local governments and their
2 regional mitigation plans as we continue going forward.
3 Thank you.

4 PATRICK MCDERMOTT: Good evening. I'm Pat
5 McDermott. I work for the Colorado Division of
6 Water Resources here in Alamosa in the division office.
7 I'm a staff engineer and I'd like to just make a few
8 statements about water availability in the San Luis
9 Valley.

10 The San Luis Valley is the home to the oldest
11 water right in the state, 1852. It's the San Luis
12 people's ditch in San Luis.

13 We have the largest ditch in the state, the
14 Rio Grande canal that can divert 1600 cubic feet per
15 second -- and that can irrigate over 100,000 acres.

16 We have a rich tradition of water use in the
17 San Luis Valley and ranching and farming practices.

18 The San Luis Valley encompasses about 8,200
19 square miles. Within that 8,200 square miles, we have
20 about 600,000 irrigated acres. Much of that land is
21 dependent upon our groundwater reserves underneath us,
22 because we do not have large-scale reservoirs in our
23 mountains.

24 The largest reservoir we have is Sanchez
25 Reservoir, that holds about 90,000 acres near San

1 Luis.

2 Now right now, it's down -- the true
3 reservoirs around the San Luis Valley are located
4 beneath us.

5 We are an appropriated basin. In the late
6 1800s, even Uncle Sam recognized that this basin was
7 fully appropriated and put a moratorium on development
8 on new public lands.

9 So it's very important for everyone to
10 realize that we do not have water available for new
11 appropriations.

12 You cannot dig a ditch or build a new
13 reservoir without a great deal of application, hassles
14 through our water court, and resistance from the
15 Division of Water Resources.

16 The confined aquifer was declared to be fully
17 appropriated by Judge Kenhold in case number 04C24.
18 That means that if you want the large-scale development
19 of water from the confined aquifer, you would have an
20 augmentation plan. A replacement plan that would allow
21 you to replace all of your depletions. That has
22 prevented some of the development of our geothermal
23 resource below us.

24 The Rio Grande Compact governs the equitable
25 apportionment of water among Colorado, New

1 Mexico, and Texas.

2 Colorado is obligated to send water to New
3 Mexico, based on the amount of inflow that we get in
4 the Conejos River drainages and the Rio Grande.

5 No new appropriations are allowed in the groundwater
6 aquifers. We do allow small-scale wells to be drilled,
7 such as domestic wells, stock water wells, for 15
8 gallons per minute.

9 Current requirements for the solar facilities
10 that we have in the San Luis Valley are generally met
11 through groundwater use. They are small amounts.

12 They have contacted Mike Gibson with the San
13 Luis Valley Water Conservancy District to obtain
14 augmentation. That's how existing ones are working.
15 They are generally very small amounts of water.

16 They can obtain a well permit through our
17 office to drill that well into the unconfined aquifer
18 and have the water replaced through planned
19 augmentation that the San Luis Valley Water
20 Conservative Division has already in place through
21 the water court.

22 If these new solar developments were to come
23 to the Valley, they would also be looking at
24 augmentation, some sort of groundwater use or surface
25 water use.

1 Perhaps new development could look at the
2 change of water rights, enabled through the purchase of
3 the senior water right.

4 Change of water rights also occurs with
5 underground water rights. So it's possible for someone
6 to come in, buy an irrigation well and change that into
7 the commercial use for solar development use.

8 I want to make sure I have all of this
9 covered.

10 I stated, my last point that I want to make,
11 the State Engineer, Dick Wolf, will be promulgating
12 groundwater use rules for the San
13 Luis Valley in the near future.

14 The promulgating of groundwater on a large
15 scale for commercial and municipal purposes in the
16 San Luis Valley has had an impact on our senior-vested water
17 rights. Those injuries need to be mitigated. It's
18 through groundwater use rules that the State
19 Engineer's Office promulgates and enacts through the
20 water court that we will bring the waters, the
21 systems, our river systems, back to a whole.

22 Groundwater Management Subdistrict Number
23 One, maybe you've heard about that, that is located in an
24 area where some of these solar facilities exist. They
25 will -- they will begin making depletion replacements

1 this spring.

2 The water court case or their water
3 management plan was approved through the Supreme
4 Court recently in a decision by a vote of seven to zero
5 in December.

6 I'll hang around afterwards, if anyone has
7 any questions. Thank you.

8 HEIDI HARTMANN: Claire Barker.

9 CLAIRE BARKER: Okay. I want to stand as
10 supportive of the points that Ceal Smith has made, that
11 the gentleman from Sun Edison has made.

12 In particular, to transmission. Transmission
13 is quite destructive. And the plan that was just put
14 on hold, was only for 1,500 megawatts; is that correct?

15 I don't have the brain to remember some of
16 this stuff. But by looking at some of the posters up
17 here, it looks like Colorado wants to be producing 2,194
18 megawatts.

19 So that is already almost double what the
20 transmission proposal was for. And that means that we
21 need even more transmission and have to go through all
22 of that again.

23 I am an ambiance person, and I don't remember
24 facts and figures very well. I think it's important to
25 realize that one of the reasons that most of us live

1 here is because of the lifestyle.

2 And, Olive, when you go out and you look
3 across and you see there is nothing out there, my
4 question is: What's wrong with that?

5 OLIVE VALDEZ: There's nothing wrong with
6 that.

7 CLAIRE BARKER: I like it that there is
8 nothing out there.

9 And I crossed the country this summer and
10 spent some time in Utah. I don't know if any of you
11 are familiar with Utah, but there's parts of it that
12 are, kind of, similar to here.

13 There's a huge study in Escalante on the
14 carbon sequestering property of desert soils.

15 And if anybody wants to stop by, what is
16 probably a multimillion-dollar building, in a
17 multimillion-dollar study, they are talking about the
18 fragility of desert soils and how it takes 10 years
19 to rebuild this carbon sequestering property back up
20 under the best of circumstances.

21 And when you start looking at the destruction
22 that using previously undenigrated lands has on that
23 property, I am thinking: "Now, why are we supporting
24 this multimillion-dollar study on the carbon sequestering
25 property of desert soils?"

1 And simultaneously saying: "We got to put it
2 over here. This is a vast track of nothing." And so
3 that's one paradox I want to address.

4 I was looking at the posters back there, and
5 I noticed under Greenhouse Gas Emission, it's well
6 explained on solar photovoltaic, with very specific amounts
7 of greenhouse emissions.

8 And it's kind of glossed over on the other
9 concentrated solar power.

10 Since we are being courted by both
11 technologies, I want to point that out, because on the
12 concentrated solar power the only comment is, "Oh, it's
13 minimal compared to coal powered." But there's actual
14 specific numbers on the solar photovoltaic.

15 And there is also a life span on the solar
16 photovoltaics, which is not mentioned on the concentrated
17 solar power. So that's another kind of a paradox.

18 There's also an estimated 23,791 megawatts
19 that would be potentially produced by the six states
20 BLM, 2,194 of that in Colorado.

21 Does anybody have a figure of what our
22 electric draw is in those states? And if it's going
23 down or up?

24 HEIDI HARTMANN: I know it's going up. I
25 don't know what the total number is.

1 CLAIRE BARKER: California is going down.

2 I know that the Valley, I think, is going
3 down.

4 The other thing that I want to point out,
5 Darius and Juan both pointed out that they are
6 concerned about housing.

7 What I have seen with the solar projects that
8 have been brought in so far, is that they bring their
9 own kind of migrant worker.

10 And so we say we are going to get jobs, and
11 we are going to get, you know, economy, and we are
12 going to get this, and we are going to get that; but
13 why, then, do we have the housing shortage?

14 Because it's bringing its own following of
15 already trained workers. And a few of those may stay
16 behind. But for the most part, these solar energy
17 places have gone up very fast, and they do not provide
18 long-term jobs.

19 And if they are on a BLM track of land, I
20 think it's important to remember, that they also don't
21 provide a tax revenue that goes directly to the
22 community. So on private land they do, but on
23 BLM land they don't.

24 I wanted to point those out. Thank you so
25 much for coming the second time, all the way from

1 Washington. That's amazing. I am not going to
2 complain about my 20 miles back home.

3 Everybody have a happy new year. I think
4 that these sorts of things, I love it, because they
5 bring out everybody's points of view, and you get to
6 hear them.

7 And it is so wonderful to live in a place
8 where you can still go out unfettered and unruled and
9 uncharged and just be out.

10 And there are very few places even in the
11 United States left that you could do that. So we truly
12 are the West. And I hope that we can keep that
13 ambiance for ourselves. Thank you.

14 HEIDI HARTMANN: And once again, I was wrong,
15 there was one more speaker that had been signed up.
16 This is Andrea Guajardo.

17 ANDREA GUAJARDO: Hi. I'm Andrea
18 Guarjardo from Conejos County Clean Water. I am
19 speaking tonight on behalf of a citizen's group,
20 Conejos County Clean Water.

21 We are based in Antonito. We have focused on
22 the Los Mogotes East site and the Antonito Southeast
23 site historically.

24 We did comment in the first round on the
25 Draft. And I wanted to use tonight to ask some

1 questions that came up in the Supplement, because we
2 are going to be formulating a formal comment for the
3 27th, that's due the 27th.

4 So the main issues that we addressed were the
5 document itself is really large and inaccessible.

6 And we attended a meeting that Department
7 of
8 Interior Secretary Ken Salazar had last week.

9 There was a nice summary document. I was
10 hoping that we could request that for future site-
11 specific -- so that we could have something like that
12 to distribute in the community.

13 Again, I don't know how many people
14 were actually able to read the project
15 documentation, or the Supplement. Of our 402 members,
16 70 have access to e-mail. And it would be nice if that
17 was both in English and Spanish.

18 I wanted to focus a little bit on the purpose
19 and need of this process, because, again, I think
20 there's confusion in our community about what a programmatic
21 effort is.

22 And I understand it to be a planning effort,
23 that there are no active projects right now. That
24 there's a whole separate process for processing the
25 applications. So I just wanted to clarify that.

1 The array of alternatives the -- including
2 driving both of the projects will be between 20 and 120
3 megawatts. I understand there's not a legal mechanism.
4 A lot of things that Alamosa County described that they
5 have structured for their county, we would not be
6 eligible for. We have reviewed the existing Senate
7 Bill. Nothing guarantees revenue to the community.

8 As you heard, we are an environmental justice
9 community. A lot of people have income well below the
10 poverty level. And there's a lot of interest in solar
11 and in the potential for bringing local job growth.

12 But the way the Supplement describes the
13 projects, and you would essentially for industry --
14 that's to make sure that you guys stick to a strict
15 schedule for processing applications and making sure
16 that the projects go forward in 24 months and not
17 allowing faced projects back-to-back beyond three.

18 That puts us at a maximum of six years. We
19 have eight people trained in the community to do this
20 work. So based on what I have analyzed, that's our
21 benefit locally.

22 So I don't really know -- the incentives that
23 were described seem to cater to the company in ensuring
24 that there's the development. Okay.

25 And I had a big question on purpose and need

1 back to the confusion at the ground level. I
2 understood the renewable portfolio standards and how
3 the BLM was looking to the states for direction on
4 where the states wanted to go with their portfolios.

5 In Colorado we want a balanced portfolio
6 between coal renewable and natural gas. There's a big
7 push to natural gas there. To me, it's a false
8 comparison to take a renewable base and remittent base
9 and compare it to a base field.

10 I know that you were driving the renewable
11 portfolio standards of the state which were goals and
12 not data-driven. I would like to suggest a resource
13 for the agencies, it's called Carbon-Free and Nuclear-
14 Free by Dr. Arjun Makhijani, who used to be a policy
15 advisor. It's a roadmap for policy.

16 So even though the Supplement in this
17 planning document has a lot of policy embedded and a
18 lot of Executive Orders that you need to meet, this
19 book by Dr. Makhijani is a roadmap on how to get there.
20 And how to be carbon and nuclear-free within 50 years
21 with economic growth.

22 I understand this was a Herculean task. But,
23 again, I don't see that it's data driven, that it's
24 going to take us where we need to be.

25 Again, to address transmission, I think it

1 requires that agencies take a hard look.

2 In your documentation, you say you are
3 optimizing transmission corridors, but we have the
4 oldest infrastructure, or one of the oldest
5 infrastructures in the Valley. And I heard some
6 industry people complain about location in proximity to
7 transmission. I wonder what that does to our time line?

8 And I still think there will be impacts on
9 the county roads, bridges, and water. But, again, with
10 not the revenue sharing back to the county, we looked
11 at, will taxes be increased?

12 I've been told by attorneys that energy
13 production isn't a commodity, so we will not be getting
14 larger chunks of payment to our county.

15 We are 66 percent public owned. That's the
16 largest chunk of revenue to our county.

17 The socioeconomics in the lack of the legal
18 revenue sharing mechanism to our community, I didn't
19 know if it was appropriate to speak directly, if there
20 is a site-specific project to speak directly with the
21 developer about some of the incentives that do happen on
22 private lands.

23 If our county officials could reach out to
24 them and ask for those same incentives, or some of the
25 distributed generation projects we are working on in an

1 effort to promote awareness in the community, if they
2 could help fund some of those.

3 That's a struggle, for us to find funding to
4 do the small stuff.

5 We did have a section specifically on natural
6 resource management, including geology, soil, water, air
7 quality, wildlife, natural history, cultural resources,
8 and visual impacts.

9 And recently we had a 150-year land
10 celebration with the county and our grant issue came
11 up. And, you know, I was born and raised in
12 Antonito. I always thought a portion of our land grant
13 was honored just like other Chicano communities. But
14 it turns out, the Conejos Land
15 Grant was the only Mexican Land Grant that was not
16 patented or even apportioned.

17 And at Secretary Salazar's meeting last week,
18 it's in a new study that they are proposing for a
19 National Preservation area.

20 And I would really like to respectfully
21 request that it is acknowledged, that it's a historic
22 and cultural resource in the Antonito Southeast site
23 and the Los Mogotes East site.

24 That's a rich cultural and historical land.
25 The land has a lot of history on it.

1 We had a group member that brought in
2 pictures of markings that I've not seen in any
3 documents published elsewhere. It was our goal to get
4 some pictures in the GPS coordinates -- but with the
5 snow cover, I don't think we will do that for the
6 Supplement. But it's a goal to do that for the Final.

7 Because I think there's a lot of
8 disempowerment and accumulated and environmental
9 injustice issues that go along with that, that are tied
10 to the land. So I, again, respectfully request that
11 that's acknowledged.

12 And then, finally, I request that the health
13 impasse our organization incorporated around the
14 premise: Let's promote environmental health as a
15 mechanism to promote public health be used for natural
16 resource management.

17 We are concerned with: What are the health
18 impacts of, you know, electromagnetic fields from large
19 energy generation?

20 And we have worked a lot to build awareness
21 at the ground level. I think people are very excited
22 about solar. But I think there are a lot of false
23 comparisons being made at the ground level.

24 And I think the BLM as a federal agency in
25 our community could go a long way to help allay some of

1 those fears by holding these forums for site-specific
2 projects in our community.

3 You have been very receptive to questions,
4 very transparent. I think this would go a long way in
5 Conejos County. If you need help with that, we would
6 be more than willing.

7 There was one -- I think I made notes about
8 sustainable studies and ethnographic studies that
9 BLM is planning to initiate on these lands. I would like
10 to offer us as a resource. We do have group members
11 who know where specific sites are out there.

12 So, again, thank you for coming to Alamosa
13 this round. And I'd just like to invite everybody to
14 our forum on Saturday. We didn't know you were coming,
15 so we had planned a forum to highlight other efforts
16 ongoing in the Valley.

17 Because there are a lot of groups that have been
18 working on these issues for a long time. We have been
19 looking to them for leadership. So thanks.

20 Have a good evening.

21 HEIDI HARTMANN: All right.

22 I know we have at least one person here who
23 wasn't signed up who would like to speak. Go ahead
24 and come forward.

25 JEANNA PALUZZI: My name is Jeanna

1 Paluzzi. I am a Community Energy Coordinator for the
2 Colorado State University extension, servicing the San
3 Luis Valley.

4 My position is funded by a two-year grant
5 from the Governor's energy office to help San
6 Luis Valley communities, families, and businesses
7 benefit from energy efficiency and renewable energy
8 development.

9 I just wanted to clarify a couple of pieces
10 of information that were communicated earlier as well
11 as make a statement that may not necessarily be
12 supported by my committee. So I am saying that as a
13 private citizen.

14 There was some references towards perhaps the
15 overall energy consumption in the Valley decreasing.
16 And I do want to say that as part of the development of
17 the strategic plan for the San Luis
18 Valley, we requested information on energy sales by
19 both the rural electric cooperative and Xcel
20 Energy. They were able to provide monthly data for
21 2009 and 2010.

22 And while I can't remember the total kilowatt
23 hours sold in 2009, the 2010 total was around 788
24 million kilowatt hours sold that year.

25 But the change between 2009 and 2010 was a 12

1 percent increase, not a decrease, an increase.

2 And, specifically, if I also take a look at
3 longer data that I received on an annual basis, and
4 between 2000 and 2010, between the two U.S.

5 census -- I never know if it's censi or
6 censuses -- but the overall from the official numbers
7 that were reported to the U.S. census for those two
8 years, the Valley actually experienced a one-third of
9 one percent.

10 That's .03 percent loss in population, which
11 is equivalent to 161 people. But the consumption of
12 electricity within the year-round residence
13 classification increased 23 percent. That is not going
14 down.

15 Now, the residential consumption as a
16 membership class, as a subclass of population overall
17 use in the Valley, is relatively minor.

18 Irrigators by far influence the overall
19 consumption in the Valley.

20 But that's just to show that our own personal
21 behavior is not -- we are not decreasing the
22 consumption of energy.

23 Part of that is actually influenced by the
24 fact that we don't have a lot of natural gas supply
25 here in the Valley. People are using electrical

1 thermal storage systems in order to stay warm in the
2 wintertime, to provide a secure supply of heat.

3 Then this is the part where I don't have --
4 we haven't really specifically talked about this within
5 the process that I have. But just from personal
6 observation, trying to get out and around into the
7 communities, I am wondering if the public lands office
8 can revisit the economic incentives for development on
9 the public lands.

10 When -- this Valley is very poor. Four of
11 the six communities are -- belong in the bottom tier of
12 the entire State of Colorado in terms of poverty
13 levels. At least one ranks nationally.

14 Our rural electric cooperative is the third
15 poorest in the system. The money generated, not only
16 to the communities is important for critical social
17 programs, but it's also critical to the people who
18 live here.

19 Right now we are taking a look at developing
20 solar farms, whether you like them or not, if they are
21 developed right now. They are currently being
22 developed on private property. Those people are
23 incurring an income. They are earning money off of the
24 sale of their land.

25 And, secondly, perhaps even a more delicate,

1 or important issue, this Valley is having to grasp
2 for the overall economic health and viability of
3 our water system, which is way out of whack.

4 And if solar farms are to be developed in the
5 Valley, there is an opportunity to retire water
6 consumption or water rights to help us get our
7 ecosystem, our water system, back in balance. And that
8 is not available through the development on public
9 lands. Thank you.

10 HEIDI HARTMANN: Is there anyone else who has
11 not spoken already, who would like to make a statement?

12 MATIE BELLE LAKISH: Matie Belle Lakish.

13 I am a resident of Saguache County. And I am
14 concerned about the environmental impacts to the
15 landscapes that we are looking at, with very large-
16 scale projects that are being proposed.

17 Partly, I would like for more attention to be
18 given to things like wildlife corridors and wildlife
19 uses of those lands. I don't think that they are
20 taking adequate consideration for that, because a small-
21 scale project is much easier for wildlife to negotiate
22 than these really large projects.

23 And I haven't had a chance to really explore
24 the documents that have been available. But I am
25 assuming that fencing would be around these large-scale

1 projects.

2 That fencing, again, is still another
3 detriment to the travel plans for wildlife. So that's
4 something that possibly could be mitigated in the way
5 that those individual projects were done, but that's
6 something that I would like to see addressed.

7 And I also want to reiterate the points that
8 have been made, as far as the economic impact on the
9 counties, and the fact that there is not anything in
10 the local communities, for the county in particular,
11 since most of these are not within city limits, but
12 county governments are not going to really get much out
13 of this.

14 Our counties are experiencing -- especially
15 in Saguache County, where a lot of the agricultural
16 lands will be taken out of production, because of the
17 water being taken out of -- water is not going to be
18 available to a lot of the current agricultural
19 landscapes.

20 So they will not be able to get the revenue
21 that they are getting from agricultural lands. So a
22 lot of counties are looking at decreased revenues
23 because of that.

24 And then to be asked to come up with extra
25 money to say, improve roads, which will have to happen

1 in order for these projects to go through.

2 And there's not really any economic incentive
3 built into this program, as far as I can see.

4 So the federal government really, really
5 needs to address that. There needs to be incentives
6 for the counties and other local government agencies
7 before any of these projects are put on federal land.
8 Thank you. Thank you.

9 CHRIS CANALY: My name is Chris Canaly. I am
10 the Director of the San Luis Valley Ecosystem
11 Counsel. We are a public land advocacy.

12 I hope my comments are helpful to the BLM. I
13 apologize because we are trying to figure this out.
14 And we have been looking at it since 2008.

15 But there is still a lot to absorb. But I
16 just wanted to start out with an analogy.

17 Someone mentioned this to me and I found it
18 helpful. If Alexander Graham Bell were to be given this
19 device right now, he would not know what it is.

20 He would not understand that this connects to
21 a satellite and that he could communicate anywhere he
22 wanted in the world. He would not get that.

23 But if Tesla were to go over to this light
24 switch, he would understand immediately what it was,
25 because it hasn't changed in over a hundred years.

1 Well, what's happening, what I am grasping at is
2 that, this technology is going to start interfacing
3 with that technology. And what that means is we are
4 going to start dealing with smart grids, micro-grids;
5 being able to take the existing infrastructure and
6 making it smarter.

7 And when you look at peak load, what business
8 actually plans for peak load?

9 When you look at a parking lot, I mean, they
10 have an estimation of what average cars and vehicles
11 are used, and they may overbuild that a little
12 bit.

13 But what other company, other than utility
14 companies, actually build for peak load?

15 And that's what is changing. That's what
16 this technology is going to be about. What they are
17 looking at is taking that average use, and then that
18 peak use, and what is in between it, trying to figure
19 out how to use it in a smarter way.

20 That's what this is all about. Right now the
21 utility companies are basically in competition with the
22 phone companies to see who is actually going to be
23 managing that.

24 And I think that when I look at what the BLM
25 is doing, I want to thank all of you for this

1 tremendous amount of work that you've done over the
2 last couple of years. I think there is so much good
3 information in there.

4 And however it ends up getting used, I mean,
5 it is there. It's baseline. It is going to be good
6 information.

7 What I am seeing, as far as the San Luis
8 Valley is concerned, is that there are two areas
9 proposed that are three miles from any existing
10 infrastructure.

11 When I look at the Valley, I see how the
12 Valley has been built, the fact that we have 31
13 substations in this Valley, which have tremendous
14 potential, for not just transmission, but also
15 generation.

16 I have to look at that infrastructure,
17 because -- especially where the [inaudible] -- irrigation
18 systems exists, there's so much potential there in the
19 corners to produce energy, to put it back into the
20 existing grid, because it was overbuilt, that I see
21 that that really needs to be the priority for us in
22 terms of focus; in terms of how we end up developing
23 our own energy here.

24 And, you know, how that's going to happen? I
25 do not know. What role public lands are going to play

1 in that? I don't know.

2 But right now, it looks like what makes the most
3 sense is for energy to be developed where the existing
4 infrastructure already exists.

5 And one of the conversations that I had --
6 because I ended up going and Darius was actually on the
7 commission -- but there was a commission that met.
8 They had a public hearing in October.

9 And they were discussing whether or not they
10 should create a streamlined process for transmission
11 line siting.

12 And, basically, the recommendation of the
13 commission was that, you know, they really needed to
14 support local land use and that decision-making
15 process.

16 But one of the other individuals on that
17 panel was an attorney who was representing the wind
18 farmers up on the eastern plains.

19 What he told me afterwards was very
20 interesting. I wanted to share it with you. He said
21 that he's advising them if they don't get their power
22 purchase agreements in place within the next two years,
23 it's basically going to be over for them.

24 Because what he sees happening is solar
25 panels are becoming so cost-effective, that places like

1 China and Korea are building them so quickly, that they
2 are going to be so accessible to the rest of us, that
3 that is going to be the driver and that is going to be the
4 determining factor of how we end up moving ahead in
5 terms of developing renewable energy.

6 And I wanted to share that with you, because
7 I mean, for whatever reason it was an "aha moment" for
8 me, in terms of what is coming.

9 And the other point that he made, because he
10 also served on governor's panels and transmission
11 throughout the West, and I wanted to -- the main points
12 that he also made is that states are going to be
13 producing energy for themselves, especially in the
14 Southwest.

15 So this whole idea that Colorado is going to
16 be exporting to New Mexico, or New Mexico is going to
17 be exporting, or California is going to be exporting is
18 over. States are going to be producing energy for
19 themselves, and that's where it's going.

20 I'm not sure exactly how these sites are
21 going to play into this dynamic that just makes sense
22 to me. But I think that our focus needs to be on the
23 existing infrastructure.

24 Thank you very much for all your time and
25 input into the process, it's going to be helpful.

1 MICHELE TRUJILLO: Hello. I am Michele
2 Trujillo. San Luis Valley Leader from
3 Antonito, near the Los Mogotes East SEZ.

4 And I have a few questions for you this
5 evening: How will this project improve and sustain
6 economic development in these areas?

7 Particularly, how will boom and bust be
8 considered and avoided in already poor communities?

9 How will existing environmental justice
10 issues, often promoted and found in large corporations
11 in most socioeconomic areas, be addressed and considered
12 by this project?

13 You know, how can we ensure that there aren't
14 more environmental justice issues developed through
15 these efforts?

16 And how will historical cultural sites, which
17 are not yet identified within the Los Mogotes East SEZ be
18 assured to be unharmed through these efforts?

19 For instance, how will Secretary Ken
20 Salazar's goals for cultural preservation in the
21 San Luis Valley be considered by this solar energy
22 project?

23 Thank you for your time and consideration.

24 EMILY LUTRINGER: Hi. I'm Emily
25 Lutringer. I live in Antonito. I run the food bank

1 down there. And I also have my Bachelor's
2 Degree in Cultural Sustainability. And I am working on
3 my Master's currently.

4 But I just wanted to say that, you know, it's
5 kind of interesting that we are talking about this, yet
6 there are people still in the county that don't have any
7 electricity and running water still and dirt floors. I
8 think it's a little bit ironic.

9 However, I am all for solar. I am all about
10 it. I think it's a great way to go. I think it's a
11 great technology. It's really good for the
12 environment. It's a direction that we need to go in.

13 However, I really do support a lot of these
14 other ideas of making it more localized.

15 Particularly, because our communities are so
16 poor.

17 And we really need that economic boost. And
18 we really need to, like other people said, it's more
19 environmentally friendly to use that space we already
20 have available. Like, rooftops, or the corners of the
21 irrigation field.

22 Or -- why not use that space and at the same
23 time, help out our communities, instead of just turning
24 it over to big business, yet again.

25 And, you know, we are really suffering from

1 that. So that's all I wanted to say. I wanted to
2 express my support. Thank you.

3 HEIDI HARTMANN: Is there anyone else? Go
4 right ahead.

5 ADAM BEAL: Adam Beal. Thank you for letting me
6 take a little more of your time.

7 Just a few final thoughts, I didn't thank
8 -- those with the federal government who have been
9 working so hard on this, to increase the availability
10 of solar development across the West.

11 But just a few more comments that I had
12 regarding the process and the proposal in front of us.

13 And kind of a side note, I know that many of
14 the comments that I'm making sound perhaps negative.
15 But, I, as much as anyone, want to see federal lands
16 opened up to solar development. I am definitely an
17 environmentalist. I went to school for environmental
18 studies.

19 I develop for a solar company. I am very
20 much in support of the process, very much in support of
21 the outcome.

22 But I want to ensure that solar development
23 on federal land happens to a much larger degree than it
24 has been. And being in the industry, I do see a number
25 of problems with the proposal in front of us and just

1 want to put my input in to hopefully make sure things
2 do occur.

3 One tremendous worry I have is with the
4 competitive bidding process. Being a developer myself,
5 I work on state land. I work on private land. I'm
6 just finishing up a number of projects on state land in
7 New Mexico.

8 They have just greatly strengthened their
9 competitive bidding process, and it's turning me
10 completely in the other direction toward private land.

11 To spend the time and energy that it takes to
12 bring a project to fruition, go through the intensive
13 levels of due diligence in determining whether or not a
14 project is feasible, just to find yourself having to
15 then, once you've determined it looks to be a feasible
16 project, find yourself entering into a competitive
17 bidding process where you can find the rug being pulled
18 out from under you in favor of another developer, it's
19 very concerning.

20 Many of these SEZs, most or all of these
21 SEZs are in areas that are not really land-
22 constrained, where there is a tremendous availability
23 of private land out there.

24 So knowing that, when I'm faced with the
25 alternative of putting a project on private land, where

1 I know I have an option agreement in place, the rug can
2 be pulled out from under me.

3 Or going through process with the feds or
4 with a state government in a competitive bidding
5 process, it makes me more -- more inclined to move
6 toward private land.

7 In a very real sense in this proposal the
8 federal government is in direct competition with
9 private landowners for our business. There has to be
10 very compelling reasons for us to want to choose public
11 land.

12 And this is one major concern that I have of
13 being in the business.

14 Also, I'm worried that environmental and
15 other concerns have done their jobs so well in this
16 situation, that they have made it -- the SEZs are so
17 restrictive, and not near low, not near transmission
18 that we will go through all of this work to find us
19 developers moving toward private land anyway; just
20 because it doesn't make sense to move forward with any
21 of these sites.

22 So I would like to encourage -- let me just
23 read from something that I have here. I think that the
24 zones being inadequate, the troubling and uncertain
25 variance process, and arbitrary exclusions may cause

1 the solar developer community to ask for the no action
2 alternative in all situations.

3 I feel that the Final PEIS must provide
4 developers with sufficient flexibility, while
5 additional work remains to be done to expand the
6 development zones.

7 To develop projects outside of these zones,
8 where environmental -- excuse me -- environmental
9 issues do not otherwise preclude development.

10 I believe that the BLM can offer interim
11 opportunities for development without sacrificing
12 biological and cultural protections already
13 incorporated into the PEIS.

14 So I am very much in support of what you are
15 doing. I want to ensure that it works for all of us,
16 and that these projects actually do get built someday.
17 Thank you.

18 AARON ABEYTA: Hello. My name is Aaron
19 Abeyta. I am also from Antonito. Most of what
20 I want to say has already been addressed tonight.

21 One thing that I would like to address,
22 however, is that communities, such as the one that
23 I live in, we are constantly -- not just because of
24 solar, but on just multiple fronts on a daily basis, we
25 are always asked to choose between our economic

1 survival and our cultural survival, as though one is
2 more relevant, as though one is more necessary than the
3 other.

4 Very often people, of course, will choose
5 their economic survival, because it means being able to
6 exist and live in a society which is predicated upon
7 how much money we make and what it is that we can
8 consume and what it is we can buy.

9 I believe that this solar project is on
10 certain levels good for our economy. But I don't think
11 it's a sustainable boost to our economy.

12 I think it's kind of a mirage. I think it's
13 Tantalus hanging from the tree with the water right
14 below him and the fruit just out of reach.

15 We can see the benefits of a project like
16 this. And we can see how it has benefitted communities
17 like Alamosa. But we are not getting any of the same
18 considerations, at least like I see it in Alamosa -- in
19 order to build schools, in order to maintain roads, in
20 order to address water rights, as well as preserve our
21 culture and our heritage in the area.

22 I can see people rolling their eyes and
23 rejecting what I'm saying. That's their prerogative.
24 We have been cast as the villain as a member of Conejos
25 County Clean Water, that we are opposed to solar.

1 We are not opposed to solar. We are opposed
2 to a system which gives us a taste of economic
3 viability and then pulls the rug out from under us.

4 We would like a system which, in fact,
5 ensures a long-term boost to our economy, something
6 which doesn't compromise our cultural values and our
7 heritage values.

8 Ultimately, that's what I would like to
9 address.

10 Another fallacy, which I think is
11 circulating, is that solar is good for the environment.
12 I believe that's completely true.

13 That's not the fallacy. But the fact that it
14 will supplant coal energy and nuclear energy, and
15 natural gas energy, from my very minimal understanding
16 of the Supplement, those things are not going to be
17 kept.

18 Essentially, we are still going to be using
19 coal. We are going to be using natural gas, still
20 looking for nuclear power. We will just have solar in
21 addition to it.

22 So we're still going to be polluting at the
23 same rate that we are polluting right now.

24 So to sell this as an environmental, you
25 know, utopian idea, essentially, is a fallacy, which I

1 think that your next draft should address.

2 That this is not going to be a tit-for-tat.

3 We are not going to swap solar for natural
4 gas.

5 We will have both. Those things make
6 communities like mine and communities all across the
7 country believe that, hey, this is a great idea.

8 Because we've all heard about greenhouse
9 gases. We've all heard about the environment, all
10 heard about the ozone layer. We are all aware of these
11 things.

12 So something like this comes along, I think
13 it's just a really nice bait-and-switch where you get
14 people on the bandwagon without giving us all the facts
15 that we need to be aware of.

16 Those are the two comments that don't
17 necessarily reflect or reiterate what people have
18 already said. Thank you for coming. I appreciate it.

19 CEAL SMITH: Well, I really enjoyed hearing
20 everybody's comments tonight. It is great. It is good
21 to hear directly from our community about what people
22 see as the future of our home.

23 I just want to really add a couple things,
24 nothing new, but just say that I support a lot of what
25 I heard tonight.

1 And a couple times this has come up about the
2 crop circle corners, and there has been some really
3 in-depth analysis on that.

4 I want to let people know that we know that
5 the crop circle corners, if anybody -- has anybody ever
6 flown over the Valley during the day, and seen how many
7 crop circles? How many do you think we have? At least
8 10,000, something like that.

9 How many? 2,800. Okay. Thank you.

10 Anyway there have been people working on
11 this, and they figured out that 2,500 megawatts of
12 solar can be generated from the crop circles only.

13 That would leave all the agricultural lands
14 and all the public lands still intact. And I think
15 that's tremendous potential right there.

16 We know the problem, we would like to do
17 that. We would like to export that energy, have income
18 go to themselves in the communities and create real
19 jobs here in the Valley, for the people in the Valley.

20 And the other thing is that I want to just
21 say, Chris is very totally right in her projection of
22 the future of our energy system, and that this light
23 switch is an antiquated thing. And we are going to see
24 a lot more smart grids and micro-grids.

25 And, in fact, the Valley is in a perfect

1 position to be the nation's first micro-grid, because
2 we already have so much solar, that that includes
3 hundreds and hundreds of rooftops that people have been
4 putting in since the 1970s, solar guard proposals.

5 The existing small utility facilities that
6 are already online, which are actually -- we will
7 generate 100 percent of our own energy use locally from
8 solar.

9 That's pretty phenomenal, without anything
10 big, without these new big transmission lines and
11 projects. I also really want to thank Andrea, and
12 Emily and Aaron for talking about the cultural,
13 historical view here. And reiterate that Salazar was here
14 last week talking about turning the Valley into a
15 national park.

16 I think we all to need to be asking: How
17 does this plan fit in with that other vision?

18 Which I think resonates much more with people
19 here.

20 Lastly, I want to agree with Claire, with all
21 due respect, to all the incredible hard work that
22 everybody has done for the BLM, I don't think that we
23 need it.

24 HEIDI HARTMANN: Thank you.

25 DEMETRIO VALDEZ: I am Demetrio Valdez. I

1 say: The more solar, the better. Let's have solar --
2 it will bring more money into the
3 Valley.

4 Another thing that I wanted to raise, you
5 know, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren, they
6 will have to eat just like we do. And this private
7 land is suitable to raise food, that's why it was
8 homesteaded.

9 The BLM wants to homestead it. That's a good
10 place to put solar. No use tying up good crop land
11 with solar collectors. Thank you.

12 CLAIRES BARKER: Claire Barker. I have one
13 more point to make. We did put solar on our place,
14 partially, because we did have a little bit of money to
15 do it, and we got the government grant to do part of
16 it.

17 But one of the inequities that both the
18 farmers who have put solar on some of their corners,
19 and people like me and Loretta, and a few other people
20 who have invested in solar deal with, is that we are
21 paid -- amount per kilowatt hour generation in
22 comparison to some of the other companies.

23 And yet I have to carry private insurance on
24 that liability to the tune of \$337 a year, which was
25 not well explained to us. I have to clean it.

1 I have to maintain it.

2 If it goes down, it's my responsibility.

3 Which is all fine and good, but I don't get
4 as much money for the same product as any given utility
5 company does.

6 And so that is an inequity that I think needs
7 to be addressed just on a very broad level with private
8 generation to begin with. Thank you again. Sorry to
9 keep talking.

10 HEIDI HARTMANN: Is there anybody else?

11 Well, if there is no one else who wanted to
12 make a statement, on behalf of BLM, I want to thank
13 everyone for coming. It is so true that you can't hold
14 a public meeting when nobody comes. Thank you very
15 much.

16 SHANNON STEWART: Can I say one thing? So my
17 big take-home is that revenue sharing is hugely
18 important here. Every one of you said it, maybe a
19 little different take.

20 It was comments that we received on the
21 Draft, I am going to take those back. We will see what
22 we can do.

23 I think that some of the folks from the
24 county pointed out that the mitigation plans, if we do
25 go with the zone concept could be an opportunity to

1 build in dollars for communities, so we can make that
2 connection.

3 But I want you to know that is a really clear
4 topic here. I will be sure to take that back to see
5 what we can do.

6 HEIDI HARTMANN: Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, proceedings concluded 9:20
8 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Carlina D. Gallegos, Registered Professional Reporter within Colorado, do certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and correct transcription of my stenotype notes, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I further certify that I am not related to any party herein or their Counsel, and have no interest in the result thereof.

In witness hereof I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of January, 2012.

Carlina D. Gallegos, R.P.R.

Notary Public in and for

The State of Colorado

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