

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND BUREAU
OF LAND MANAGEMENT

SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
SUPPLEMENT TO THE
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
(PEIS)
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2011
EL CENTRO, CALIFORNIA

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

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

2 MR. HANEY: Hello. My name is Frazier Haney.
3 I'm a long-time desert resident. I grew up in Joshua
4 Tree, and I currently work in White Water Canyon for a
5 land conservation group called the Wildlands
6 Conservancy as the preserve manager. So you know that
7 I care a lot about all this because I drove to El
8 Centro tonight from White Water, it's two and a half
9 hours or something, right after work.

10 But more importantly, I grew up camping in a
11 lot of the areas that are talked about for development
12 right now with my father, and those things take on
13 special significance when you've -- when you've gone
14 through other parts of your life, so if you don't have
15 family members that you had once, you share meaning
16 with them in these places. And so much of the meaning
17 that I shared with my father, I can't express in any
18 way that it's going to be picked up and put into a
19 comment period.

20 But I do remember those times and they are
21 very meaningful to me, and they just happened to take
22 place in the Midland Valley out near the Big Maria
23 Mountains where there's plans for major solar
24 development. I also toiled around quite a bit in the
25 Little Maria Mountains and out by Desert Center and out

1 near Rice, and I climbed a lot in Joshua Tree, and I
2 just see this as a massive and huge change that
3 shouldn't be tolerated.

4 And I'm -- I just want to harp on the point
5 that we should be really taking a stronger look at
6 distributed generation and using disturbed lands to
7 produce renewable energy.

8 As far as the PEIS goes, I think that the
9 assumption that 75 percent of all renewable energy
10 that's going to happen in the next 20 years, that's
11 going to be built in the next 20 years, is a bad
12 assumption. I'd like to see that discussed further.

13 Also, I think that by excluding lands under
14 2,500 acres from the analysis, I think we drive
15 development into pristine desert lands, and it drives it
16 away from fragmented public lands near urban centers
17 and near transmission.

18 There's been no discussion in the Supplement
19 or the PEIS about the rapid change in technology as
20 projects have switched from concentrating solar power
21 to photovoltaic (PV). That should change the analysis,
22 because there's no advantage to scale in PV. It can be
23 done on 10 acres the same as it can be done on a
24 thousand. I realize that concentrating solar power is
25 different, that you need large-scale projects to

1 produce power, but I didn't see any discussion of the
2 change in technology changing the analysis at all, and
3 I think that's flawed.

4 There's a lack of data in the whole process.
5 In the DRECP, which is the California state planning
6 process, areas of low biological diversity and areas
7 that lack scientific data are somehow lumped into the
8 same category, and that's disturbing.

9 I also think that our money and land being
10 given to the same cadre of companies that's wreaked
11 financial and environmental havoc in the last few years
12 is a shame. To me, thinking of Goldman Sachs and
13 Chevron Energy trying to do renewable energy is like
14 watching a wolf in sheep's clothing taking some of our
15 most precious resources.

16 So I think all three alternatives that are
17 mentioned in the PEIS as well as the Supplement PEIS
18 will cause fragmentation and industrialization in one
19 of the last and greatest intact ecosystems in the
20 United States.

21 And what we're giving away can't be replaced.
22 I can't go to disturbed lands and make them pristine
23 viewsheds where I can hike and climb and fish again,
24 but I can certainly go to pristine lands and turn them
25 into disturbed lands as often as I want, but it's a

1 one-way street.

2 So I want to say again that I think that the
3 PEIS needs a fourth alternative that examines things
4 like the EPA's brown lands initiative that names over a
5 million acres of disturbed --disturbed land Superfund
6 sites for renewable energy development, and I want to
7 see a stronger conversation about the use of
8 distributed generation rather than just being a
9 footnote in the analysis.

10 I realize that the Bureau can't see into what
11 private land and industry are going to do and what
12 private land and industry are going to drive distributed
13 generation, but certainly if the Department of Energy
14 is a co-author of the PEIS and the Supplement and any
15 further documents, the Department of Energy certainly
16 could author a chapter in the environmental impact
17 statement and really give us a thorough analysis about
18 why distributed generation would or wouldn't work as we
19 switch to renewable energy development.

20 As for the other alternatives, I think
21 variance looks an awful lot like the original idea,
22 opening 22 million acres up to development. And I
23 notice that it's put into relief now in saying the
24 exclusion areas are 77 million acres, but I still look
25 at it as areas open to development are 22 million

1 acres, and I think that's unacceptable.

2 So thanks very much.

3 MS. HARTMANN: Is Ruth Nolan here?

4 No, okay.

5 Then, next, Preston Arrow-Weed would like to
6 speak.

7 MR. ARROW-WEED: My notes are very small. I
8 just put them in back of this DVD. I didn't expect to
9 say anything.

10 I am a descendent of the people of Imperial
11 Valley. They are no longer here, but I'm still here,
12 though I live on the Quechan Reservation. I'm an
13 enrolled tribal member. But I speak for a people who
14 are not here. Many people have moved away to other
15 areas and I -- we've only moved to the river and joined
16 the Quechan, but we're still Kumeyaay from Imperial
17 Valley. My brother is here with me, and his wife.
18 We're still Kumeyaays from Imperial Valley. We're
19 Quechan and Kumeyaay.

20 And we -- we're very much -- there's so few
21 of us. We're so much against the things that are going
22 on. We don't even want to mitigate, period. You can
23 run over us, you can overpower me, you can run around
24 me, you can get more money than I can to stop you, you
25 can do anything you want, but I still say -- we still

1 say no. The Kumeyaay of Imperial Valley say no.

2 Other Kumeyaays, other Quechan members, other
3 Quechan entities, might want to mitigate or to deal
4 with you, but I speak for the whole Kumeyaays who once
5 lived here. We say no, the ghosts of the past say no.
6 That's the way I feel. That's the way we feel. I've
7 talked to other members of my family who feel the same
8 way, but they are not here today.

9 The sites that are selected, if you've done
10 the research on it, if you -- I don't know if you've
11 ever done research in it because I'd say every place
12 you've ever picked has something of culture
13 significance on it, there's archeological sites on it.

14 I've seen something not available for
15 development and lands available, available for
16 application, what -- what -- I mean, where do you make
17 the decision as to when it's available, it's okay to do
18 it? Because there's no archaeological remains there, is
19 that when you decide? Or is there some, but it's okay
20 to destroy it? You know, I think Imperial Valley has
21 one of the oldest civilizations that once lived here,
22 and yet nobody wants to research that.

23 Man has been trying to find out where they
24 came from when they came to America. They came through
25 here. And we are still here, some of us are still

1 here. Some have gone on, some go in different
2 directions, but we're still here. And nobody cares if
3 this is where they went through. They did come through
4 here. And we're not paying any attention to it.

5 We keep researching some place like the
6 mounds or the Clovises and all of that, but we don't
7 come to Imperial Valley. You're completely destroying
8 it and covering it up before they even do that. I've
9 seen things that were old and I think they should have
10 done something about it.

11 All these things, these conclusions that you
12 make, I don't understand that. Why do you think --
13 there was a time in the early '80's when I was -- when
14 I first started looking into it, that if the monitor
15 went out there and saw one little thing, like a pottery
16 -- piece of pottery, the whole thing would stop; they
17 would stop. But today, it goes on. Record it and go
18 on, record and go on. And there's so many things that
19 are more than that today, but it's completely ignored.

20 I think also when you think of the ecology,
21 ecology is very important to our way of living, to our
22 beliefs. When you destroy one, there will be something
23 that will come up too; something will go wrong when you
24 destroy the ecology. It could be anything from a
25 little ant up to the biggest animals. It just --

1 something just goes wrong, something happens.

2 If you don't believe that, look around you
3 today. The plants, the animals, everything is being
4 destroyed, and when you destroy that, you destroy the
5 land, and when you destroy the land -- look what's
6 happening in the world today, the global warming, for
7 instance, what they've done. They won't stop.

8 And I think too that the ecology -- our way
9 of keeping the ecology before the white man came was
10 that each one of our tribe, our people, had clans and
11 each one was responsible for it.

12 I come from the frog clan. My mother was a
13 frog clan. My grandmother was a coyote clan. Her
14 responsibility -- what she was responsible for was the
15 desert, the coyotes that are out there. That was her
16 area, that's where she came from, that was her clan.

17 So each woman was responsible -- the women
18 had the clan names. The women should be the ones -- us
19 men always support them, we fight for it too, but the
20 women should stand up. The women should come forward
21 and say, "Hey, we hold the clan names; we say no." But
22 they are not here today, very few are coming. Maybe
23 they don't know. The men only back up the women with
24 the clan because we come from that clan.

25 So when we think about -- when I think about

1 the sheep out there, they won't have no place to go.
2 The snakes will be destroyed. These are clans. The
3 ants who will be destroyed will be the clans. There's
4 rabbits out there. I mean, there's so many creatures
5 out there that are important to us. And there's a
6 meaning that -- once you destroy them, then you're
7 going to destroy everything else too that comes along
8 with it. We may not see it right at the moment, but
9 eventually it will come. We're just destroying
10 ourselves.

11 I'm surprised that there is no -- you don't
12 have no moderation in what you do. The more you get,
13 the more you want; you keep going and going and going.

14 And all you're doing is taking money from the
15 -- the tax money -- the US Government is giving them
16 money to develop this thing and then they are coming to
17 the BLM to get government land, which was once ours,
18 that they are supposed to hold for us, the Bureau of
19 Land Management. That used to be our land. Now they
20 are playing real estate people and giving it to someone
21 else. And they say when it's okay and when it's not
22 okay to do that. But they are doing that.

23 And I don't think you have any compassion for
24 the way we think and the way we feel, and I don't think
25 we've expressed enough.

1 I've also said in the past -- it's being
2 picked up nowadays -- is that songs have a proclamation
3 that was made before other proclamations were ever made
4 to do what you're doing today. We had other
5 proclamations already, in the song, in the story, and
6 the Kumeyaay have proclamations in Imperial Valley.

7 In the Kumeyaay dialect, there's a song that
8 says the land you know has been given to you, the land
9 that's been made has been given to you. These words,
10 this song, it's been in the song for thousands of
11 years, and they were here -- we still sing them today,
12 that song. That is just one of them. There's other
13 songs that followed.

14 I can sing all night and tell you exactly
15 what it means in Kumeyaay, and it will show you that we
16 do have proclamations and we do believe it's our land.
17 We live here, but -- I mean, people are welcome to live
18 here, but not come here and take it. But that's what
19 happened. We don't have no title or deeds, we just
20 lived here and moved on.

21 And there are cremation sites here that are
22 very important. And I hear the mitigating of cremation
23 sites -- what do you know about cremation? We've been
24 doing this for thousands of years and no one has come
25 forward to ask us about the cremation sites you're

1 running through. It's not okay. It's wrong to do
2 that. You don't destroy graveyards to do things that
3 you're doing. I don't know if you have someplace else.
4 Do you guys go and wreck graveyards for progress?
5 Well, you're doing it over here.

6 And then every creature is in those songs too
7 that we sing about, and they are so important to us.
8 But it's all a reminder to save the ecology.

9 We had a method of living with the -- the --
10 nature, and yet you destroy nature to get what you
11 want, what you want to do. Somebody wants more light
12 and more electricity in Los Angeles, to put up a big
13 signboard or to flash lights around, so we give it to
14 them. And what's the price we pay for that? That's
15 the ecology again, the destruction of the creatures out
16 here.

17 Nobody speaks for the creatures. Those
18 little guys can't even speak. So maybe I'm talking for
19 them now because they have no way of defending
20 themselves. The dead cannot come back here and tell you
21 it's wrong for what you're doing, so I stand here and
22 speak for them.

23 And with all your government powers and all
24 your -- all your words that you have that sound so
25 great -- it sounds great. All the words that I've

1 heard today, tonight, it sounds great, but if you sum
2 it all up, it means we're going to take this land,
3 we're going to do what we want to do; there's no way
4 you're going to stop us because we got the money, the
5 power, and whatever you say don't mean a damn thing.
6 That's what it really is about.

7 It's very impressive what you're saying, it's
8 very impressive. All these words that you're using,
9 how you do this, how you do that, and look at that,
10 this -- contact web site, contact federal agencies, and
11 this and that. It's just words, and all it means is
12 that you're going to do it because somebody is going to
13 give you enough money to do it. And it's totally
14 wrong. And if you believe it, you're lying to
15 yourself, you're lying to yourself.

16 I don't know how you can accept that and say,
17 "Hey, they're right and we are doing the right thing."
18 I don't know how you go to sleep at night, how you live
19 with yourself with what you're doing.

20 And I cannot -- I will never -- I will never
21 mitigate. I will never sit down and make a deal with
22 you guys. I can't do that. I won't do it.

23 We've been living the way we have and it's
24 been okay so far, but you're going too far now, you're
25 going too far. You shouldn't do that. You should

1 think about it.

2 And not only to our belief and our way of
3 life, but to yourselves also, to the world. You're
4 sending an example to the world, what we're doing, and
5 it's just going to get worse and worse and worse. When
6 are you going to stop doing this? When are you going
7 to admit that, you know, "We're wrong; the Native
8 American or the Kumeyaays were right in what they're
9 saying."

10 I got nothing to lose, but hopefully you'll
11 believe what I'm saying and accept what I'm saying,
12 that all your fancy words, all your technical words,
13 only mean one thing, that you're going to take it. And
14 you'll overpower me, but you'll never take my will.
15 I'll never agree with you, and the dead past will never
16 agree with you, as I stand here and speak for them.
17 And them little creatures will never agree with you
18 either, what you do to them.

19 I have what, five minutes?

20 MS. HARTMANN: We're at about 12 now.

21 MR. ARROW-WEED: Okay. Give me enough time
22 to try to save the Kumeyaay of the past and all the
23 little creatures of Imperial Valley, and I just speak
24 for them, and if you want to destroy them, well, I've
25 done my best for them. Never did go to law school, but

1 I did the best I could for them.

2 Thank you.

3 MS. HARTMANN: Thank you.

4 MS. STEWART: Heidi, remind them that they
5 can get back up.

6 MS. HARTMANN: Mr. Arrow-Weed, you'll be able
7 to speak again if you'd like to after we've gone
8 through everyone else who wants to speak too.

9 Terry Weiner?

10 MS. WEINER: Thank you.

11 I am Terry Weiner. I work for the Desert
12 Protective Council. I live in San Diego, California,
13 and I've been a desert lover since I set foot in
14 California, which was in 1976, and I really am grateful
15 for the comments that have preceded me. Frazier really
16 summed up a lot of the concerns of my Desert Protective
17 Council.

18 And another organization, which I co-founded,
19 called, "Solar Done Right," we actually wrote a
20 response to the original draft PEIS, and we call it,
21 "Wrong From the Start." And we believe that this PEIS
22 has not been substantially improved by a Supplement
23 because there's still 21 or 22 million acres on the
24 drawing boards for possible destruction.

25 It's wrong from the start because you didn't

1 meet the qualifications of NEPA. NEPA requires that
2 all alternatives for a project must be analyzed. You
3 didn't analyze any of the alternatives related to
4 potentially developing distributed generation in the
5 already built environment. So really there's not much
6 more I need to say anything other than that. You need to
7 go back -- and Frazier drew out in a little bit more
8 detail what more analysis needs to take place.

9 I'm really surprised and appalled that nobody
10 seems to have taken an interest in the EPA's comments
11 on re-powering America. They have offered a solution
12 which could also be analyzed in a real -- real NEPA
13 document, which is the alternative of up to 15 million
14 acres of abandoned lands, contaminated lands, brown
15 fields.

16 And they go so far as to say -- in their
17 recommendation of these lands, "These lands are
18 environmentally and economically beneficial for siting
19 renewable energy facilities because they offer
20 thousands of acres of land with few site owners, often
21 have critical infrastructure in place, including
22 electric transmission lines, roads and water on site,
23 adequately zoned for such development, provide an
24 economically viable reuse for sites with significant
25 cleanup costs or low real estate development demand,

1 take the stress off undeveloped land for construction
2 of new energy facilities, preserving the land carbon
3 sink, and provide job opportunities in urban and rural
4 communities."

5 Why haven't you looked at them? Because, you
6 know, the purpose, the need, has been driven by the
7 energy companies and the developers. And we've taken
8 billions of our tax dollars and given them to big
9 companies when we ought to be working toward policies
10 to give incentives to people to put it on their
11 rooftops.

12 I come to El Centro a lot to work because I'm
13 the Imperial Valley coordinator for the DPC, and in the
14 summer, oh, my God, there's miles and miles of concrete
15 here and parking lots for malls which could be covered
16 with photovoltaic panels and providing for the energy
17 needs for the city.

18 The solar projects themselves aren't the only
19 source of destruction. It's the transmission corridors
20 that you refer to that will scrape and ruin wildlife
21 corridors throughout the desert.

22 Some of the other things that haven't been
23 adequately analyzed are -- you know, scraping soil.
24 I've been reading that -- lately there's a lot of
25 information about the burst of cases of Valley Fever in

1 Arizona and California.

2 And it's interesting to me that a lot of the
3 cases have been in areas where archeologists have been
4 poking around old cultural sites, you know, disturbed
5 soil, soil that isn't pristine desert, has already been
6 disturbed by, you know, ceremonial circles or village
7 sites have these microbes in the soil. And the Valley
8 Fever fungus can be fatal. And I don't know how many
9 cases there have been in Imperial Valley, but there
10 have been some more lately.

11 There's a soil called "caliche," which covers
12 a lot of Imperial County. When you disturb that, you
13 remove the carbon that's been stored in the soil,
14 adding carbon to the atmosphere. And in addition to
15 that, you ruin the ability of the soil to absorb carbon
16 because the desert is a carbon sink, as is forest.

17 And I am really appalled at the lack of
18 consultation with tribes and real surveys of the
19 cultural sites throughout the desert.

20 Imperial Valley is, as Preston said, one of
21 the richest areas for Native American heritage anywhere
22 in California, and arguably none of this should be
23 disturbed. We should be protecting it and promoting it
24 as part of our national heritage.

25 I will just quote from the Council on

1 Environmental Quality, regarding NEPA. Section 1502.14
2 of the regulations requires the EIS to examine all
3 reasonable alternatives to the proposal.

4 In determining the scope of alternatives to
5 be considered, the emphasis is on what is reasonable
6 rather than on whether the proponent or applicant likes
7 or is itself capable of carrying out. Particular
8 alternatives, reasonable alternatives include those
9 that are practical or feasible from the technical and
10 economic standpoint, and using common sense rather than
11 simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant.

12 Thank you very much.

13 MS. HARTMANN: Susan Massey, you're up next.

14 MS. MASSEY: Thank you.

15 My name is Susan Massey, I live in Holtville,
16 and I'm part of the 99 percent. I'm part of Occupy
17 Imperial County. And, no, we're not really physically
18 occupying anyplace and I'm not going to be sleeping in
19 a tent tonight, but I do want to occupy maybe three
20 minutes of space at this meeting.

21 You know, we need to explain what this
22 movement of the 99 percent is. We're not angry at
23 people because they are the top economic one percent;
24 we're not angry at anybody because they have money.

25 What makes us angry is -- and why some people

1 are out camping and doing other types of things other
2 than speaking at meetings, is we're angry with just the
3 people in the one percent who use their money to
4 influence public policy to their benefit and to the
5 detriment of the other 99 percent. And I really feel
6 that what's happening here, what's recommended, what
7 seems to be recommended, or the suggested alternative
8 in this plan, is exactly this. We have a case where we
9 have a plan to destroy public land for private profit.

10 And even worse, the companies that are going
11 to be doing this are getting massive loan guarantees
12 and subsidies of public money. And when I say
13 "massive" -- for a long time I had this impression that
14 people were getting millions of dollars. No. One
15 company is bragging about getting a billion dollar loan
16 guarantee from the government for solar energy
17 development.

18 I've lived in the Imperial Valley for 34
19 years. When I was younger, I lived in New York City, I
20 even spent a year in Paris when I was a student. And
21 people ask me, "Well, how did you end up here, aren't
22 you unhappy?" No, I am not. Each place has something
23 special.

24 We sure don't have what New York has, we
25 don't have what Paris has, but we have incredible

1 desert vistas, clean air out there, and a very rich
2 desert, desert vegetation, which will be permanently
3 destroyed by solar installations.

4 I do understand the seriousness of climate
5 change and I understand an urgent need to develop
6 renewable energy, and I do understand that the plan
7 that seems to exist at the county, state, and national
8 level claims to be for the good of the country and the
9 world. But just as we've heard so far, there are
10 alternative ways to confront the problem of global
11 warming.

12 And one thing that hasn't been mentioned this
13 evening, I don't believe -- we've seen very minor
14 government support for energy conservation. And to
15 some extent -- you know, I know that for a politician
16 to tell you to turn down your thermostat, turn it down
17 in the summer -- okay, I'm going to get confused on
18 that.

19 When a politician says, you know, put on
20 three sweaters in the winter, which Jimmy Carter did
21 and it didn't get him re-elected, or, you know, put up
22 with being a little bit hotter in the summer, that's
23 not a politically popular thing to do, I can see that.
24 And, honestly, I like to be comfortable.

25 But offering subsidies, offering loans for

1 people to better insulate their house, so they can
2 still be comfortable but be paying less for energy and
3 using less energy, seems to me should be pretty
4 popular. And I know there's been minor efforts in this
5 direction, but this should be a major thing.

6 And it's already been mentioned, but I
7 certainly think that instead of massive subsidies to
8 giant industries, subsidies and loans should be given
9 to cities or public utilities, such as the IID, so that
10 they can buy solar panels in quantity and make loans to
11 homeowners to install them on their rooftops. If I
12 could get a loan and get this on my rooftop, I could
13 repay it with what I'm going to save from my electric
14 bills.

15 And what would be the advantage? There would
16 be no need for the disruptive transmission lines,
17 energy wouldn't be lost in transmission, and we
18 wouldn't be at the mercy of a giant company who can
19 claim that lines are down and they have to raise the
20 rates or whatever and jerk us around as we in
21 California have been jerked around.

22 I also looked at the material that Terry
23 mentioned, that the EPA has suggested many previously
24 disturbed sites that could very well be considered for
25 renewable energy production and -- the sites that

1 already have infrastructure that are closer to where
2 people are living, and I believe that they need to be
3 used for solar energy before our pristine desert is
4 disturbed. And I believe that the BLM needs to
5 consider all these preferable alternatives in their
6 plan.

7 And I realize that it is more expedient for
8 the government to give billion dollar loan guarantees
9 to groups of investors and let each project come in
10 with all this money and level many squares of virgin
11 desert or desert that has cultural artifacts, and it's
12 certainly to the advantage of the one percent to be
13 given that expediency and that opportunity to make a
14 fortune.

15 But it would be much more to the advantage of
16 the rest of us in the 99 percent to get assistance with
17 energy conservation in our homes, to be able to have
18 solar panels wherever it's appropriate, and to have our
19 beautiful surroundings remain intact for our enjoyment.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. HARTMANN: The last speaker I have signed
22 up is Marilyn, and then after Marilyn speaks, we'll
23 give anyone else an opportunity to either speak for the
24 first time or speak again.

25 MS. MOSKOWITZ: Okay. I'm not used to using

1 microphones. I'm hoping this presentation isn't too
2 scattered because I have a number of things I want to
3 touch on.

4 One is I think it's really much more
5 appropriate and makes a whole lot more economic sense
6 to generate power locally for the cities. I think that
7 there have been solar towers constructed in cities, and
8 especially with the PV technology, that's a very viable
9 alternative.

10 We talked about -- I guess Susan talked about
11 solar on rooftops. There have been large buildings,
12 parking lot structures, that have lots of solar. I
13 think with the -- with a concerted effort to generate
14 power locally, that would make a whole lot more
15 economic sense. It doesn't have the cost of the
16 transmission and the cost of all the incredible
17 infrastructure you're going to have in the desert. And
18 the big cities can do that.

19 Right now in the world, Germany and China are
20 the big producers of solar. Germany has much less
21 sunshine days than we do here in the Southwest. It's
22 kind of an absurd thing that Germany is the biggest
23 producer of solar in the world. And they are also on
24 the cutting edge of solar production.

25 Okay. So now I'm talking about something a

1 little bit different. I'm real concerned that the
2 companies who are going to be doing these projects are
3 limited liability companies, that there's not going to
4 be a bond required sufficient for the cleanup and
5 restoration, because my concern is that -- and I'll
6 talk about this a little bit later. There's several
7 concerns.

8 One is I think the technology in terms of the
9 motors that drive the solar dishes is not proven
10 technology for this purpose. I'm real concerned about
11 that. Also, the use of water for these projects.

12 You're in a desert area that has very little water,
13 very little rainfall, and it's less and less each year.

14 There's some real problems because I think
15 some of these projects are very water-intensive using,
16 to keep the dishes clean, and there's lots of
17 dust and lots of wind that blows in the desert. So
18 you've got a real problem; we don't have the water.
19 The water we have is very precious, we need it.

20 Right here we're dependent on Colorado River
21 water. The Colorado River water is still under drought
22 conditions. In Las Vegas they are dependent on Lake
23 Mead. Lake Mead -- they've had a couple of good years,
24 but Lake Mead is still way down. Las Vegas is in
25 trouble, California is in trouble. We've got a water

1 problem and we're going to put huge amounts of water on
2 these solar dishes? Doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

3 Okay. The other thing is, look, long-term
4 economic feasibility of these projects. It's not just
5 the transmission and the infrastructure and what it's
6 going to take to clean it up and the restoration that's
7 really not feasible and possible in the desert.

8 Right now you've got -- you've got the
9 equivalent of the California Gold Rush in North Dakota.
10 There are natural gas fields the size of West Virginia
11 underground. That's going to alter, I think, the whole
12 energy picture. Natural gas has been talked about for
13 a long, long time.

14 Has anybody done a cost-benefit analysis long
15 term of what this means to this very expensive probably
16 not really feasible idea to site these huge solar
17 dishes that use a lot of water, that require a lot of
18 infrastructure, that require a lot of transmission
19 lines in all this desert area? I think somebody needs
20 to do some kind of look at long-term economic
21 feasibility. It makes much more sense to do solar
22 locally in cities and do it in towers.

23 In the Southwest, you have so much sunshine.
24 These towers can rotate. Okay. It's feasible. It
25 makes a lot of sense. To me, anyways.

1 The other thing is the soil structure in the
2 desert is really, really delicate. There are ruts in
3 the desert that have been there for decades; it doesn't
4 change. The sand dunes are different. Okay. The wind
5 blows the sands, things change. But in the desert,
6 it's a very delicate soil structure. It depends on
7 microbes. It's not easily restored. It's not just the
8 plants. Everything in the desert depends on the soil
9 structure. Once that's gone, it's not easy to bring it
10 back.

11 The other thing is that what are we doing?
12 We're promoting huge subsidies to corporations that
13 profit from oil and gas development as we speak on
14 public lands. I think our public lands are real
15 precious and we've got to safeguard them, not just for
16 us, but for the future, for our children and
17 grandchildren and great grandchildren. Once this
18 resource is gone, it's not coming back.

19 So I guess that's all. I'm trying to see if
20 there's anything else I want to say from my notes. No,
21 no, I think that's it.

22 So thank you.

23 MS. HARTMANN: Is there anyone who hasn't
24 spoken yet who would like to speak?

25 MR. SHARP-GARCIA: I haven't spoken and I'd

1 like to speak.

2 MS. HARTMANN: Marilyn, before you go, can we
3 get your last name so we can put it in the record?

4 MR. SHARP-GARCIA: I'm Philip K. Sharp-
5 Garcia, S-h-a-r-p-G-a-r-c-i-a. I'm an archeologist. I
6 live in Holtville. I've had to survey for a number of
7 environmental impact reports, including the Sunrise
8 PowerLink project, which I'm currently working as an
9 environmental monitor for, and I just wanted to speak
10 to the -- my understanding of the environmental impact
11 report is that it didn't -- you didn't do any surveys
12 or reports on possibly using farmland or other
13 disturbed land, and I find that that would be -- that
14 was a severe miscalculation.

15 If you were to use farmland or fallow land or
16 otherwise disturbed land rather than building it in
17 pristine desert, it would save you money. A lot of the
18 farmland has power lines near it. You wouldn't have to
19 build quite as many -- you wouldn't have to try and
20 build transmission towers.

21 There's a project that I'm -- some colleagues
22 have told me about between Palo Verde and -- going to
23 be -- to Banning, that has been shut down because of
24 various environmental concerns. And, at the moment, my
25 understanding is that they're building a transmission

1 line to a substation, and that's basically not going to
2 connect anything, due to various concerns,
3 environmental and otherwise.

4 We've got the Sunrise PowerLink, which is
5 going to be a huge upgrade to our transmission
6 infrastructure. It's got its own issues associated
7 with it, but for the most part it's following the old
8 swivel corridor or whatever, so it's basically next to
9 an existing power line.

10 The other concern is that if you're building
11 out in the desert, you're going to -- in pristine
12 desert or whatever, there's a concern that the Imperial
13 Valley doesn't -- it never meets the air quality
14 standards because of windblown dust.

15 And this was brought up, about the Valley
16 Fever, the stuff -- if you were to get Valley Fever
17 from digging into the ground or from windblown dust
18 that was disturbed from digging, there's no real
19 treatment for it. It can be fatal, but I haven't heard
20 of a death in a few years. I have a number of
21 colleagues who have contracted Valley Fever, and it's
22 going to be basically with them for the rest of their
23 lives.

24 It's this fungus that grows in your lungs and
25 it severely restricts your airways. It's like -- it's

1 going to be basically -- if your immune system gets
2 weak, you're going to get sick again, and it's really
3 bad for you. And it's found subsurface in a lot of
4 desert areas, especially in Southern California and
5 Arizona, and -- yeah. When I'm digging, I'm usually
6 wearing some kind of respirator, if I have to work on
7 an excavation or something or whatnot.

8 Anyway, those are all concerns that I don't
9 think have been addressed. I haven't read the newest
10 version of the environmental impact report, but from
11 the previous speakers it seems like they still haven't
12 addressed any of those issues.

13 Thank you.

14 MS. HARTMANN: Is there anyone else?

15 MS. HALL: Hi. My name's Jamie Hall, and I
16 live in the desert and I work in the desert. I've
17 grown up there and I absolutely love it.

18 I just want to generalize my comments and
19 just say that there's no place like the Mojave Desert,
20 and I just want to emphasize that -- on everyone else's
21 comments tonight, that once this is gone, you won't get
22 it back. And there's no place here that's anywhere --
23 that looks anything like this desert, and there's so
24 many of us that enjoy it and love being here. And it's
25 just silly that there's so many simple alternatives

1 that haven't been really looked at.

2 And so I just want to emphasize that the
3 alternatives that you've briefly mentioned in the
4 Supplement and all the rest of the PEIS should be
5 further looked at, especially generating electricity
6 locally, closer to the urban centers where it's needed.
7 You know, make sure that you've done everything you can
8 possibly before you're going to take a big chunk of
9 land out of the pristine desert and get rid of it
10 because there's definitely things you can do before you
11 go to that route, such as, you know, putting rooftop
12 solar in commercial things.

13 Every new commercial building that gets put
14 up from here on out could be, you know, easily, I think
15 -- maybe not -- but I think it should be easily
16 incorporated into the plans that solar -- and maybe
17 other types of renewable energy -- be incorporated into
18 all of the commercial development.

19 You know, whenever -- for an example, when
20 people do try to get rooftop solar on their homes, the
21 companies that provide those panels tell you that, you
22 know, you need to get your home energy efficient before
23 you put the panels on. So that's basically what I'm
24 trying to say, is that you need to make sure all the
25 small things are done before you go and put the big,

1 huge utility-scale solar out in the desert, places that
2 are far away from the people and places that are unique
3 and loved. So that's pretty much it.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. HARTMANN: Anyone else?

6 MS. HIGGINSON: My name is Jane Higginson. I
7 live in San Diego, but I work here at Imperial Valley
8 College, and I've been involved in natural resource
9 management things for a long time.

10 I guess the image that comes to my mind with
11 this project is that, you know, historically -- and no
12 offense to the BLM or anything, but this is just an
13 historic fact, that mineral extraction has historically
14 taken place a lot on BLM land, and this is just another
15 kind of extraction. It's just another ignoring the
16 patterns of nature and extracting -- even though we're
17 calling this renewable energy, it's already been
18 pointed out that it's not going to be renewable from
19 the standpoint of soil ecosystems, biodiversity and
20 cultural resources.

21 So the energy will be basically extracted
22 from these desert areas and transmitted via straight
23 lines to dense population areas, and this is a pattern
24 that we've made mistakes with in the past.

25 So the energy companies get the land for

1 free, they extract the energy, it goes on these
2 straight-line transmission corridors to the densely
3 populated areas, and it's the same ol' same ol'. The
4 land is going to be degraded forever, same ol' same ol'
5 pattern.

6 I guess I'm afraid that this pattern is being
7 promoted instead of developing rooftop solar and so on
8 and conservation because the energy companies stand to
9 make the biggest buck, the easiest, with this pattern.
10 And it's not going to be sustainable, even though we're
11 calling it renewable energy. So I hope that the
12 history of that pattern of extraction is visible in
13 your minds when you think about this project.

14 It's also very disturbing that it's just
15 going to be another way to gut the Endangered Species
16 Act. It is. It's going to be another foot in the door
17 to gut the Endangered Species Act.

18 It's already known that these big solar
19 projects in the Mojave are right now one of the biggest
20 threats to the desert tortoise. There's concrete data
21 about that. We don't know enough to quantify the
22 impact to the soil ecosystem, but that's going to be
23 another really big impact, but we can't quantify it now
24 so it's not even being talked about in mitigation.

25 The tortoises -- typically the mitigation is

1 to translocate them to another area. They already know
2 that most of them die when they do that.

3 When you disturb the soil, plants, invasive
4 species grow in that are not food plants that are
5 acceptable to the desert tortoises. The same thing is
6 going to keep happening on an immense scale if the
7 projects are implemented as visualized.

8 So I'm really pro conservation first of
9 energy, and then, as the other speakers have been
10 saying, develop renewable energy locally, which doesn't
11 involve the BLM lands, I realize, so it may be a moot
12 point, but it should involve the Department of Energy.

13 So that's about all I have to say.

14 MS. HARTMANN: Thank you.

15 Is there anyone else?

16 MS. WEINER: I just have one question. How
17 was this meeting advertised? I'm rather shocked at the
18 small turnout of people. And people I talked to in the
19 Valley today hadn't heard that there was a meeting. So
20 was it in the paper, were there any posters up? Yeah,
21 those of us in the loop, we know how to be in touch
22 with the PEIS and the DOE web site. But what about the
23 other citizens, how have they been informed of this
24 process?

25 MS. HARTMANN: It was advertised in the local

1 media. I don't have the exact date.

2 Do you know, Shannon?

3 MS. STEWART: I don't know actually. We did
4 try and -- I mean, in the *Federal Register* notice that
5 went out on the 28th of October, we did describe where
6 we would have meetings. I think at that point we
7 didn't have specific hotels, but we did say El Centro
8 and that the notification would happen at least 15 days
9 in advance of this meeting locally, and that did take
10 place. So I can find out specifics if you want. If
11 you want to leave your name or contact information, I
12 can follow up.

13 MS. WEINER: And also, it might be me, but
14 when I went to that web site looking for a link to the
15 Supplement, I couldn't find it on your -- on that web
16 site. But, you know, again, I didn't spend an hour.

17 MS. HARTMANN: Well, just briefly, there's
18 tabs across the top, and if you click on "documents,"
19 it will be the first one discussed at the top, and then
20 it goes down and gives you the draft also. I can
21 actually show you, if you want to stick around
22 afterwards, where to find it.

23 MR. ARROW-WEED: Did you tell the Quechan
24 Tribe about this meeting?

25 MS. HARTMANN: They are informed I believe

1 through our web site also. If they are subscribers,
2 then notifications go out, e-mail notifications.

3 MR. ARROW-WEED: I'm left out. Not everybody
4 uses computers.

5 MR. SHARP-GARCIA: There's a project that got
6 shut down because they were able to demonstrate that
7 they hadn't made an attempt to consult the tribe over
8 it. That was sort of sad.

9 MS. STEWART: Yeah, so we are undertaking
10 formal consultation with all tribes in the six-state
11 area. Those letters have gone out specifically to the
12 contacts in the tribes.

13 We understand that there isn't computer
14 access for everyone, which is why we notify the local
15 media. We provide documents in the reading rooms for
16 people who don't have computers. We try to work with
17 you if you don't have that access. But consultation is
18 ongoing -- NHPA, National Historic Preservation Act,
19 consultation is ongoing, so those things are underway.

20 MS. HARTMANN: And also all of the tribes
21 were sent hard copies of the documents.

22 MR. ARROW-WEED: So they are the ones that
23 didn't tell me about it.

24 MS. MASSEY: I just have a question. Could
25 you briefly please explain what Argonne National

1 Laboratory does in addition to helping put together
2 this document?

3 MS. HARTMANN: We are -- our job is to put
4 together the document -- we have the environmental
5 resource specialists that go out and look at the solar
6 energy zones and do the evaluations of the species
7 present, and we do some air quality modeling, which is
8 described in both the draft PEIS and the Supplement.

9 But most of the work that we've done has
10 focused on the solar energy zones, and BLM and DOE have
11 developed the policies, and we've also helped with
12 putting together the design features and mitigation
13 measures.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Another important
15 topic that's been coming up with regards to climate
16 change is the albedo. And I'm not sure if anybody has
17 quantified the change in albedo of covering, you know,
18 so many hundreds of thousands of desert acres that's
19 generally light colored with black solar panels.

20 And now, you know, one of the geoengineering
21 recommendations is for everybody to paint their roofs
22 white, or half of it white and put solar panels on the
23 other half. But this is a big deal. And, you know, as
24 far as geoengineering recommendations goes, making sure
25 that we don't decrease the reflection of the sunlight

1 back out because that's going --

2 MS. HIGGINSON: Could you just explain what -
3 - what's albedo?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Albedo means the
5 amount of light that's reflected off of the surface.
6 So if it's light-colored, it reflects more light; if
7 it's dark-colored, it absorbs more light. A-l-b-e-d-o.

8 And the deal is, right now, the global
9 warming is accelerating faster than people -- than the
10 climate scientists predicted it would. And one reason
11 is that as the snowcaps melt, more -- you know, the
12 ocean and the land are darker than the snow, so they
13 are absorbing more sun and more heat.

14 So it's been recommended by some geoengineers
15 that -- you know, we try to counteract that by creating
16 more light-colored surfaces on our own structures. So
17 if we had lighter roofs, of course that would mean --
18 you know, if you have a solar panel on your roof, you
19 can't have a white roof, but maybe half of your roof
20 can be white.

21 But the deal is if we cover this relatively
22 light-colored desert with black solar panels for, you
23 know, hundreds of thousands of acres, or however many
24 acres, I wonder if anybody has tried to calculate the
25 change in albedo of doing that. And if they haven't,

1 they should. Because this is a real legitimate concern
2 among climate scientists, the change in albedo. Okay.

3 MS. HARTMANN: Is there anyone else?

4 We do appreciate you coming and giving us
5 your comments. As I said earlier, all the comments
6 will be posted, the transcripts, and the meeting
7 material. And if there's any more comments you want to
8 provide, just do so either via the web site or mail a
9 comment in before the end of the comment period, which
10 is January 27th.

11 So I think that concludes the meeting for
12 tonight.

13 MR. ARROW-WEED: You know, I used solar power
14 a long, long time ago when it first came out. I used
15 solar power. I had no electricity and I used it. I
16 know how great it is. It's good if you use it the
17 right way, if you don't overdo it. So I used enough
18 power to live on, for lighting and things like that, to
19 watch TV. I used that before, so I know that solar
20 power is great.

21 I'm not saying I'm against solar power. It's
22 what you're doing, that's what I'm talking about.
23 Because I've used solar power before, and I still have
24 it at home, it's still there, and I turn it on once in
25 a while when I go to the other house that I have.

1 Solar is good, but it's what you're doing to get that.

2 You're going to far is what I'm saying.

3 But solar power is good. I've used it
4 before. I still have it. I plan to expand on that a
5 little bit too. Probably next month, I want to expand.
6 I have more panels I want to put on and get more
7 batteries. So I'm familiar with solar power. I even
8 rigged it up myself, too. No, my brother helped me one
9 time. We rigged it up. So we bought it a long time
10 ago, so I'm familiar with it.

11 MS. HARTMANN: Thank you all very much for
12 coming this evening.

13 (Whereupon, at 8:31 p.m., the meeting
14 was concluded.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, Irene R. Keating, the officer before whom the
3 foregoing deposition was taken, do hereby certify that
4 the witness whose testimony appears in the foregoing
5 deposition was duly sworn by me; that the testimony of
6 said witness was taken by me in stenotypy and
7 thereafter reduced to typewriting under my direction;
8 that said deposition is a true record of the testimony
9 given by said witness; that I am neither counsel for,
10 related to, nor employed by and of the parties to the
11 action in which this deposition was taken; and,
12 further, that I am not a relative or employee of any
13 counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor
14 financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of
15 this action.

16

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Irene R. Keating

22

Notary Public in and for

23

the County of Imperial, CA

24

25 CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER No. 8143

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