

Thank you for your comment, Connie Simkins.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is SolarM60248.

Comment Date: September 14, 2009 18:02:58PM
Solar Energy Development PEIS
Comment ID: SolarM60248

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Attachment: Connie solar comments.doc

Comment Submitted:

Please see attached letter.
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Connie Simkins
P.O. Box 333
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Monday, September 14, 2009

Solar Energy PEIS
Argonne National Laboratory
9700 South Cass Avenue – EVS/900
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Comments to PEIS to evaluate utility scale solar energy development

Gentlemen:

It is my lifelong privilege to live and work and recreate in Lincoln County, Nevada, a small rural lifestyle eastern Nevada county home to 4,000 people on 6.6 million acres, with 98.16 percent of this land managed by various federal agencies, primarily BLM. We agree that renewable energy is a valuable tool for the future of our energy independent goal for the United States. That is why we have personally been involved with Lincoln County leaders, BLM officials, impacted ranchers, and utility companies seeking to build these sustainable projects in our area. We see a bright future for a number of responsible uses of this renewable energy, including solar energy, wind turbines, and pinion-juniper biomass energy production.

We take this opportunity to comment on the PEIS for solar energy in three Lincoln County valleys: North Dry Lake, Delamar, and East Mormon Mountains. Many federal projects require taking a look at the customs and culture of the areas impacted. We understand there are slope limitations, proximity to existing and planned energy mainline corridors, and interconnection with other present and future power facilities and transmission lines. All of these items would have a major impact on all of the multiple uses of the public land in these three areas of our County.

To maintain the Renewable, Sustainable, and Responsible components of any future solar energy project, we suggest you make it a requirement that each area undergo a site specific analysis that incorporates input from the impacted ranching operations, local county leaders, and appropriate Ely District BLM personnel who help manage these lands. Any such solar project would certainly not be built or exist in a vacuum, or all by itself. Construction of any project will impact its neighbors, whether they be private land owners, public land users, or the diverse population of animals, wildlife, and vegetation that exist here today. You must analyze all of these impacts, not just perform the solar suitable reviews.

For instance, in your North Dry Lake Valley study area, there already exists a major transmission line that supplies Lincoln County citizens with power from Hoover Dam; plus plans for three additional major north-south transmission lines, planned by NV Energy, South West Intertie Project, and Southern Nevada Water Authority who plans a major water pipeline and major powerline to service that pipeline; plus there exists now an off road recreational vehicle trail (Silver State Trails); in addition to the occasional hunter, picnicker, sight seer, miner, camper, photographer, public use and accesses; all what we refer to casual uses in all these areas. All this adds up to major impacts that require advance planning and implementing of mitigation measures if the area is to survive in its current condition and beauty.

These same impacts and plans exist in the Delamar Valley area. Concerning the East Mormon Mountains Solar Study Area: this area is an active grazing area which in 2005 was the scene of a 600,000 acre fire that removed about 75 percent of the beneficial vegetation and this area is just now starting to rebuild itself into multiple use values once again; earlier this area of 95,000 acres was reduced by 39,000 acres to protect the desert tortoise while multiple uses have been eliminated; the area has a power corridor that contains a major transmission line serving the south west areas of Las Vegas and southern California; along with an underground natural gas pipeline; plus a proposal for a clean coal fired power plant by Sithe Global Energy.

We urge you to make No Net Loss of Grazing Units (Animal Unit Months or AUM's) your priority. This brings to the planning table the direct means to make things better before you would accept or approve any solar power plant applications. We want to be a part of the process that makes these advance plans and stand ready to cooperate and work with you to assure continued multiple uses in our valleys. This advance plan must contain forage manipulation to increase beneficial forage for all animals; noxious weed and non-beneficial plant controls; provide for emergency communication, fire and medical responses in this rural area; short and long term monitoring and a mechanism for appropriate adjustments to this mitigation plan. Livestock grazing is the environmentally responsible way to be careful with this renewable resource.

Another way to make solar energy successful in this County would be to assure that BLM require that every solar energy applicant fund an independent full time professional position, administered by the Lincoln County Commission, to work with the grazing operators, the solar plant contractor, the federal agencies, and Lincoln County officials to monitor the planning, engineering, permitting, impact mitigations in advance of construction, construction work, and operations of the subject solar plant.

We understand that some of your PEIS preparation staff made a tour of these areas in Lincoln County with the local BLM staff in the Caliente and Ely offices. Please accept our invitation to meet with local leaders and the ranchers involved in these areas on your next trip to Nevada. Feel free to contact me at any time we can assist with plans or information. We look forward to working with you to improve our electricity independent future.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Connie Simkins

cc:
Governor Jim Gibbons
Senator Harry Reid
Senator John Ensign
Congressman Dean Heller
Congresswoman Dina Titus
Congresswoman Shelley Berkley
Nev Legislative Committee on Public Lands, Dean Rhoads
Bob Abbey, National Director, BLM
(continued on Page 3)

Ron Wenker, Nevada State Director, BLM
Rosemary Thomas, Ely District Manager, BLM
Victoria Barr, Caliente FO Manager, BLM
Paul Mathews, Chairman L.C. Commission
Carl Pyatt, Chairman LC Regional Development Authority
Ron Cerri, Central committee, Nevada State Grazing Board
Meghan Brown, Nevada Cattlemen's Association
Jeff Fontaine, Nevada Association of Counties
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Assemblyman Ed Goedhart
Assemblyman Pete Goicoechea