

Steve Saway stevesaway@gmail.com
To:Chris_Horyza@blm.gov 07/08/2009 12:31 PM
Cc:
Subject: Gillespie Solar Study Area

Hi Chris,

Thanks again for the update you provided at the last RAC meeting on planning for solar energy development on BLM lands. It was very timely, although I wish the BLM Washington Office solar energy press release had been published prior to the RAC meeting so we could have discussed with you the proposed Arizona Solar Energy Study Areas.

I don't have a detailed map, but from what I can tell using the web site, it appears that the Gillespie solar study area could pose serious multiple use conflicts. Does the area include Agua Caliente Road? I believe that the upcoming Lower Sonoran RMP envisions that Agua Caliente Road will be designated a backcountry byway. As you probably know, it serves as a major recreational gateway to pristine Sonoran Desert public lands that offer a wide range of recreational opportunities, including hiking, hunting, dispersed camping, wildlife viewing, rockhounding, OHV backcountry touring, etc., as well as access to spectacular scenery, including the Gila Bend Mountains, Yellow Medicine Butte, and Fourth of July Butte. This access is important to local rural communities which rely on public lands for recreational opportunities. Also, it appears the Gillespie solar study area includes several OHV routes that lead south from Agua Caliente Road to provide access to the Signal Peak and Woolsey Peak Wilderness areas. I'm concerned that the Gillespie solar study area could jeopardize the public's ability to access spectacular public lands via Agua Caliente Road and connecting OHV routes, mainly west and south of the proposed solar study area. Were recreation and public access thoroughly considered when this area was nominated as a solar study area? Please correct me if I have incorrect information or if these concerns can be mitigated as the planning process moves forward.

Thanks for any clarification you can provide.

Steve