



## THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

July 15, 2008

*Delivered via electronic mail and overnight mail (with attachments)*

Solar Energy PEIS Scoping  
Argonne National Laboratory  
9700 S. Cass Ave. - EVS/900  
Argonne, IL 60439

**Re: Scoping Comments on the Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept and fully consider these scoping comments on behalf of The Wilderness Society and the other organizations identified below. The Wilderness Society's more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide care deeply about the management of our public lands. Founded in 1935, our mission is to protect wilderness and inspire Americans to care for our wild places. We appreciate the opportunity to submit these comments to the Bureau of Land Management and Department of Energy on the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for agency-wide solar energy programs and policy. We are submitting these comments today via the website and also forwarding a copy with attachments to you separately.

At a time when the threat of global warming, air and water pollution, and dramatically escalating fuel prices stand to force Americans to entirely rethink how we obtain and consume energy, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Department of Energy (DOE) now have the opportunity to play a critical role in cutting-edge, non-polluting and renewable energy development. The Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) provides an important part of that opportunity.

We support the agencies' commitment to develop the Solar Energy PEIS and urge you to take this opportunity to commit to responsible development of solar energy resources. The PEIS process should be carried out thoughtfully, rigorously, and with a sense of urgency needed to balance the current drive to develop oil and natural gas on our public lands. Oil and natural gas companies have been given the opportunity to lease and run roughshod over some of our most precious public lands throughout the West with minimal consideration for the ecological, recreational and cultural resources that exist there. This PEIS is a chance to plan for development that does not ignore the other important uses and values of these lands.

# **ATTACHMENT 1**



## THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

July 8, 2008

The Honorable David Obey  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jerry Lewis  
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Obey and Ranking Member Lewis:

On behalf of The Wilderness Society and its members, I write to ask for your assistance with necessary appropriations to enable appropriate siting and development of renewable energy projects on the public lands.

As you know, our nation needs to move aggressively forward with renewable energy development. Renewable energy will play a key role in reducing emissions of heat-trapping gases, and is an essential component in the future economic and energy security of our nation. America's public lands in the West are blessed with substantial solar energy resources and can play an important role in this regard. Of course, our public lands are managed for multiple uses including recreation, wildlife conservation, historical preservation, and wilderness. As with any activity, solar energy development will have environmental impacts and will not be appropriate for all places on the public lands, such as wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and national parks. Fortunately, we have the opportunity to facilitate development of these resources in the best, most appropriate places.

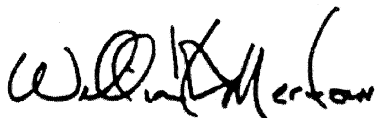
The Bureau of Land Management has announced that it will prepare Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to determine where large-scale deployment is compatible with other land management goals. The Wilderness Society strongly supports this effort. While completing the PEIS, the agency has committed to processing pending applications and lifted its moratorium on new applications for developing large scale solar energy projects.

Despite lifting the moratorium on accepting solar project applications, BLM still faces a backlog of more than 130 applications representing a combined total of more than 70 gigawatts of solar potential in part as a consequence of this Administration's single-minded focus on issuing oil and gas drilling permits. Between 2001 and 2007, this Administration has processed 35,106 permits to drill for oil and gas projects, but has yet to process a single permit to develop solar energy even though some project applications have been in the queue since January 2005. The agency finds itself unprepared and without the required resources to address this mounting challenge.

In light of the significant work to be done, I am writing to encourage you to appropriate \$1 million to the BLM for the specific purpose of addressing the significant backlog of solar project permits. Pending and future applications should be prioritized by the agency to work down this backlog as expeditiously as possible. We believe a top priority for the agency is consideration of serious projects (such as those that have entered into power purchase agreements and have secured project financing), and moving forward with environmental review and siting of appropriate projects quickly and intelligently.

The Wilderness Society stands ready to assist the agency in preparing a robust PEIS and responsibly deploying solar and other renewable generation technologies on the public lands. If done well, the agency can assemble a coherent policy to develop solar energy resources on the public lands in a manner that provides the country with important renewable energy resources and is consistent with the agency's other land management responsibilities, including protecting wildlife, water quality, and America's special places.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Meadows". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "William" and last name "Meadows" clearly distinguishable.

William H. Meadows  
President

CC: Representative Norm Dicks  
Representative Todd Tiahrt

# **ATTACHMENT 2**



SCIENCE FROM



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY



# **NATURAL DIVIDENDS**

*Wildland Protection  
and the Changing  
Economy of the  
Rocky Mountain West*

MICHELLE HAEFELE, PH.D. • PETE MORTON, PH.D. • NADA CULVER