

Thank you for your comment, Ed Stovin.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is SolarS50472.

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My name is Ed Stovin and I am submitting comments to the Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS on behalf of the California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA.org). CORVA works to promote the positive aspects of vehicular access on public lands and protect that right. CORVA is very concerned about the installation of solar energy facilities on public land in California and would like to comment on that here. We appreciate the state's need for renewable, non-polluting energy, but feel it needs to be considered with current and future land users in mind. A very important user is the off-road vehicle user. There are 1,126,713 registered off-road vehicles in California (Cal State Parks, Off-Highway Division, as of April 30, 2008) and many times that more of street legal off-road vehicles in the state. These millions of people have a recreational need to leave the urban areas of the state to experience the natural settings of our beautiful back county, including the deserts. Precious little (less than 2%) of California desert is currently open for off-road recreation, not enough now for all those who wish to participate. We wish for those people choosing areas for solar energy generation to look away from legal off-road areas on public land.

Where to go then? Our first choose is to recommend putting solar energy devices on the rooftops of the buildings that need electricity. This allows fewer unsightly, inefficient and dangerous transmission lines. When economy of scale is factored in, it may make sense to build large scale facilities. When this option is considered, we believe it is in the publics best interest for the private companies who wish to produce solar energy to do so on private property. Land is inexpensive and readily available in the desert. Sterling solar is working to develop 6500 acres in Imperial County for solar energy. Why can't they do this on private property? See <http://www.iid.com/Operations/SurplusLandSale> for a current example of 2,900 acres for sale by a government agency in the same geographic region. It may be argued that electricity needs to be developed for the public good, therefore it should be developed on public land. People also need to eat vegetables. These are now grown on private land, even though they benefit the public. This logic may be applied to private companies generating electricity for sale to the public.

Should these valid arguments fail to influence and solar energy projects are approved on public land where off-highway vehicle users recreate, we believe that mitigation should take place to compensate those who will loose recreational opportunities. We would expect that, at a minimum, mile for mile or acre for acre mitigation take place for any OHV land lost due to development. There is also value in the natural views we enjoy while recreating. Mitigation should also be considered for visual losses in ways such as development of other off-road opportunities or facilities built or upgraded in existing off-road areas. Replacement opportunity would need to be approved by off-highway vehicle organizations such as CORVA to insure that it is adequate mitigation.

The beautiful character of our public lands should be preserved whenever possible so that people can enjoy it. Once land is scraped flat for energy development, it can never be returned to its former state. Please preserve our natural land whenever possible so that the people can enjoy it now and in the future.