

Thank you for your comment, Heidi McIntosh.

The comment tracking number that has been assigned to your comment is SolarS50666.

Comment Date: July 16, 2008 00:06:51AM  
Solar Energy Development PEIS  
Comment ID: SolarS50666

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Comment Submitted:

July 14, 2008

VIA BLM Solar EIS Website and U. S Mail

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

Re: Scoping Comments of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance

Greetings:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Solar Energy PEIS. We strongly support the development of alternative energy solutions to meet our resource demands, and welcome a broad study of such development opportunities in a way that is comprehensive, ensures the efficient development of solar energy and at the same time protects the pristine and scenic wilderness landscapes for which the west, and Utah, is world renowned.

We have endorsed and signed the comments submitted by The Wilderness Society and others, and incorporate those herein. SUWA submits these comments separately to clarify the location and extent of BLM lands proposed for wilderness designation in American's Redrock Wilderness Act, and urge you to avoid these areas as you attempt to delineate the location of solar energy facilities and their supporting infrastructure, including roads and transmission facilities. We are sending via U.S. Mail a CD/ file with maps showing the precise location of lands included in the wilderness bill.

America's Redrock Wilderness Act

America's Redrock Wilderness Act is now pending in Congress, with twenty co-sponsors in the Senate and 160 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. It would protect over nine million acres of BLM land in Utah where citizen volunteers have mapped areas where there is no development, but which offer vast opportunities for solitude and remarkable scenery. All told, the BLM has itself inventoried over seven million acres of the proposal in the course of a 1999 inventory and subsequent planning-related reviews. In nearly all cases, the BLM's inventory confirmed the work of the citizen inventory, ultimately finding that these areas remain undeveloped, with no roads or other significant impacts which would detract from their naturalness. Our website has more information about the bill and the lands it would protect at [www.suwa.org](http://www.suwa.org).

Because of the spectacular beauty and the acknowledged natural character of the landscapes within America's Redrock Wilderness Act, we believe that solar energy development should be focused outside of the boundaries delineated in the wilderness bill. Doing so would preserve a wondrous part of the nation's western public lands, and also encourage the development of solar resources in places which have already been impacted and where existing support infrastructure is already in place or most easily sited. Focusing development in places already impacted by development makes it both more cost-effective for the solar industry, and less

controversial for all at the same time.

Steering the development of solar resources away from wilderness-quality landscapes would also likely place these energy developments in closer proximity to communities which could benefit from the economic activity and jobs generated by the development of solar energy. Along these lines, we urge you to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the potential economic benefit to communities where solar energy development may take place.

We believe that this EIS is an important milestone in the nation's necessary and inevitable transition towards sustainable resource development and away from the dead-end reliance on fossil fuels. With a full appreciation of the economic opportunities available, and of the simultaneous need to protect unique landscapes, we believe that this EIS will facilitate the speedy development of these much-needed solar resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important undertaking.

Sincerely,

Heidi McIntosh  
Associate Director