

From: Eric Solorio
To: Docket Optical System
Date: 1/20/2010 4:31 PM
Subject: Fwd: Solar Millenium Ridgecrest Project - scoping

>>> Daniel Burnett <imdanburnett@verizon.net> 1/20/2010 10:23 AM >>>
 sent via internet only

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Regarding: Docket Number 09 AFC 9

Persons,

I believe this project should not be allowed to occur on the proposed site because it will utterly destroy thousands of acres of nearly pristine desert habitat and it will encourage unsustainable development in the area given the water situation in the Indian Wells Valley. Having said that, I appreciate that my beliefs are unimportant. This scoping phase is an effort to identify all of the issues to be addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement so that a reasoned decision about this proposal can be made by the various decision makers in this process. To that end I am putting forth below a few issues I would hope that DEIR will address,

Water is a critical resource in the Indian Wells Valley. As this project is now described it would use only 150 acre feet of water a year. If I am correct this is about what three or four residential households use in a year. However the project proposal is to install a 12" pipeline to bring water to the site. I believe that a 12" pipeline is capable of delivering in excess of 5,000 acre feet per year. Why such a huge line? How will water consumption be monitored? Can the scope of the project be changed such that a pipeline only large enough to provide about 150 acre feet per year is installed?

If completed this project will have some impact upon the growth of commerce and industry in the Indian Wells Valley. I hope the DEIR will completely address this impact. Will new industry come to the valley because of cheap energy? Will the operation and follow-on industry attract more residents? What impact will this have on water, air quality, and infrastructure such as roads, sewage, schools, etc.?

I believe the proposal for this project states that about 4,000 acres of land will be permanently denuded. I hope the DEIR will address the impact of such vast habitat removal upon threatened and endangered species in the Indian Wells Valley and in California. This is prime Desert Tortoise and Mojave Ground Squirrel habitat. What is the impact upon these species of having so much prime habitat removed from the survival equation? What is the cumulative effect of this upon these species and other threatened species? Can these species survive in the Indian Wells Valley with so much habitat taken away? Will the removal of these lands from natural habitat use result in the extinction of these species in the Indian Wells Valley? Is it possible to mitigate these species to extinction here?

Burrowing Owls use this area. The Salton Sea water transfer to San Diego will potentially threaten the Burrowing Owls in the Cochilla Valley which represent 70% of the population of this species in California. What is the cumulative impact of the Solar Millennium project upon this species of concern? How will

other proposed solar projects impact this species in our area?

Does this project have to be placed where it is proposed? I hope the DEIR will address how this site was selected and describe other sites that were considered and why they were eliminated from further consideration. I would love to see this facility replace the hay growing ranches along Brown Road north of Inyokern in the Indian Wells Valley. I am sure this will be "out of scope" for this DEIR but replacing hay growing with this project would result in substantial decrease of water usage in the Indian Wells Valley and not destroy any more desert habitat. It might be possible for Solar Millennium to join with the Indian Wells Valley Water District, the City of Ridgecrest, and Indian Wells Valley well owners to acquire the ranches for this project.

Will this be the last solar project in the valley or the first of many? How many proposals are there for solar projects and what is the cumulative impact of incremental approval of such projects? Can the DEIR address this? What is the carrying capacity of the Indian Wells Valley for solar projects?

Thank you for accepting my inputs to this process.

Sincerely,

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