

From: Eric Solorio
To: Docket Optical System
Date: 1/20/2010 4:31 PM
Subject: Fwd: Scoping comment re Solar Millennium Ridgecrest Solar Power Project

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>>> James Vijay <jimvijay@gmail.com> 1/20/2010 7:40 AM >>>
 California Energy Commission
 ATTN: Eric K. Solorio, Project Manager
 1516 Ninth Street, MS-15
 Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

Dear Mr. Solorio:

I am a very enthusiastic supporter of solar and other renewable/green energy projects. But we should minimize the impact of such projects on our precious natural, cultural, and water resources. This is why the proposed Solar Millennium (SM) project at the current site straddling Brown Road should be stopped and a different -- preferably already disturbed -- site should be selected for the project.

The following is my list of reasons why this site should not be despoiled:

1. Water. The water in the Indian Wells Valley (I WV) aquifer is a precious and possibly finite fossil remnant of the last ice age. Since the primary beneficiaries of the electricity will be in the Los Angeles area, any such project should use renewable water from the LA aqueduct. There are plans to "bank" excess water from the LA aqueduct in the I WV aquifer. This would imply pipes being built from the aqueduct to the I WV. If these pipes cannot be built in time to supply the large amount of water needed during the SM construction phase, the I WV should be promised an equivalent amount of water from the LA aqueduct at a later date.
2. Biological Impact. The site teems with desert tortoises, Mojave ground squirrels, burrowing owls, kit foxes, etc. Relocating these could cost several million dollars, if it can be done at all. Tortoises usually die if relocated, and the squirrels and foxes are very difficult to trap. Essentially this is pristine desert that SM plans to grade and terrace so the parabolic troughs can be level. They will move several hundred million cubic yards of dirt, resulting in a barren environment.
3. Cultural heritage. Since this is such a disruptive construction it will destroy graves and other sites considered special by local native American tribes. The region has evidence of human settlements from 12000 years ago, when there were lakes there.
4. Pristine Desert: This is a beloved local piece of wilderness that is enjoyed for its flowers, birds, animals, and quiet beauty. At night, it is used by local astronomy enthusiasts because of the lack of light pollution. All this could be lost forever.

The obvious question is why SM wants to despoil pristine desert when there is so much disturbed land in the vicinity. There are alfalfa

fields in Fremont valley around Cantil other than the ones to be used by the Beacon project. There are alfalfa fields north of Inyokern.

The BLM and other government agencies charged with managing federal/state lands should "zone" areas suitable for such solar projects after diligent surveys that are done in advance.

That would spare applicants like SM, and local inhabitants (who bear the brunt of the deleterious impacts) the time and energy spent on battles like this one. If such surveys had been done, I am sure the Brown Road site would be off-limits for this project.

Yours sincerely,

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