

From: Eric Solorio
To: Docket Optical System
Date: 1/21/2010 2:41 PM
Subject: Fwd: Ridgecrest : Solar Millennium Proposal

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09-AFC-9	
DATE	JAN 21 2010
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>>> Dave Maggie <gire_haggis_hovel@yahoo.com> 1/21/2010 1:34 PM >>>
 January 21, 2010

California Energy Commission
 ATTENTION: Eric K. Solorio, Project Manager
 1516 Ninth Street, MS-15
 Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

Dear Mr. Solorio

After spending much time researching, reviewing, observing, and making personal inquiries...I find myself more-than-compelled to share the following comments and concerns.

Please note: For future reference purposes...when referring to "Residents"... I am referring to the general (public) population Residents -of the Indian Wells Valley only, (and am excluding the inclusion of any of the local business community, City /and or/ Gov. Agencies, as well as any other private interest groups that would most likely gain monetarily [in some form, or another]...from Solar Millennium's presence.

There is a lot of confusion among Residents (of the Indian Wells Valley), and understandably so, since there has NOT been much in the way of readily available, (supplied to "the public"), accurately-detailed, non-biased, factual information.

Speaking about information (pertaining to Solar Millennium Proposal) that is supposed to be available to "the public"...is an "Environmental Impact Study", thoroughly done by The B.L.M., and then made accessible to us Residents.

As I was saying, so many Residents are confused about Solar Millennium's "Ridgecrest Solar Power Project" proposal, and infact believe that Solar Millennium's intention is to supply the Ridgecrest area with (Clean & Green) Solar Energy Power, as well as the offer of lots and lots of jobs for local Residents.

Well this sounds to good to be true, and it is (too good to be true).

For one thing, Solar Millennium is NOT supplying the Ridgecrest area with Solar Power !

And, then there is 'their" (estimated) needs for daily, operational usage of: Large consumption (in gallons): of L.P. Gas, which "they" propose to have trucked in, and (not to forget) the enormous volumes (in gallons) of water that is needed, water which would come from our Indian Wells Valley's groundwater supplies).

It is sounding less and less...like a "Clean & Green" way to obtain "Renewable Solar Energy" !

And as far as the actual number of potential jobs the locals might obtain, will probably not be any where near as numerous...as optimistically anticipated, and taking into account that it is common around here...to have the large, out-of-town construction companies, and their crews...come to Ridgecrest to do the work.

Regardless of how many (possible) employment positions locals could gain (on a temporary, or full-time basis), it still does not out-weigh, or diminish what we....as the general population Residents of The Indian Wells Valley could lose...if Solar Millennium's proposed "Ridgecrest Solar Power Project"...was given approval.

(NATIVE) GROUNDWATER SUPPLIES:

Whether it is our "potable" water supplies, or our "brackish" water supplies:(which, if need be in the future could be treated by reverse-osmosis to become "potable"), both are invaluable, and as documented and well-known in this valley... our native groundwater is NOT replenishing.

With this knowledge, (why should we and) why would we, Residents willingly allow Solar Millennium access to our ever-decreasing native groundwater supplies...!?!

After looking over some of Solar Millennium's estimations on Water Usage....which looks to be "unrealistically low"...particularly when it comes to "Dust Control" and "Washing the Solar Mirrors".

"Dust" is an ongoing, endlessly-perpetuating problem in the Indian Wells Valley, particularly when the desert ground is constantly disturbed, (by being driven on, ...for example), plus this desert area's natural hot, dry climate, and long-term state of drought, along with wind...can create, and move "the dust".. And it does !

"Dust" would be more than a full-time job, which Solar Millennium would not get the upperhand on, although they would probably use massive volumes of water trying to achieve that goal.

HEALTH CONCERNS:

On account of the disturbed desert ground, and "the dust" that develops because of it, (and then blows in the wind...), the Ridgecrest/ Indian Wells Valley has numerous respiratory/ bronchial/ lung, ailments.

One of these ailments is: Valley Fever (Coccidioidomycosis).

Valley Fever is a soil-dwelling fungi-which once air-borne, (and if wind-driven) can travel a significant distance.

Our prevailing winds, place the City of Ridgecrest -directly downwind from Solar Millennium's proposed site.

The CDC, California Department of Health Services, among other agencies, and medical professionals that have been studying, and documenting Valley Fever and its recent (and notable) increase in reported cases, all seem to agree that this increase (in certain Desert areas) seems to be related to disturbance of desert land due to new construction / scaping the ground, etc.

Valley Fever can, and does infect humans, and animals, and in severe cases, it can be fatal to either.

CULTURAL CONCERNS:

El Paso Wash, and Vicinity,(and Black Mountain), are rich in Native American History. This History is more than evident by the Burrial sites, and artifacts found throughout the region. Not only is this area Historical, and Spiritual, but is considered a Sacred place by local Native Americans.

The importance of this "Sacred Land"should be acknowledged, respected, and protected as such !

DARK SKIES:

As I recall from the first Ridgecrest meeting (held December 15, 2009), you MR. Solorio, were telling all of us present... about your driving into Ridgecrest (the night before the meeting)....and your personal observance of...just how dark our "Dark Skies" were.

As it stands at present, we already experience (some) nighttime "Light Pollution" (most likely coming from Apple Valley/ Adlanto/ Victorville, California, ...and from Las Vegas, Nevada).

Fortunately this above-mentioned "Light Pollution" has not seriously interfered with being able to experience our area's "Dark Skies".

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: If we can, (and we do), have nighttime "Light Pollution" coming from as far away as the above-mentioned locations, it certainly is NOT unreasonable to think that Solar Millennium (and its massive, far-reaching complex) would definately have a detrimental effect in diminishing, if not "seriously" diminishing...the ability to view our "Dark Skies", regardless of Solar Millennium's proposal of: "....using hooded light fixtures - to minimize nighttime glare - in deference to "Dark Skies" initiatives that strive to protect views of night skies...."

People, including the Residents of the Indian Wells Valley...are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of "protecting" our community-accessible "Dark Skies", (which are becoming more and more scarce, and threatened).

IMPORTANT:

Solar Millennium's Project (site)...Proposal...which totals an approximate: 3,920 acres of B.L.M. land.

Thousands of B.L.M. acres mentioned-above, have NOT been previously disturbed, and are intact, undeveloped, "Pristine Desert Land", which is "Prime Desert Tortoise Habitat", and an important connectivity breeding area, and "Habitat for Mojave Ground Squirrels", as well as a self-chosen Habitat area for the rest of the many, many wildlife species, (endangered, rare, or not), which call this area of "the desert"...HOME !

And, El Paso Wash (Sacred Native American Grounds) are also found within this area, as well as our "Dark Skies".

IF- Solar Millennium were allowed the use of this very special, thriving, precious, and environmentally-fragile section of Desert,...wildlife, and "protected" wildlife, along with vegetation, washes, streambeds, animal movement corridors, and the delicate eco-systems, and so much more, would be forever changed, and in time, would be lost.

**RELOCATION / TRANS-LOCATION- OPTIONS
of "PROTECTED", and "NON-PROTECTED"
WILDLIFE SPECIES :**

Since relocating "Desert Tortoise" has not had a good track record, as far as relocation success rates/ statistics go, ...and the fact that the relocation of the "Mojave Ground Squirrel" is virtually an impossibility,
" ...since they are physically-tied to the area...",
then the logical solution, and in the best interest of the "Protected" Desert Tortoise, and the "Protected" Mojave Ground Squirrel"... would be - to leave them undisturbed, therefore "protecting" them in their self-chosen habitats. Habitats where they rightfully belong !

IF - decisions were made in favor of Solar Millennium's Proposal, and "attempts" at wildlife relocation was the chosen option, (although in actuality it is a non-option), allowing these (Government-sanctioned) "relocation (attempts)" to take place, would be a serious crime ...(and on so many levels)....against nature, (and so-called protected nature at that) !

Thinking about the fragility and vulnerability of so many things that could, (and would), very well be placed in the path of Jeopardy,
(depending upon an all-important decision that is to be made), makes me reiterate once again...that we, "Residents of the Indian Wells Valley" would stand to lose...way more, than we could ever possibly gain...from having Solar Millennium come into "our" desert valley.

Signed, Maggie Gire

P.O. Box 880, Ridgecrest, CA, 93556-0880

- Cc. B.L.M. Ridgecrest Field Office
- Cc. B.L.M. State Office
- Cc. California Fish and Game Department
- Cc. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
- Cc. Nuuicunni Indian Cultural Center
- Cc. Kern County Water Resources Board
- Cc. Lahonton Water District
- Cc. Cerro Coso Community College
- Cc. Creg Peterson: Kern County Supervisor Assistant
- Cc. Kern County Planning Department
- Cc. Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce
- Cc. Inyokern Chamber of Commerce