

DOCKETED

Docket Number:	09-AFC-07C
Project Title:	Palen Solar Power Project - Compliance
TN #:	200106
Document Title:	USFWS email to Pete Bloom in re: Palen Helo GOEA Nest Survey Flights
Description:	email
Filer:	Ann Crisp
Organization:	Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife
Submitter Role:	Public Agency
Submission Date:	8/1/2013 11:37:24 AM
Docketed Date:	8/1/2013

Crisp, Ann@Energy

From: Fraser, Jody [jody_fraser@fws.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, July 31, 2013 4:15 PM
To: Peter Bloom; Michael Kuehn; scottthomas@bloombiological.com
Cc: Rodriguez, Magdalena@Wildlife; Kim Marsden; Frank P McMenimen; Crisp, Ann@Energy; Watson, Carol@Energy; Chris Huntley; Pete Sorensen; Tera Baird; Thomas Dietsch; Joel Pagel; Sharma, Shankar@Wildlife
Subject: High Priority: Palen Helo GOEA Nest Survey Flights

Hi Pete,

Thank you for your recent notification that aerial surveys for golden eagles are slated for August 2-3, 2013. While we appreciate your efforts to obtain the data necessary to inform a project-specific Eagle Conservation Plan and a potential take permit, we believe that any data acquired this late in the season may not be entirely helpful unless additional steps are taken to determine occupancy, if possible. Reconnaissance surveys in August only have utility in documenting nest structures, and golden eagles have either failed to nest (December - February), failed to reproduce (January – June), or have successfully reproduced (January – June).

As conveyed to you for the Solar Reserve Rice and other solar projects in this region, if you conduct late-season aerial surveys to detect breeding activity using methods that do not adhere to recommended protocol (Pagel et al. 2010), we further recommend the following data be collected:

- High resolution photographs of each nest site, with approximate bowl and scrape dimensions listed for each structure.
- Bowl and scrape dimensions should be collected during the nest entry. The scrape should be searched for eggshell fragments, prey remains, dead chicks, etc.
- High resolution photographs of each nest scrape while in or near the nest.
- Nest entry on sites where the nest is still solid on the cliff (i.e., not dilapidated). Nest entries may be done only by a highly qualified bio-climber who possesses the necessary state and federal permits.

If you proceed with the August surveys, please provide detailed notes for all golden eagle field work and a thorough discussion of the rationale used to justify late-season surveys when ground surveys to known nest structures could have been accomplished much earlier in the season and followed the Pagel et al. (2010) guidance. Also, please provide information about future monitoring during the upcoming fall and winter of the known nest structures within the 10-mile radius of the project site, as well as approximate dates of breeding season surveys for the 2014 nesting season.

An Eagle Conservation Plan has been highly recommended by the REAT agencies and in recent conversations, BrightSource appears more amenable to drafting a plan. Consequently, efforts to discern the potential risk to golden eagles caused by the power tower technology are critical and will depend on quality robust data, including additional eagle use surveys during the upcoming fall migration and overwintering periods. As currently presented, we remain concerned that the data collected thus far during 2013 may lack sufficient detail for a robust risk characterization under the Service's Eagle Conservation Plan guidance. We encourage you to work closely with the REAT agencies to determine the type of detail necessary to complete the plan.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Baird, Tera** <tera_baird@fws.gov>
Date: Mon, Jul 29, 2013 at 10:10 AM
Subject: Fwd: Palen Helo GOEA Nest Survey Flights
To: Jody Fraser <jody_fraser@fws.gov>

Hi Jody - this is for the Palen helicopter surveys.

Tera Keeler Baird
Biologist
777 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Suite 208
Palm Springs, California 92262

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Peter Bloom** <petebloom@bloombiological.com>
Date: Mon, Jul 29, 2013 at 8:18 AM
Subject: Palen Helo GOEA Nest Survey Flights
To: "[Tera Baird@fws.gov](mailto:Tera_Baird@fws.gov)" <[Tera Baird@fws.gov](mailto:Tera_Baird@fws.gov)>
Cc: Michael Kuehn <michaelkuehn@bloombiological.com>, Scott Thomas <scottthomas@bloombiological.com>

Good morning Tera,

I hope that all is well. BBI recently received approval from BLM to conduct the final helicopter nest survey flights in the wilderness areas of the Chuckwalla Mountains and have scheduled them for August 2 and 3rd. Please respond ASAP if you have any questions or comments.

Thank you, Pete

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