

DOCKET 07-AFC-5
DATE _____
RECD. AUG 30 2010

In Regards to Docket No. 07-AFC-5

To Whom It May Concern:

I am greatly disappointed to find out that Ivanpah Valley is currently slated to be converted into a solar energy farm. I feel that there has not been enough thought given to this issue. I am concerned first and foremost as an American citizen who does not like knowing that public land is being sacrificed in the name of 'alternative energy' when this is unnecessary, and when other options (such as the cheaper option of roof-top dispersal of solar power) have not been properly explored and acted upon prior to this. This should be a last resort. You would think long and hard before giving permission for a company to clear-cut sections of California's sequoia forests in exchange for setting up, say, windmill farms, and the same regard should be given to old-growth desert.

As you may know, the Mojave Desert, and the public lands therein, are a valuable resource to myself and many other Americans. When we visit we go to explore a wild landscape, to take in the natural beauty of the land, to enjoy solitude and quiet. We do not go with the intent of basking in the glory of hundreds of solar panels reflecting the already intense sunlight back into our eyes. Granted, California is the 'Golden State,' but that is not the kind of 'gold' that visitors have in mind when we arrive. We are much more interested in the wealth of natural riches your state has to offer. I understand the desire for progress and the reasons why it is important to move toward green energy, but destroying our last remaining areas of wilderness—of refuge—is not the way to achieve these goals. There is also another important concern that I wish to address that relates to destruction of these lands.

Destruction of these lands—as you know—goes hand-in-hand with destruction of habitat (and, thus, life) of the endangered desert tortoise. While there have been requirements set that require BrightSource Energy to translocate the tortoises, which constitute an admirable attempt to save them, this attempt is almost certain to fail based on prior experiments. The tortoise translocation involved in the Fort Irwin expansion project, for example, resulted in a 44% morality rate. A similar mortality rate can be expected as a result of the current project, and this is *not* factoring in concerns like the likelihood that the relocation of the tortoises will lead to them crossing (and being killed on) Interstate 15 due to the lack of a protective fence along the highway, which will further increase the mortality rate. Why is the company not expected to pay for a fence, or for other measures that could help mitigate the inevitable (and already massive) damage that will be done by displacing the tortoises? Please reconsider.

Sincerely,

Thomas Neistler