

# HIGHLIGHTS NEEDLES FIELD OFFICE

## California Desert District Advisory Council Meeting

December 6 and 7, 2013

### First Solar Stateline Solar Farm

**BLM Action:** Desert Stateline, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of First Solar Development, Inc. (First Solar) proposes to develop and construct a 300-megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) solar photovoltaic (PV) energy generating project known as the Stateline Solar Farm (Project). The PV generating facility (Solar Farm), the corridor for the Project's 220-kilovolt (kV) generation interconnection (gen-tie) transmission line, and the access road would be located in western Ivanpah Valley, east of Interstate 15 and northeast of the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System project. The proposed project would include the solar farm, an on-site substation, the 220 kV gen-tie line within the Utility Corridor, and an access road. The project would connect to the Southern California Edison (SCE) regional transmission grid via SCE's Ivanpah Substation. First Solar proposed Alternative 1 would encompass 2,143 acres. The Bureau's preferred alternative, Alternative 3, would reconfigure the Alternative 1 boundary to improve desert tortoise connectivity corridors and encompass 2,150 acres.

**Contacts:** Jeffery Childers, Project Manager  
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Agencies:** California Desert District Renewable Energy Action Team and Needles Field Office

**Status:** A Final Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared and made available for review on November 15, 2013.

### Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System

**BLM Action:** Solar Partners', LLC are in the process of constructing the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System, a concentrated solar electrical generating facility capable of generating 370 megawatts (MW) of renewable power. The project will be located in Ivanpah Valley, southwest of Primm, Nevada, and consist of three power plants, Ivanpah 1, Ivanpah 2 and Ivanpah 3. Shared facilities include a substation and natural gas pipeline. The three independent power plants and shared substation will be co-located on approximately 3,671 acres of Bureau administered public land.

**Contacts:** Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Agencies:** BLM, Needles Field Office

**Status:** Construction of the facility is nearing completion.

### **Eldorado-Ivanpah Transmission Project**

**BLM Action:** Southern California Edison's Eldorado-Ivanpah Transmission Project will consist of replacing an existing 115kV transmission line with a new double circuit 230kV electric transmission line, building a new Ivanpah substation, and building new fiber optics telecommunications facilities.

The transmission line will handle projected electricity produced from up to 13 proposed renewable energy projects in and around the Ivanpah and Eldorado Valleys, in addition to the Ivanpah Solar Energy Generation System being constructed by Solar Partners, LLC. The electric transmission line and a new substation will be constructed within an existing designated utility corridor.

**Contacts:** Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Agencies:** BLM, Needles Field Office - lead  
BLM, Las Vegas Field Office

**Status:** The transmission line upgrade is complete.

### **I-15 Joint Point of Entry**

**BLM Action:** The state of California will construct and operate a Joint Port of Entry (JPOE) on Interstate 15 located in Ivanpah Valley, southwest of Primm, Nevada. The JPOE will include an Agricultural Inspection Facility and a Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facility. Upon completion of the project, all traffic entering California on the southbound I-15 will be diverted through the JPOE.

**Contact:** Karen Montgomery, Realty Specialist  
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Agencies** BLM, Needles Field Office - lead  
Caltrans - roads and traffic control  
California Department of Food and Agriculture - agricultural inspection facility  
California Department of General Services - state facilities administration  
California Highway Patrol - commercial vehicle enforcement facility

**Status:** The JPOE project will be constructed in two stages. The Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Facility (CVEF), to be operated by the California Highway Patrol, will be constructed in Stage 1, and the Agricultural Inspection Facility, to be operated by the California Department of Food

and Agriculture, will be constructed in Stage 2. Construction on the CVEF portion of the project is scheduled to begin in 2013. A Decision Record approving the JPOE project was issued on November 9, 2011. Escrow instructions have been issued, and as soon as the consideration is delivered into escrow by CalTrans, the BLM will be in a position to issue the patent, deliver it to escrow, and have the patent recorded.

### **Abandoned Mine Lands**

**BLM Action:** The NFO is actively pursuing inventories, prioritization and closures of abandoned mines that may present a public safety hazard.

**Agencies:** BLM, Needles Field Office with support from the California Desert District and California Department of Conservation

**Contact:** Sterling White, CDD AML  
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

**Status:** The NFO has closed 14 openings and repaired one bat gate at the Umberci Mine. Several features have been identified in the Sheep Hole Mountains and in the Western Whipple Mountains that may present hazards to winter visitors in that area. Bat surveys and other natural and cultural resource surveys are being conducted as funds and staffing allow for the development of a NEPA document and a possible contract for the closures. Much of the inventory work and bat surveys are accomplished by contractors, staff, and volunteers. Although available funding for closures under the Continuing Resolution is well below FY 2012 levels, it is hoped that the closures in the Sheep Hole Pass and Western Whipple Mountains areas can be funded and implemented in FY 2014.

### **Horsethief Springs Grazing Allotment**

**BLM Actions:** Approval of a 10-year grazing lease for the Horsethief Springs

**Contact:** Lara Kobelt, Natural Resources Specialist  
Mike Ahrens, Field Manger

**Status:** The Field Office Manager signed a Final Decision approving the 10-year grazing lease for the Horsethief Springs Allotment on May 12, 2011. On June 15, 2011 the Decision was appealed by Western Watersheds Project and the Defenders of Wildlife. The lessee also filed an appeal, but that it was received after the deadline and was thus not accepted by the Department of Interior Office of Hearings and Appeals.

Western Watersheds and the Defenders of Wildlife filed a Joint Motion for Summary Judgment on December 30, 2011. The Solicitor's Office subsequently filed a Cross Motion for Summary Judgment in response to the Appellants' Motion. Through an August 8, 2012 Order issued by the Interior Department's Office of Hearings and Appeals, the Appellant' Motion for Summary Judgment was denied and DOI's Cross-Motion was Granted with the result that the Appeal was dismissed. On September 9, 2012, the Appellants immediately appealed the Administrative Law Judge's Order with

the Interior Board of Land Appeals, submitting their Statement of Reasons on October 9, 2012.

### **Partnerships**

Chicago Botanical Garden – The NFO has decided to defer its involvement in the Seeds of Success program until next spring due to funding/staffing uncertainties. We look forward to more robust involvement next spring.

Amargosa Conservancy - The NFO and the Amargosa Conservancy (AC) are working together in protective and conservation efforts at Crystal Springs, Wildhorse Spring, and Horse Thief Springs in the Kingston Range. AC has provided cleanup efforts and are “eyes and ears” for the field office in this remote area.

California Trail Users Coalition - The NFO has entered into an agreement with the California Trail Users Coalition (CTUC) to extend their successful map series to include the NFO. This will include the development of three maps covering our jurisdiction. The maps will be available through the CTUC distribution network and at the NFO. The project is funded through a grant from the California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division.

Two of the three map series covering the Needles Field Office jurisdiction have been completed and are now available through the CTUC, the Needles Field Office. The NFO has also initiated a distribution network utilizing local RV Resorts along the Colorado River.

All maps will use a comprehensive route network, developed by staff based on the designated open route system for the map series. This network highlights long distance touring opportunities and access to recreational points of interest. The routes are marked; those with assigned names have been marked with stickers showing the names and numbers that correspond to labels on the maps.

Great Basin Institute – The NFO has entered into an agreement with the Great Basin Institute to provide a Research Associate to support our GIS needs on several wilderness monitoring and characteristic inventory projects. The Research Associate will be funded through an OHMVR grant and will support the project for the remainder of the fiscal year.