

HIGHLIGHTS NEEDLES FIELD OFFICE

California Desert District Advisory Council Meeting

September 26-27, 2014

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: Noel Ludwig, Project Manager
Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

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

Status: The right of way has been issued as well as a limited notice to proceed. Construction will be phased in roughly three 500 acre portions. The first phase is underway including development and tortoise fencing of the access road and fencing of the of the first construction area. BLM has contracted with SWCA Environmental Consultants to provide third party compliance monitoring throughout construction.

Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System

BLM Action: Solar Partners', LLC have constructed the Ivanpah Solar Electric Generation System, a concentrated solar electrical generating facility capable of generating 370 megawatts (MW) of renewable power. The project is located in the 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 are co-located on approximately 3,671 acres of Bureau administered public land.

Contacts: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Status: NEFO continues to work with NRG to complete a few mitigation projects and monitor operational compliance. Monitoring of desert tortoise, impacts to avian species, and glare continue as well.

Camp Iron Mtn

BLM Action: The NEFO is considering opportunities to further protection and interpretation of the Camp Iron site. Camp Iron Mtn was one of the Divisional Camps at the Desert Training Center where our troops trained during WWII. Measures could include Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, development of interpretive facilities, brochures, web based education materials, interpretive walks etc.

Agencies: BLM Needles Field Office

Contact: Mike Ahrens, Field Manager

Status: There is an ACEC Management plan that was prepared for Camp Iron Mountain in 1984. Additionally, there is a wealth of information stored in the Needles Field Office from an outreach campaign that culminated in hundreds of letters from soldiers that trained at the Desert Training Center. NEFO staff is reviewing those materials and will either update the Camp Iron Mountain ACEC plan or tier off of it to enhance protection and interpretation of the site.

The NEFO is also working with the BLMs National Operations Center (NOC) to coordinate a test inventory flight of the camp by the BLM Unmanned Aircraft. The objective is to achieve detailed mapping of the site through this new technology that will be suitable to support a National Register Listing Nomination.

Abandoned Mine Lands

BLM Action: The NEFO 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: 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.

Manchester Quarry Closure

BLM Action: The NEFO is cooperating with the Bureau of Reclamation on a project to permanently close the Manchester Quarry. The quarry is located north of Needles CA, within the Dead Mountains Wilderness.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office; Bureau of Reclamation, Yuma

Contact: Bill Webster, Needles Field Office Realty Specialist
Mike Ahrens, Needles Field Office Manager

Status: The NEFO has coordinated with the BOR on completion of NEPA compliance documents authorizing the closure of the quarry. BOR contractors will reduce the steepness of the high walls to a safe condition and contour the site to generally mimic the natural surroundings. Additionally, the entrance road to the site will be obliterated and also contoured to mimic the natural surroundings. NEFO will provide vertical mulching and restoration of the obliterated access route.

Castle Mountain Mine Re-opening

BLM Action: The NEFO has been contacted by Castle Mountain Mining Company (CMMC) about the possibility of re-opening the Castle Mountain Gold Mine. The mine was operated by the Viceroy Mining Company from approximately 1991 through 2001.

Agencies: BLM, Needles Field Office

Contact: Peter Godfrey, CDD Geologists
Mike Ahrens, Needles Field Office Manger

Status: The NEFO has been in informal consultation with the CMMC since December 2013. CMMC has indicated that they do want to pursue re-opening the mine and that we can anticipate a proposed Plan of Operations (POO) soon. Indications are that the proposed POO will be to initiate operations within the previously authorized foot print of the mine. The NEFO has assembled a small team to offer an initial review of the CMMC proposal and the proposed POO when it is released, and to conduct any necessary environmental review and authorization.

Partnerships

Chicago Botanical Garden – The NEFO host an intern in support of the Seeds of Success program. The program collects native plant seeds which are stored for use in future restoration projects.

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 includes the development of a three map series covering our jurisdiction. The maps are 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.

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

All maps 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 two interns in support of an OHMVR Grant funded Invasive and Sensitive plant inventory project. The three year project will focus on invasive and sensitive plant species adjacent to our system of roads and trails.

Native American Lands Conservancy (NALC) – The NEFO is partnering with the NALC to support the management of the Old Woman Mtn. Wilderness and the adjacent NALC Old Woman Mountain Preserve. The NEFO supported the NALC in the development of an OHMVR restoration grant to provide restoration and barriers along the borders of the Old Woman Mountain Wilderness and the Old Woman Mountain Preserve. The grant will be administered by the NALC.