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**U.S. Department
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News Release

Date: Nov. 05, 2009

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Salazar Highlights Fast-Track Renewable Energy Projects

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Citing what he called America's urgent need for a diverse energy supply, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today detailed several renewable energy projects that are on a fast track, including a 400-megawatt solar tower development available for public review and five others that are poised to begin environmental impact studies. Five of these are solar projects and one is a wind farm; all are located in California.

"Under President Obama's leadership, we have entered a new energy frontier," Salazar said. "By putting these renewable energy projects on a fast track, we are managing our public lands not just for conventional energy development but also for environmentally responsible renewable energy production that will power our clean energy future."

Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California Energy Commission have completed a joint draft Environmental Impact Statement for the BrightSource solar project in the Ivanpah Valley near Interstate 15 in San Bernardino County. The draft EIS is ready for public review and will be published in the Federal Register next week. This project, which will deploy solar power tower technology on about 4,000 acres of land, will have the capacity to generate 400 megawatts of electricity.

The other five fast-track projects noted by Secretary Salazar are:

Name	State	Type	Size	Acreage
Solar Millennium (Palen)	California	Solar	484 megawatts	5,200
Solar Millennium (Blythe)	California	Solar	968 megawatts	9,500
Solar Millennium (Ridgecrest)	California	Solar	250 megawatts	3,920
NextEra Genesis (Ford Dry Lake)	California	Solar	250 megawatts	4,640
AES (Daggett Ridge)	California	Wind	82.5 megawatts	1,575

Each of these projects will be fully or partly sited on public lands managed by the BLM, which has identified nearly 23 million acres of public land with solar energy potential in six southwestern states and more than 20 million acres of public land with wind energy potential in 11 western states. "Moving forward with these projects is a tangible sign that our nation is poised to enter its green energy future," said BLM Director Bob Abbey.

Fast-track projects are those where the companies involved have demonstrated to BLM that they have made sufficient progress to formally start the environmental review and public participation process. These projects are advanced enough in the permitting process that they could potentially be cleared for approval by December 2010, thus making them eligible for economic stimulus funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. All renewable energy projects proposed for BLM-managed lands receive full environmental reviews required by the National Environmental Protection Act. A number of other renewable energy projects also are on fast-track status and could soon be ready for environmental study and public review.

The draft environmental impact statement for the BrightSource solar energy development concluded the project could proceed without harming federally and state protected plants and wildlife under certain conditions. Among those, the statement recommends that the developer be required to purchase and manage up to 12,000 acres of habitat for the desert tortoise because the project would remove about 4,000 acres of habitat used by the protected species.

The solar-thermal power plant proposed by BrightSource Energy Inc. would serve utilities owned by PG&E Corp. (PCG) and Edison International (EIX). The facility would help meet California's goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and producing 33 percent of its electricity from renewable resources by 2020.

For more information about the proposed Ivanpah Solar Electric Solar Generating Station visit: <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/ivanpah/index.html> or http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd/alternative_energy.html.

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Last Updated on 03/25/09