



Solar Energy Development

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Background Information

In Executive Order 13212 (Actions to Expedite Energy-Related Projects), the President ordered that executive departments and agencies take appropriate actions "to expedite projects that will increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy." In addition, Title II, Section 211, of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Pub. L. 109-58) provides that the Secretary of the Interior (the Secretary) should, within 10 years of enactment of the Act, "seek to have approved non-hydropower renewable energy projects located on the public lands with a generation capacity of at least 10,000 megawatts of electricity." DOE and BLM (the Agencies) have identified solar energy development as a potentially critical component in meeting these mandates. The Agencies have determined that specific actions should be taken to further such energy development. The Agencies are considering the development and implementation of agency-specific programs that would establish environmental policies and mitigation strategies related to solar energy development in six western states (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah). The Solar Energy Development Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) will focus on the environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the potential solar energy development activities. Information regarding all aspects of the PEIS is available on the Internet at <http://solareis.anl.gov>.

What Is Being Considered?

Through this PEIS, the BLM is considering whether to establish a Bureau-wide solar energy development program to supplement or replace existing BLM solar development policy, and to amend land use plans in the six-state study area to adopt the new program. In addition, the BLM expects to identify BLM-administered land in the six state study area that may be environmentally suitable for solar energy development and land that would be excluded from such development. The PEIS will also consider whether designation by BLM of additional electricity transmission corridors on BLM-administered lands is necessary to facilitate utility-scale solar energy development.

Through this PEIS, DOE is considering developing a solar energy program of environmental policies and mitigation strategies that would apply to the deployment of solar energy projects that are supported by DOE. Policies and mitigation measures adopted as part of the proposed solar energy technology deployment program would identify for DOE, industry, and stakeholders the best practices for deploying solar energy and ensuring minimal impact to natural and cultural resources on BLM-administered lands or other Federal, State, tribal, or private lands.

PEIS Process and Schedule

Preparation of the PEIS is a multistep process that begins with Scoping and will include publication of a Draft Programmatic EIS, a Final Programmatic EIS, and a Record of Decision. These and other documents will be available for downloading and browsing on the EIS Documents page of the Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS Information Center Web Site (<http://solareis.anl.gov>) and can also be requested by mail at the address given below. The Public Scoping Period is open from May 29, 2008 until July 15, 2008. The Draft PEIS is anticipated in the Spring of 2009.

Getting Involved

Public input into the PEIS process is encouraged. The agencies invite interested parties to participate in the scoping process, both to refine the preliminary alternatives and environmental issues to be analyzed in depth and to eliminate from detailed study those alternatives and environmental issues that are not feasible or pertinent. The scoping process is intended to involve all interested agencies (Federal, state, county, and local), public interest groups, Native American tribes, businesses, and members of the public.

How to Submit Comments

There are three ways to submit comments or suggestions on the scope of the PEIS:

- Electronic submittal via the Web at <http://solareis.anl.gov>,
- Regular mail, and
- Public scoping meetings (written or oral comments).

Written comments or suggestions on the scope of the PEIS can be mailed to:

Solar Energy Development Programmatic EIS Scoping
Argonne National Laboratory EVS/900
9700 S. Cass Ave.
Argonne, IL 60439

All scoping comments received or postmarked by July 15, 2008 will be considered. Comments received or postmarked after that date will be considered to the extent practicable. Oral, written, and electronic (i.e., by the Web site) comments will be given equal weight by the agencies in defining the scope of this PEIS.