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Salazar Approves Major Renewable Energy Projects, Identifies Next Step in Solar Energy Development

Projects to generate 1,300 Jobs, 550 MW of clean power; Supplement to Solar PEIS will offer greater clarity for solar development in the West

WASHINGTON – Advancing the Obama Administration’s commitment to rapid and responsible development of large-scale renewable energy, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced the approval of four new projects on public lands, the launch of environmental reviews on three others, and the next steps in a comprehensive environmental analysis to identify ‘solar energy zones’ on public lands in six western states.

“The focus we have placed on smart planning and coordinated reviews of permit applications is paying dividends with new large-scale renewable energy projects that are springing to life, powering communities, and creating jobs across the West,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “As we encourage innovation and the deployment of technologies through the projects approved today, we are also moving forward with an enduring solar energy program that will further spur private sector job-creation and solar power production.”

The renewable energy projects that Salazar announced today - two utility-scale solar developments in California, a wind energy project in Oregon, and a transmission line in Southern California - together will create more than 1,300 construction jobs, provide a combined 550 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 185,000 to 380,000 homes, and generate several million dollars annually in local government tax revenues. The projects are part of Interior’s “smart

from the start” approach to processing existing applications for renewable energy development on public lands in a coordinated, focused manner with full environmental analysis and public review.

In addition, Interior’s Bureau of Land Management has issued Notices of Intent to begin environmental analyses of two wind projects and a solar energy project located in California with a combined generating capacity of more than 370 megawatts.

Salazar today also announced that the Interior Department, in cooperation with the Department of Energy, will prepare a targeted supplement to the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development (Draft Solar PEIS). First released for public review in December, 2010, the Solar PEIS will establish a framework for developing large utility-scale solar energy projects on public lands, based on landscape-level planning and the best available science, designed to promote the development in “solar energy zones” in six western states.

The supplement will address key issues identified through public comments and provide a number of enhancements, including developing well defined criteria for identifying solar energy zones; incentives for encouraging developers to site their projects in the zones and a variance process for those who wish to develop facilities outside such zones; additional surveys of biological and cultural resources in the zones; and a more detailed analysis of transmission.

"Investing in large-scale solar and wind energy projects helps create jobs today, builds the clean energy economy of tomorrow and increases our global competitiveness around the world," said Energy Secretary Steven Chu. "Together these projects will power hundreds of thousands of homes with clean, renewable power while helping to create jobs in California and Oregon."

No new solar energy zones will be analyzed in the supplemental document, but additional zones will be analyzed through other ongoing BLM state and regional planning efforts, such as the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, the West Chocolate Mountains planning effort in California, and the Arizona Restoration Design Energy Project.

Through the Solar PEIS supplement, Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) would review the establishment of Solar Energy Zones within the lands available for solar development right of way applications. These are areas in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah that have been identified as most appropriate for development, containing the highest solar energy potential and fewest environmental and resource conflicts. The Solar Energy Zones would provide directed, landscape-scale planning for future solar projects and allow for a more efficient permitting and siting process.

The BLM will prepare the supplement for expected release in the fall of 2011 when it will be available for further public comment.

“Public involvement is a vital component in every step of the BLM’s solar energy program and this supplement and additional time for comment will serve to increase the utility of the Solar PEIS,” said BLM Director Bob Abbey. “The lessons learned from what we have done so far will help make all solar development resulting from this process ‘Smart from the Start.’”

Click [HERE](#) for more information on the Solar PEIS.

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Additional information on today’s renewable energy projects:

Abengoa Mojave Solar Project: This 250 megawatt project will be located on 1,765 acres of private land, with 17 miles of transmission lines crossing public lands. The developer, Mojave Solar, LLC, has agreed to acquire more than 100 acres of habitat suitable for desert tortoise, Mohave ground squirrel and burrowing owl. The project will be constructed on previously disturbed, fallow agricultural land, thus avoiding impacts to pristine desert lands. The project will avoid an

estimated 350,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide each year, according to the Department of Energy. The company estimates a construction payroll of \$272 million and would spend about \$121 million locally on materials and equipment.

For a fact sheet, click [HERE](#).

For a map, click [HERE](#).

Imperial Solar Energy Center: The 200-megawatt project will be located on 946 acres of private land, with a 19 acre right-of-way on BLM land in Imperial County. The developer, CSOLAR Development, LLC, has agreed to acquire and enhance habitat for flat-tailed horned lizard and burrowing owls to compensate for project impacts. The project also will be constructed on previously disturbed, fallow agricultural land, thus avoiding impacts to pristine desert lands. CSOLAR will co-locate its transmission line on existing poles across much of the public land being crossed, minimizing impacts to less than 20 acres of permanent disturbance on public land. The project is expected to generate \$38,000 to \$80,000 in annual property taxes to Imperial County and an estimated \$3 million in local sales tax revenue from the private land parts of the project.

For a fact sheet, click [HERE](#)

For a map, click [HERE](#)

West Butte Wind Energy Project: Consisting of up to fifty-two 2.0 to 3.0 megawatt wind turbines on private land in Deschutes and Crook Counties, Oregon, the project will produce up to 104 megawatts of electricity for homes and businesses. The project includes an access road and transmission line that would cross about 4.5 miles of BLM lands. BLM is requiring the developer, West Butte Wind Power LLC, to mitigate 9,000 acres of sage grouse habitat by providing funding for the restoration and enhancement of a similar amount and type of habitat on BLM lands. The company will also provide funds through Crook County to purchase conservation easements for sage grouse management and worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop an Avian (golden eagle) and Bat Protection Plan and prepared a Wildlife Mitigation and Monitoring Plan for Crook County. The project will employ about 70 workers during construction with another 345 workers providing supplies, material, support and offsite services; and pay about \$1 million annually to Crook County in property taxes.

For a fact sheet, click [HERE](#)

For a map, click [HERE](#)

Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project: This 500 kV line will provide interconnection and electrical transmission for numerous solar energy facilities proposed for construction, including nine large-scale solar projects in California and Nevada with a potential output of more than 3,600 megawatts that were approved by Secretary Salazar last year. The developer, Southern California Edison, anticipates hiring about 200 construction workers for the project. The line will extend 115 miles from the Colorado River Substation near Blythe to the Devers Substation in Palm Springs and from the Devers Substation to the Valley Substation in Romoland, Riverside County, about 41.6 miles. The line will cross 57 miles of BLM land and two miles of San Bernardino National Forest land, running primarily along the I-10 Interstate, a primary corridor for energy transmission in Southern California. BLM is requiring conservation and design features to avoid and minimize potential adverse effects to the Kangaroo Rat, Milk-Vetch, Fringe-toed and Horned Lizard, and Desert Tortoise. The line will be constructed on previously disturbed, fallow agricultural land. The project has conducted extensive inventory, monitoring, site evaluation, awareness programs, consultation with Native Americans and other groups, and developed plans to protect cultural sites.

For a fact sheet, click [HERE](#).

For a map, click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).