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**News Release**

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***BLM Proposes Major Changes to Soda Mountain Solar Project***

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today issued the final environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Soda Mountain Solar Project, with a preferred alternative that reduces the size of the proposed renewable energy facility by more than 25 percent in response to environmental concerns raised by stakeholders during the public comment process. If approved, the smaller project is expected to generate enough electricity to power more than 79,000 homes, helping to meet the President's Climate Action Plan goal of 20,000 megawatts (MW) derived from renewable energy projects on public lands by 2020.

The project is proposed on lands managed by the BLM along an active transmission and transportation corridor near Baker, Calif. that includes portions of Interstate 15, a segment of a proposed high-speed rail corridor between the Los Angeles Basin and Las Vegas, an off-highway vehicle use area and existing electrical transmission lines. The preferred alternative eliminates an array of solar panels originally planned for a site north of Interstate 15, effectively reducing the size of the project from 2,557 to 1,923 acres, and decreasing the project's output from 358 to 264 MWs.

The BLM's preferred alternative is a modified proposal that responds to concerns raised by the public and partner agencies about the project's potential impacts to bighorn sheep movement, groundwater and scenic vistas. The smaller project footprint reduces potential interference with future efforts to re-establish bighorn sheep movement across the interstate highway.

Eliminating the array of solar panels north of Interstate 15 provides for scenic vistas and ensures that the project will not be seen from most parts of the neighboring Mojave National Preserve. The BLM is also proposing additional mitigation to reduce the project's night lighting and dust emissions, and to provide further compensation for potential impacts to bighorn sheep populations.

The Final EIS also presents additional environmental analysis to address concerns raised about potential impacts, including an independently reviewed groundwater study verifying that the project's water use would not measurably affect important nearby springs.

The notice will publish in the *Federal Register* on Fri., June 12 and initiates a concurrent 30-day protest period and 60-day Governor's consistency review prior to the BLM's issuance of a Record of Decision.

The BLM has approved 19 solar, wind and geothermal projects on public lands in California since 2010. Nationwide, the BLM has authorized 55 solar, wind, and geothermal utility-scale renewable energy projects on public lands since 2009, including associated electric transmission facilities and infrastructure to connect to established power grids, for a total of 14,599 MWs of renewable energy capacity. When built, these 55 projects would provide an estimated 23,000 construction and operations jobs, power about five million homes and attract private capital investments of approximately \$36.6 billion.

The Final EIS and further details about the project can be found at:

[http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/barstow/renewableenergy/soda\\_mountain.html](http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/barstow/renewableenergy/soda_mountain.html)

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