

ROUGH HAT CLARK COUNTY SOLAR PROJECT

INPUT SUMMARY REPORT



Bureau of Land Management
Southern Nevada District Office
Las Vegas Field Office
4701 North Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

March 2022

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Candela Renewables, LLC (Candela or Applicant) has applied to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Southern Nevada District Office (SNDO) for a right-of-way grant in Clark County, Nevada to provide the necessary land for the construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning of a proposed solar facility and interconnection to the regional transmission system, known as the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project (Project). The Project would total up to 400 megawatts (MW) of solar energy generation, using photovoltaic (PV) technology and incorporating energy storage up to approximately 200 MW. The proposed Rough Hat Clark County solar generating facility would be constructed on approximately 2,400 acres of BLM-managed public land located in the Pahrump Valley in Clark County immediately adjacent to the Clark-Nye County line. These lands are southeast of the town of Pahrump and approximately 38 miles west of Las Vegas.

In 2012, BLM and the United States Department of Energy released the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development (Solar PEIS) in six southwestern states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah) and a Record of Decision was approved October 2012 (amending the Las Vegas Resource Management Plan). The comprehensive Solar PEIS facilitated the permitting of solar energy development projects on federal public land in a more efficient, standardized, and environmentally responsible manner. The Solar PEIS designated Solar Energy Zones that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy and also designated variance areas on BLM-administered lands that are outside of the Solar Energy Zones and not otherwise excluded by the Solar PEIS. Variance areas are available for utility-scale solar energy development on a case-by-case basis and are evaluated through the BLM's established variance process. As part of the variance process, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed project would avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the impacts to sensitive resources, according to standards set out by the Solar PEIS.

The BLM considers right-of-way applications for utility-scale solar energy development in variance areas on a case-by-case basis based on environmental considerations; coordination with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and Tribes; and public outreach. Information gathered during the public input period will inform the variance process as well as the BLM determination on whether to continue to process or to deny the right-of-way application (application evaluation determination). The application evaluation determination, including the variance process determination, is separate and comes before the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. More information about the application evaluation process is included on the website: https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2021-11/Nevada%20-%20SNDO%20-%20Solar%20Application%20Eval%20Process%20Fact%20Sheet_0.pdf

The purpose of this report is to summarize input provided by individuals, organizations, Tribes, and agencies during the public input period for the Project. This report also describes methods used for soliciting input.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Project is located approximately 38 miles west of Las Vegas and southeast of the town of Pahrump and is bordered on the northeast by Nevada State Route (SR) 160. The Project would interconnect at the planned Trout Canyon Substation at the intersection of SR 160 and Tecopa Road approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the site. All Project facilities would be located on lands

administered by the BLM. The solar fields and associated facilities would be in Sections 18, 19, 20, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, and 35; Township 21 South; Range 55 East; Mount Diablo Principal Meridian. Part of the associated generation interconnection transmission (gen-tie) line would also be located in Section 2; Township 22 South; Range 55 East; Mount Diablo Principal Meridian.

The proposed Project would include solar PV modules that convert sunlight into direct current (DC) electricity that would be collected and converted to alternating current (AC) electricity through a system of inverters. Medium voltage transformers would step up the AC electricity to 34.5 kilovolt (kV) and the collected energy would be delivered to the on-site substation; there the electricity would be stepped up with high voltage transformers to 230 kV. The Project would interconnect from the on-site substation via a 230 kV gen-tie line into the planned Trout Canyon Substation. The Trout Canyon Substation was previously approved with the Yellow Pine Solar Project and is currently in the process of obtaining permits for construction. The proposed gen-tie line runs southeast of the Project, parallel with SR 160, to the Trout Canyon Substation. Construction is estimated to take approximately 12 to 18 months. Substation and gen-tie construction would occur in parallel with construction of the solar arrays.

Access to the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project for component deliveries and worker access would be provided directly from SR 160 located adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the site. Water is not required for PV generation. The Project would require water during construction primarily for dust control as well as some minor consumptive use for concrete and other needs. Water consumption during operation would be relatively low and primarily for potable uses by site personnel and periodic washing of panels. Construction water needs are estimated to be up to approximately 800 acre-feet (AF). Estimated operational water requirements would be up to 16 acre-feet per year (AFY). Water would be provided by either developing a well on-site or delivering water from a local provider to the site via truck or pipeline.

After the Project's useful life, the Project would be decommissioned, and existing facilities and equipment would be removed. Decommissioning would involve removal of the solar arrays and other facilities with some buried components potentially remaining in place. Following decommissioning, the solar site would be reclaimed and restored according to applicable regulations at the time.

2.0 NOTIFICATION AND SOLICITATION OF INPUT

During the public input period, the BLM informed the public, landowners, federal, state, and local government agencies, Tribes, and interested stakeholders about the proposed Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project and solicited their input. The BLM announced the Project and the initiation of the public input process, held public information forums, and invited the public to comment and ask questions. The public information forums were publicized on the Project website and BLM social media accounts, in letters mailed to interested stakeholders, and through public notices/news releases. These outreach and notification activities are described in more detail in the following subsections.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

The Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project was presented at a government-to-government consultation meeting with the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe on February 19, 2021, and input was invited. The BLM presented project information at government-to-government consultation meetings with the Moapa Band of Paiutes on March 3, April 7, November 3, and December 1, 2021, and January 5, 2022. Follow-up project information was provided to the Tribe. The BLM sent letters to the Moapa Band of Paiutes, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Timbisha Shoshone, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, and Colorado River Indian Tribes on March 31, 2021, to assess initial interest on the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project and invite the tribes to initiate formal government-to-government consultation. The BLM also sent follow-up emails to these Tribes on April 27, 2021. Based on interest, the BLM conducted field visits for the proposed project area on May 26, 2021, and June 4, 2021, with the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians and the Timbisha Shoshone, respectively. Follow-up meetings were conducted with the Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians on May 6 and July 30, 2021. The BLM emailed the Tribes on November 30, 2021, to invite them to attend an interagency meeting on December 2, 2021, as an opportunity to learn more information about the proposed solar projects.

Summary of Tribal Input

- Request for visual analysis and for the Tribes to be included in identification of key observation points.
- Potential long-term impacts of the proposed solar project.
- Concern about impact on the cultural landscape.
- Interest in Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT), which is in the vicinity of the project.

Tribal Consultation for the Project is ongoing.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The BLM issued a press release on November 15, 2021. The press release included information about the proposed Project and variance process; registration information for the virtual public information forums; instructions for providing written input; and contact phone numbers—one for the media and the other for general questions. After the two virtual public information forums, the website was updated to include links to video recordings of the forums in addition to the lists of questions and answers from each of the forums. The website will remain active for the duration of the application evaluation process and can be accessed at www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtual-public-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county.

NOTICE OF VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION FORUMS

Notice of the virtual public information forums for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project was distributed via postcards, emails, and BLM social media accounts. Postcards were sent by the BLM to

government agencies, elected officials, property owners near the proposed Project, various non-governmental organizations, Native American Tribes, individual members of the public, and other interested stakeholders. The postcards briefly explained the Project, identified the application evaluation and variance processes, announced the virtual public information forums, and described how to access additional information. Included on the postcard was a map displaying the Project location. Over 4,700 postcards were mailed on November 15, 2021. The postcard can be found in **Appendix A**. In addition to postcards, notifications of the virtual public information forums were distributed via email to interested publics, agencies, and Native American Tribes.

METHODS FOR SUBMITTING INPUT

The BLM publicized that public input would be accepted until December 22, 2021, and encouraged interested parties to submit input through a variety of methods:

- Written input could be submitted via email to [BLM NV SND EnergyProjects@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov).
- Letters could be mailed to BLM SNDO, Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance, 4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89130.
- Input could be provided verbally at the virtual public information forums. A link to the recording for each virtual public information forum can be found below:
<https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2021-12/Nevada%20-%20SNDO%20-%20Rough%20Hat%20Clark%20Public%20Info%20Forum%20Recordings.pdf>

3.0 VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION FORUMS

The BLM hosted two virtual public information forums using the Zoom online platform. These forums provided a description of the application evaluation and variance processes, information on the proposed Project, and the opportunity to ask questions and provide public input. The two virtual public information forums were held at the times listed below.

Meeting Date/Time	Registered	Attended
December 8, 2021 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. PST	48	25
December 9, 2021 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. PST	37	30
Total	85	55

Registration for the virtual public information forums opened November 15, 2021, and was announced via the press release and postcard. Registration was required in order to attend the meeting and participants were able to register at any time, including during the forum. The virtual public information forums were open for participation for the duration of the announced time from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. PST. Those without access to a computer were still able to register and participate via phone. Those who were not able to join the live forum could access a recording of the meeting in addition to the lists of questions and answers from each of the forums on the Project website.

PRESENTATION

A formal presentation was included as part of the forum. The presentation opened with a welcome and overview by Kenda Pollio, a consultant for the BLM. The Field Manager, Shonna Dooman, provided introductions for the meeting. Then the Project Manager, Whitney Wirthlin, provided information about the proposed Project and application evaluation process. The presentation included maps and information about the Project location; descriptions of the major Project components; information about the application evaluation process in solar variance areas; and resources for additional information.

After the formal presentation, Kenda Pollio facilitated the live question and answer section with Whitney Wirthlin before moving into the verbal input portion and then a closeout by Shonna Dooman. Throughout the meeting, participants were reminded that the public input period would close on December 22, 2021, and that additional comments could be sent in via email or mail. Additional information about the question and answer and verbal input portions of the virtual public information forums is provided below.

The PowerPoint presentation provided a visual aid for the virtual public information forums and is provided in **Appendix B**. As previously mentioned, the entirety of each virtual public information forum was recorded and posted to the Project website.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Written questions could be submitted throughout the meeting using the online platform's Q&A feature. Questions were either responded to in writing or answered verbally by the Project Manager, Whitney Wirthlin. A total of 65 questions were asked and answered over the two nights of virtual public information forums, 32 on the first forum and 33 on the second forum. Copies of the questions that were asked and answered for each forum are provided in **Appendix C**.

VERBAL INPUT

Verbal input could be provided during the verbal input portion of the virtual public information forums. Verbal input was accepted in the order of participant registration online. Input was limited to two minutes to ensure that every participant had a chance to provide input. After going through the registrants who signed up before the meeting to provide input, verbal input was opened to anyone who had not yet spoken. After that, the verbal input portion was opened to any additional input, and participants were able to provide as much input as the remaining time in the virtual public information forums allowed.

Input and questions were not responded to verbally; however, participants were encouraged to continue submitting their questions in writing using the aforementioned Q&A feature. A total of 19 verbal comments were provided over the two forums, 11 on the first forum and eight on the second forum. A summary of the input provided each night is included in **Appendix D**.

A link to the recording for each virtual public information forum, which include the verbal public input portion, is below:

<https://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/docs/2021-12/Nevada%20-%20SND0%20-%20Rough%20Hat%20Clark%20Public%20Info%20Forum%20Recordings.pdf>

AGENCY INPUT

The BLM conducted a meeting for federal, state, local governments, and Tribes to provide information on multiple proposed solar projects in the Pahrump Valley, including the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project, and to gather agency input. The virtual meeting was held on December 2, 2021, from 9:00 am to 11:00 am PST. The virtual meeting was attended by 25 individuals from 16 agencies, including:

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Chemehuevi Cultural Center
- Clark County
- Clark County Desert Conservation Program
- National Park Service
- Nellis Air Force Base
- Nevada Department of Wildlife
- Nevada Department of Transportation
- Nevada Division of State Lands
- Nye County
- Nye County Planning
- Pahrump Public Land Advisory Committee
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The agency input period concluded December 17, 2021, and three letters/emails were submitted with agency input. The agency submissions are included in **Appendix E**.

Summary of Agency Input

- Concerns about potential impacts, including visual impacts, to the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, south of the proposed Project area.
- The proposed Project will have minimal impact on military operations conducted in the area.
- There is the potential for Gila monster and western burrowing owls within the Project area; both are BLM Nevada sensitive species.
- If the Project proceeds, the BLM should consider potential impacts from desert tortoise translocation into nearby habitat.
- Request for more information on the proposed Project related to native vegetation species and communities, as well as mitigation for those effects to sensitive biological resources and ecosystems.

- Potential impacts to Mojave yucca, Joshua tree, and cacti, and additional information on how these species would be impacted under the proposal.
- Concerns that reflection from the proposed solar arrays may increase impacts to birds and nighttime migrant species. More information on potential monitoring programs for bird recovery is needed.
- Impacts to climate change from the proposed Project.
- Potential water impacts to the basin from the proposed Project.
- Impacts from the proposed Project to recreation use, including impacts to recreationists and users moving to other surrounding areas, if the Project is constructed.

4.0 COMMENT EVALUATION

The public input period began on November 15, 2021, the date the press release was published. In addition to verbal comments received during the virtual public information forums, there were 45 comment letters/emails received. Each comment document was read to identify key concerns/topics. In some cases, a single comment document contained multiple comments that were identified by resource/concerns/topic categories. All comments were evaluated, and copies are contained in **Appendix F**.

This report summarizes concerns/topic areas identified from the input received throughout the public input period. For the purposes of this summary, all concerns/topics were given equal weight, regardless of whether they were mentioned once or mentioned several times. This report does not prioritize concerns/topic areas, but it provides tracking for the number of comments each concern/topic category received. The identified topics and areas of concern will be used to guide the application evaluation determination and variance process for the Project.

5.0 COMMENT SUMMARY

This section provides a summary of the key concerns/topics identified during the public input period for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project. The Project received public input in a variety of ways and the public input table below summarizes the topics that were raised.

At the Public Input Forum on December 8, 2021, there were 11 comments. At the Public Input Forum on December 9, 2021, there were eight comments. In addition to comments received during the Public Input Forums, BLM received emails and letters. There were 25 emails and 20 letters received from the public. Therefore, in total, the BLM received a total of 64 public input submissions.

Some of the submissions focused on one subject or topic, while other submissions mentioned several topics. The attached table shows the topics or areas of concern that were included in the submissions received. Each individual mention of a specific topic or area of concern provided in the submissions was included in the table below. There was a total of 195 individual comments included in the 64 public input submissions.

ROUGH HAT CLARK COUNTY SOLAR PROJECT COMMENTS BY TOPIC CATEGORY

Topic Category	Total Comments Submitted	Percentage of Total
Variance Process		
Public Outreach	3	1.5
Cooperating Agency Relationships	4	2.0
Range of Alternatives/New Proposals	15	7.8
Other Regulations, Policies, Surveys, or Permitting	3	1.5
Monitoring (including Mitigation)	2	1.0
Other Issues, Concerns	9	4.6
Public Access/Traffic/New Construction	5	2.6
Recreation		
Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Use	9	4.6
Nonmotorized Recreation	4	2.0
Camping	2	1.0
Access to Public Lands	12	6.2
Cultural and Historical Resources	6	3.1
Wildlife and Vegetation		
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species	23	11.8
Sensitive Vegetation and Soils	21	10.8
Rights-of-Way Concern	1	0.5
Socioeconomics/Property Values	16	8.2
Quality of Life	6	3.1
Air Quality and Climate	17	8.7
Public Health and Safety	9	4.6
Water Resources	13	6.7
Other Resources	15	7.7
Total	195	100

Variance Process

- From public comments and input received, there was a generalized tone of opposition to solar projects within the Pahrump Valley area.
- The BLM should add local people, entities, or groups to the list of planning partners and consult with businesses and local entities.
- The BLM should consider having in-person forums and explain the ‘low conflict’ label.
- Questions on how BLM is reviewing the projects in the Pahrump Valley area, reviewing case by case or looking at all the projects together in the area.
- Input submitted suggested the Project should be moved to formally contaminated lands, landfills, or mine sites, or placed on private rooftops and parking areas.
- Questions were submitted in regard to distribution of the generated electricity, solar panel replacement, Project decommissioning, and reclamation.

Public Access/Traffic/New Construction/Rights-of-Way

- The BLM should provide to the public a plan and cost for new construction of roads, loss of public lands, and expected traffic impacts on rights-of-way.

Recreation

- The BLM should engage and partner with local knowledge experts in the OHV community, local tourism, and chambers of commerce during this process.
- The BLM needs to consider the loss of area hiking trails, dispersed camping sites, horseback riding, and non-motorized vehicle trails as well as impacts to national park land.
- The BLM needs to consider visual impacts to the area and local communities from the proposed Project solar panels.
- The BLM needs to take into account how the proposed Project will impact the peaceful nature and enjoyment of the proposed Project area by the local communities.
- Concerns were expressed about access being restricted to trails that are currently being used for recreation and business purposes. Access restrictions to trails in the area may impact organized events for trails rides and races, and in turn impact economics of the local communities.

Cultural and Historical Resources

- The BLM needs to ensure adequate tribal consultation and consider impacts to spiritual land.
- The BLM should consider impacts to the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

Wildlife and Vegetation

- The BLM should consider the loss of sensitive desert soil crust, deterioration of biologically diverse vegetation such as buckwheat, Mojave Yucca, Joshua trees, Parish club cholla, and other rare plants, including how the potential impacts to Joshua trees would be mitigated. Comments about the removal of vegetation in the area impacting carbon-sequestration and global climate change.
- The BLM should be aware of the prior desert tortoise relocation efforts.
- The BLM should consider the loss of habitat and general harm to all area wildlife, including desert tortoises, kit fox, desert iguana, burrowing owl, bird species, and coyote. The Project proponent needs to resurvey the Project area for desert tortoise based on the conditions in which the previous surveys were completed.
- The proposed Project will impact 100,000-year-old biological soil crusts and desert pavement within the area.

Socioeconomics/Property Values

- The BLM should consider the public's concern about loss of property values.
- Comments expressed concern that the local communities will not benefit from the solar projects which are located very close to homes and residences.
- Comments were received that suggested proposed job creation from the Project will not offset impacts to the environment.

Air Quality and Climate

- The BLM needs to consider impacts from dust pollution, fine particulate matter, and asbestos (mesothelioma, Valley fever) and climate change issues. Comments were made on the removal of the desert surface which would result in uncontrollable fugitive dust.
- The BLM needs to consider impacts to temperature in the valley from the construction of solar panels.

Public Health and Safety

- The BLM needs to consider plans for construction traffic around schools and residential neighborhoods to ensure safety in these areas.

Water Resources

- The BLM should engage and partner with local knowledge experts to ensure water resources are adequate for this Project without it being a detriment to the community of Pahrump and that water resources will not be affected.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

As part of the solar application evaluation process, the BLM will continue agency coordination and evaluation of the information gathered during the public input period. The BLM will then determine whether to process or deny the right-of-way application for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project. The variance determination is made by the BLM Nevada State Director, with concurrence from the BLM Director. If the BLM determines to process the application, then the NEPA process will be initiated which involves NEPA analysis and further public involvement.

The BLM will post documents related to the variance process for the Project at the Project website www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtual-public-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county.

Appendix A - Post Card



In 2012, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Department of Energy issued the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development (Solar PEIS) in six Southwestern States. The Solar PEIS designated Solar Energy Zones that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy. Outside of those zones, the PEIS designated variance areas on BLM-administered lands that are not otherwise excluded by the Solar PEIS. Solar energy development within variance acres is evaluated through the BLM's established variance process, which includes coordination with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and tribes, and public outreach.

Candela Renewables, LLC, is proposing the construction, operation, and eventual decommissioning of the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project (Project), a photovoltaic (PV) solar power project located on designated variance lands in Clark County, Nevada. The Project would include a 400 MW solar and battery storage facilities on 2,400 acres of federal lands managed by the BLM Las Vegas Field Office. Candela Renewables has applied for a right-of-way grant for the Project to provide the necessary land and access for the construction and operation of the proposed solar facility and interconnection to the regional transmission system.

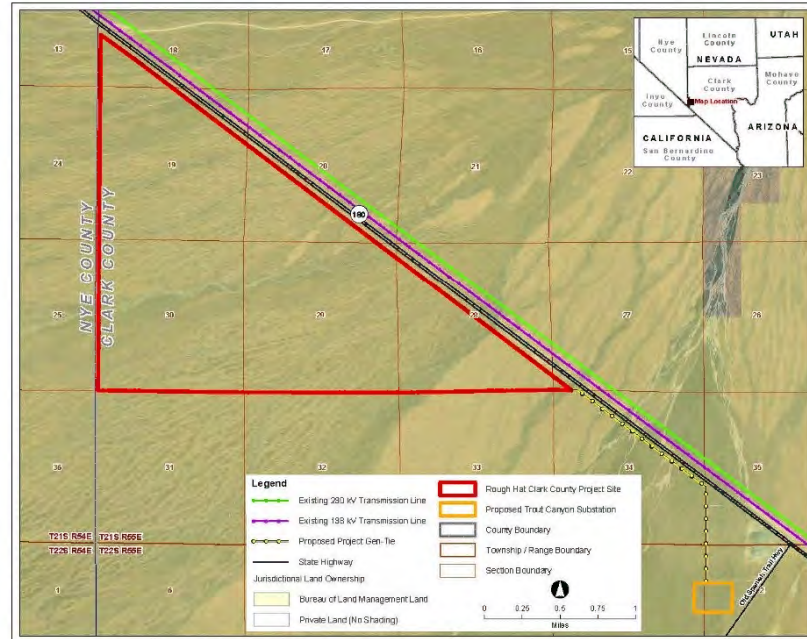
BLM Southern Nevada District Office
Attn: Rough Hat Clark Solar Project Variance
4701 N Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

As part of the variance process, the BLM will hold virtual public information forums for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project on December 8 and 9, 2021 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

To register for the information forums, please use the following link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C45ABA622A1FAC25-rough1>. If you have any questions or technical issues trying to register for the information forums, please call 864-901-3832 for assistance. More information on the Project and the virtual forums can be found at www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtual-public-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county. The information forums will be recorded, and a copy posted at that website. The information forum will include brief presentations on the Project and BLM's variance process followed by a question-and-answer portion and a public input period. Public input will be accepted until December 22, 2021.

For more information, please visit our website at www.blm.gov

NOTICE OF VIRTUAL PUBLIC INFORMATION FORUMS



Appendix B - PowerPoint Presentation-Visual Aid



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project

Variance and Application Evaluation Virtual Public Information Forums





Agenda

- Field Manager Introduction
- Presentation
- Question & Answer Session
- Public Input
- Close out



Introductions

Presenters

- Shonna Dooman, BLM Field Manager
- Whitney Wirthlin, BLM Project Manager
- Kenda Pollio, Principal, KP Environmental, Inc.

Additional Participants

- Steve Leslie, BLM
- Beth Ransel, BLM
- Lara Kobelt, BLM
- Matt Klein, BLM
- Kelsey Bynum, BLM
- Jessica Headen, BLM
- Kirsten Cannon, BLM



Questions and Input

Tonight's meeting will provide opportunities to ask questions and provide public input

- Question & Answer portion: written questions can be submitted throughout meeting
- Verbal Public Input: after the presentations and Q&A portion

Want to provide input or questions after the meeting?

Input or questions can also be submitted after the meeting, until December 22, 2021, via:

EMAIL: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov

MAIL: BLM Southern Nevada District Office,
Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130



Solar Projects within the Pahrump Valley

BLM
Southern Nevada
District Office
Rough Hat Clark County,
Rough Hat Nye County,
and Copper Rays
Solar Projects

Legend

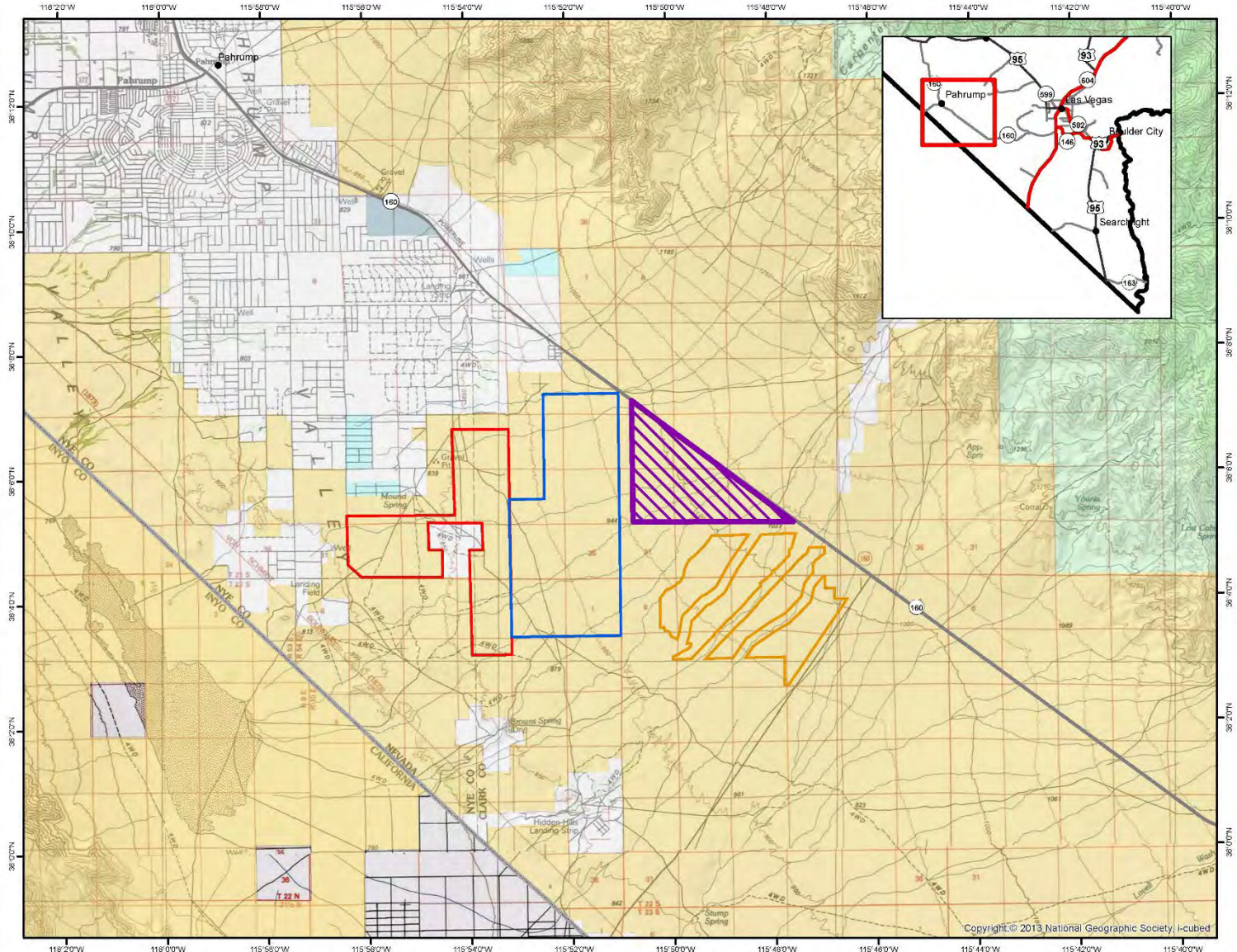
- Cities & Towns
- Yellow Pine Solar Project (approved)
- Copper Rays (proposed)
- Rough Hat - Nye (proposed)
- Rough Hat - Clark (proposed)
- US Highways
- State Highways
- State Boundary
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- Forest Service
- National Park Service
- Nevada State
- Local Government
- Private

0 1 2 4
Miles

Lat/Long Grid - UTM Zone 11, NAD 1983
Degrees Minutes Seconds

Prepared By: SNEO E&I Staff on 11/24/2021

No warranty is made by the BLM as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data or individual use or aggregate use with other data.

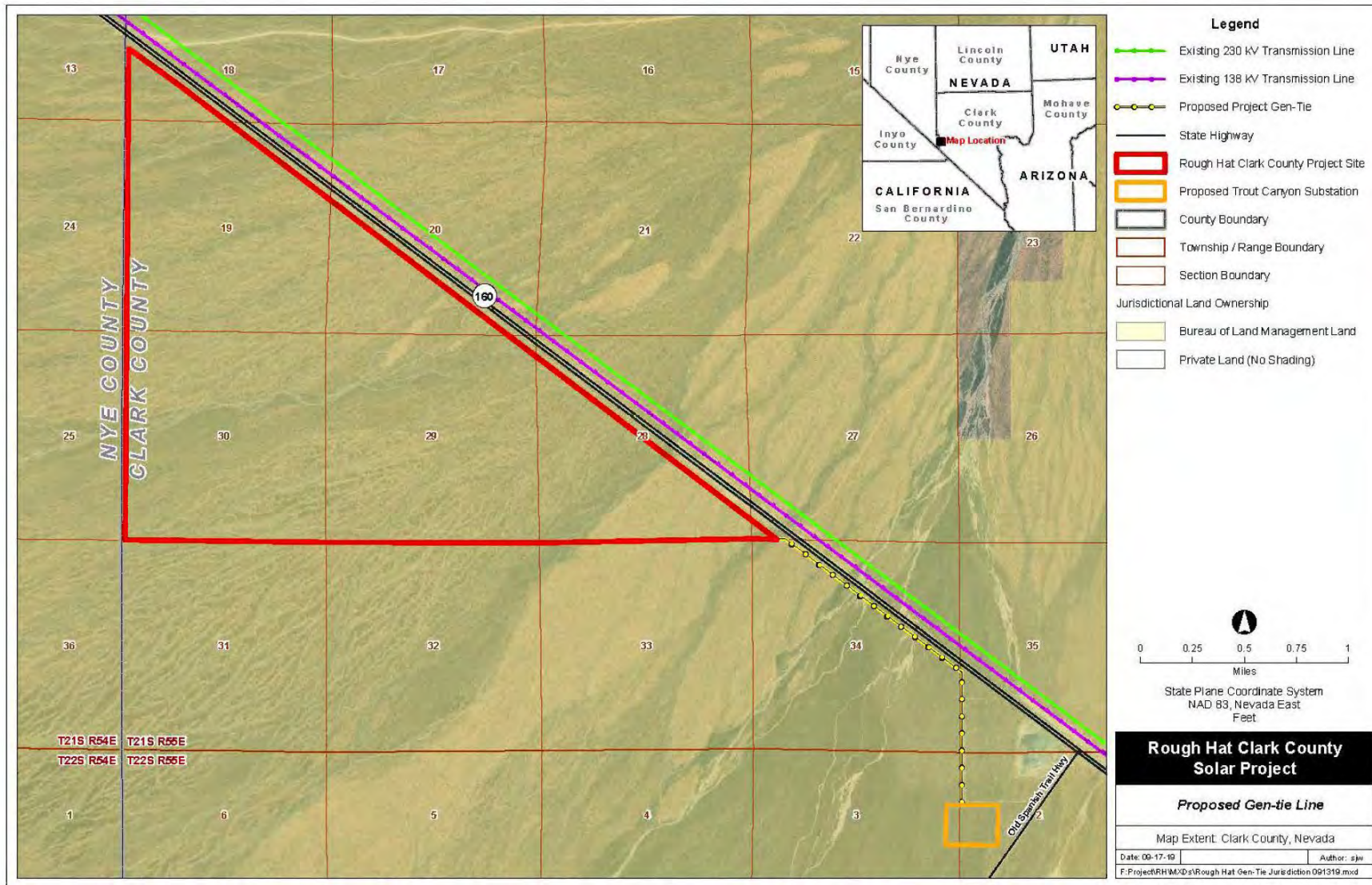




Rough Hat Clark Solar Project

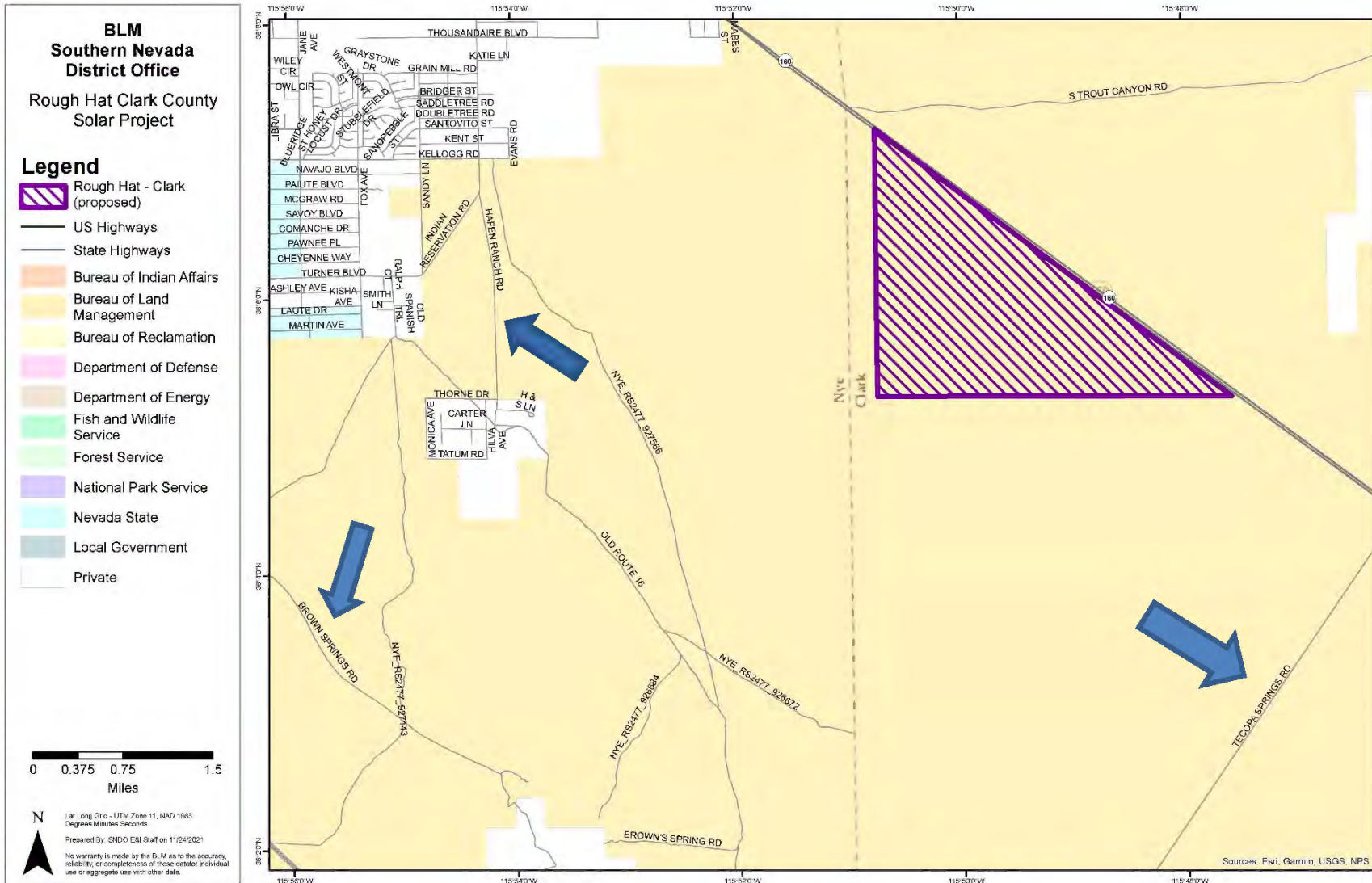
- Candela Renewables applied for a right-of-way grant requesting to utilize public land for the construction and operation of a proposed solar facility with interconnection to the regional transmission system.
- The request is to use approximately 2,400-acres of public land managed by the BLM Southern Nevada District, located in the Pahrump Valley in Clark County, approximately 38 miles west of Las Vegas and southeast of the Town of Pahrump, Nevada.
- The project proposes to build and operate a 400 mega-watt alternating current solar photovoltaic power generating facility with battery storage.

Rough Hat Clark County Project





Rough Hat Clark County Project



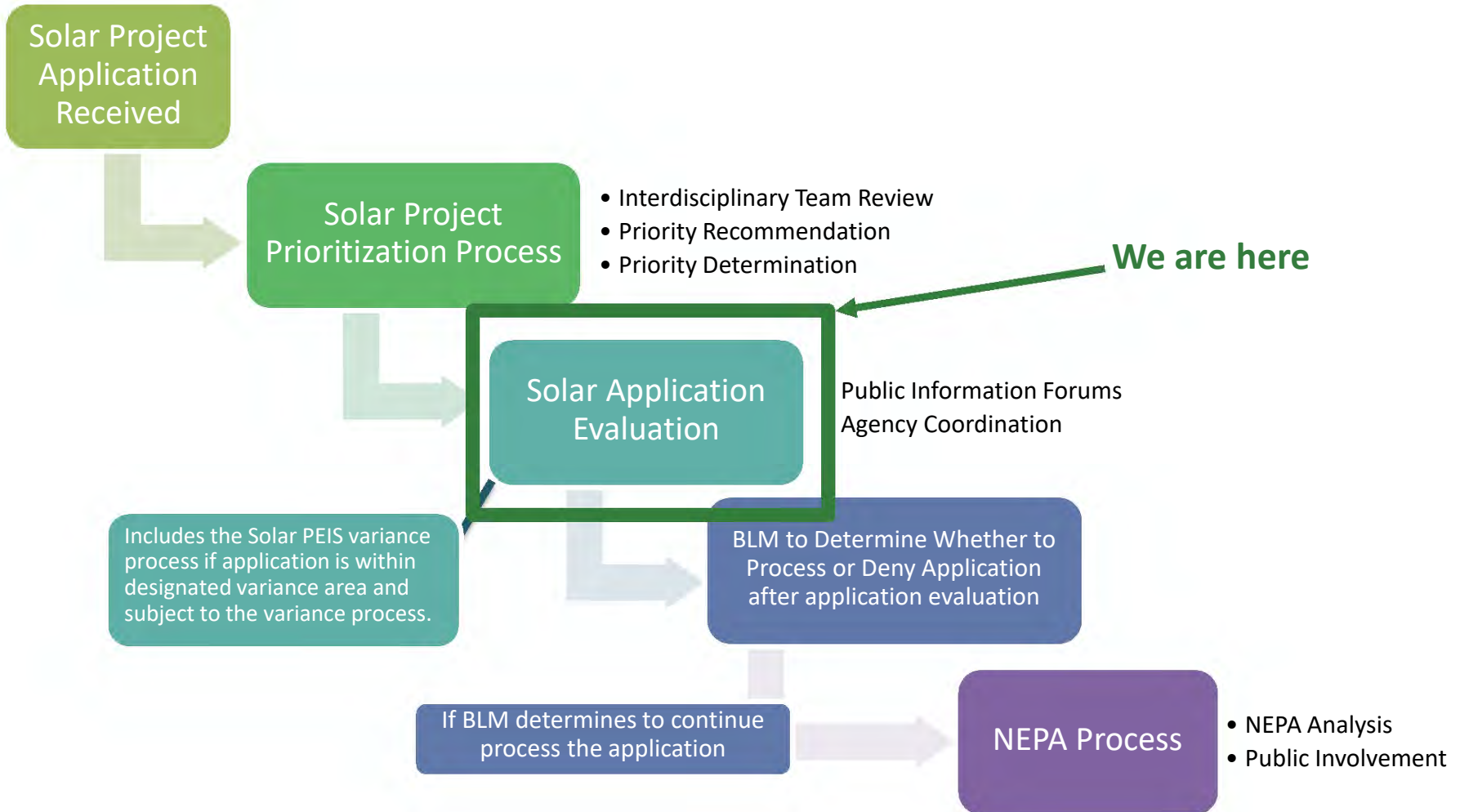


Additional Project Information

- The project would use photovoltaic modules that convert sunlight into direct current electricity
- Direct current electricity is collected and converted to alternating current electricity through a system of inverters
- Transformers would step up the alternating current electricity to 34.5 kV
- Energy would be delivered to the BLM-approved Trout Canyon Substation - the Point of Interconnection - via new 230 kV gen-tie lines
- Battery storage facilities would also be constructed on-site



Rough Hat Clark County Application Review Process





Solar Project Prioritization Process

- The Southern Nevada District solar project prioritization process focuses on prioritizing applications that have the fewest known resource conflicts.
- The district uses the prioritization process to prioritize processing the existing 26 pending applications.
- In August 2020, the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project was determined to be a High Priority for continued application processing by the BLM due to low resource conflicts.



Application Evaluation Process in Solar Variance Areas

- In 2012, BLM and DOE issued the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States.
- The PEIS designated Solar Energy Zones that are suited for utility-scale production of solar energy.
- Public land is available on a case-by-case basis, outside of the Solar Energy Zones. Variance areas require a separate process prior to initiating analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act. The Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project is located in a variance area.



Application Evaluation Process in Solar Variance Areas (cont)

- The variance process is included in the application evaluation determination process, as described in the right-of-way regulations.
- The focus of the variance process is to collect resource data and evaluate it, along with input from the public, Tribes, and Federal, State, and local governments to assess the appropriateness of the proposal.



Public Input as Part of Application Evaluation

- These scheduled public information forums and public input period for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project provide opportunities for public outreach and input.
- Information gathered during the public input period will inform the application evaluation/variance process including the BLM determination on whether to continue to process, or to deny, the right-of-way application.

Next Steps

- Public input on the Rough Hat Clark County project will be accepted until December 22, 2021.
- The information gathered will be presented to the BLM State Director. The BLM State Director, with concurrence from the BLM Director, will make the determination of whether the project will move forward and be analyzed under the NEPA process. Determination expected early 2022.

What Types of Input Would be Most Helpful Now

- Helpful public input at this point would include potential local concerns, barriers, and/or opportunities related to the proposed project.
- Input about types of use or resource concerns within the proposed area, like recreational activities and opportunities, wildlife, vegetation, visual resources, and other factors, would also be helpful at this time.
- Information related to the variance factors found at the following link:
<https://blmsolar.anl.gov/variance/process/factors/>



Question and Answer Section

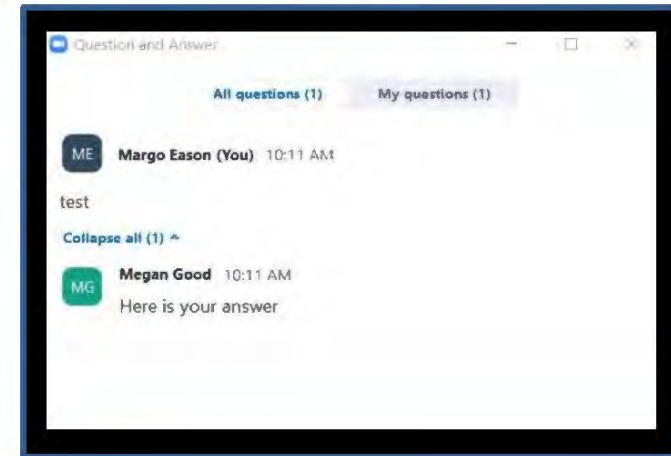
1. Click "Q&A"
button at
bottom of screen



2. Type your
question



BLM will answer your
question in Zoom or live





How to Provide Verbal Input

- Input will be accepted in order of registration
- Once your name is called, use the 'Raise Hand' feature and the meeting facilitator will open your microphone
- If you are on the phone, you can raise your hand with *9 and then unmute/mute using *6
- A timer will be displayed on your screen to show the time remaining for your input
- Your input will be included in the project record





Public Input Section

BLM wants to hear from all members of the public. Out of respect for everyone's participation and input, we will be using the following guidelines:

- Stay within your allotted time so that everyone can speak
- Please be respectful of others
- Refrain from profanity

If guidelines are not followed, your microphone will be muted, and we will move to the next person

Next 10 commenters

1. Tambi Calvert
2. Erika Gerling
3. Donna Corey
4. Simone Griffin
5. Kevin Emmerich
6. Edward LeBlanc
7. Shannon Salter
8. Alan Sass
9. Amy Noel
10. Jimmy Lewis

2:00



Public Input Section

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- Please be respectful of others
- Refrain from profanity

If guidelines are not followed, your microphone will be muted, and we will move to the next person

Next 10 commenters

1. Ben Burr
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

2:00



How to Submit Further Input

More information is available at the website: www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtualpublic-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county

Want to provide comment?

EMAIL: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov

MAIL:

BLM Southern Nevada District Office,
Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar
Project Variance
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

**Public input period closes
12/22/2021**

Appendix C - Q&A From Virtual Public Information Forums

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

#	Question	Answer(s)
1	I have a statement/questions I like to put out there during the public portion of the presentation.	If you have a question you would like answered, please type that in the Q&A box and a response will be provided. If you would like to make a comment during public input, your name can be added to the speaker list.
2	Can you add me to the speakers list?	Absolutely, will do.
3	Has Candela decided what type of PV modules would be used?	The information Candela has provided is included within the preliminary plan of development. The BLM has posted the preliminary Plan of Development for the Project online at the following link: https://www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtual-public-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county . Additional information on the proposed Project can be found in the Plan of Development and at that website.
4	What is the status of any mining claims that would be affected by the Project; are they active, what minerals are involved (are they critical minerals), and who could be affected?	Thank you for your question. We strive to provide the best information and at this moment we don't have an immediate response. We also encourage you to submit your question/comment through: Email: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov Mail: BLM – Las Vegas Field Office Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance, 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr. Las Vegas, NV 89130
5	How long will construction last?	Candela Renewables estimates that construction would take approximately 12 to 18 months. Additional information on the Project including more detail on the schedule estimate, can be found in the preliminary Plan of Development, which BLM has included online at the following website: https://www.blm.gov/press-release/bureau-land-management-hold-virtual-public-information-forums-rough-hat-clark-county . A link to the website has been added in the chat.
6	The Project applicant has claimed that they will be paying property tax, my understanding is ROW is not taxed in NV, so will they? And does it affect payment in lieu of taxes?	The BLM does not have authority relating to payment of taxes by a Project sponsor.
7	Variance Factors, what does this entail?	(live answered) The variance factors were included under the solar programmatic API. Yes, there is a list of variance factors that would require documentation that we would be working through. So, public input would feed into that as well as agency coordination. Some of the documentation requirements include looking at the land

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

		status of the area, applicable opportunities to document for the cultural resources. It's a list of kind of different factors to look at when we review the application through the various process.
8	My concern is that this Project will lower the water table and that I will have to hire a driller to lower my well. Because of this Project you will cause me additional expense to have a well dug deeper.	Candela Renewables has stated in their preliminary Plan of Development that water would primarily be needed for the construction phase of the Project. Water use after construction would be relatively low during operation. Candela Renewables has estimated approximately 800 acre-feet of water for construction and approximately 16-acre feet per year for operation. Water would be provided by either developing an onsite well, following State of Nevada requirements, or delivering water from a local provider via truck or pipeline. The Nevada Division of Water Resources is responsible for the allocation of water resources within the State of Nevada. If the Project receives a favorable Variance Determination, the BLM will consider impacts from water use during the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process. BLM considers water, both surface and groundwater, within the broader context of all resources on BLM administered lands and their interaction as they relate to BLM responsibilities.
9	This area is somewhat remote, does the applicant bear any responsibility as far as emergency services to their Project?	Thank you for your question. We strive to provide the best information and at this moment we don't have an immediate response. We also encourage you to submit your question/comment through: Email: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov Mail: BLM – Las Vegas Field Office Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance, 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr. Las Vegas, NV 89130
10	Has BLM establish a National Trail Management Corridor for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail consistent with BLM Policy Manual 6280?	(live answered) With BLM policy manual 6280, the BLM currently has an interim five mile corridor around the trail. This has not been designated yet to date.
11	It would be helpful if you answered all the questions out loud.	Thank you for your comment. If you would like, please sign up to give a verbal comment or you can also submit the comment using the methods below: Email: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov Mail: BLM – Las Vegas Field Office Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance, 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr. Las Vegas, NV 89130
12	What would be done to mitigate the loss of desert habitat in the Project footprint?	Mitigation measures have not been developed at this time. Currently, we are requesting information about potential impacts within the site. If the Project receives a favorable Variance Determination and the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process is initiated, relevant mitigation

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

		would be identified and addressed as part of the environmental review process. Additionally, applicable design features required by the Solar PEIS include methods to minimize the effects to biological resources.
13	Can you clarify if that means 5 miles from the OSNHT centerline or 2.5 miles from the centerline?	(live answered) Yes, thank you, we can provide clarity, it's 5 miles from the central line.
14	Who bears responsibility for the security of the Project?	(live answered) The security of the Project would fall to the applicant, however we are still very early in this process and so we do not have full details to that .
15	How would anyone know to apply for this land use if the BLM is not advertising those lands for sale or for use?	The applicant, Candela Renewables, identified and applied for the proposed Project site. The lands being requested in the application were identified in the Solar PEIS as Variance lands, where solar energy development applications can be considered on a case-by-case basis. The BLM is currently considering the appropriateness of the application utilizing the Variance process that was identified in the Solar PEIS. The current public input meetings and public input period are a critical piece of the Variance process and will inform BLM's decision on whether to continue processing the application (initiate the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process).
16	Will you amend the RMP for this? Gemini Solar was also a VRM Class III and got a full plan amendment with a 90-day comment period.	(live answered) So land use plan conformance review is part of the variance process and so we are looking into that specific to the VRM class III as well, so yes, documentation of that performance is part of this process, and then we would, if a plan amendment was needed, we would move forward with that but we are still reviewing our plans and our conformance.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

17	<p>Is this the norm, building so close to residential areas considering this Project is 2,400 acres with other projects adding additional acreage?</p>	<p>To look at the siting of solar comprehensively, the BLM and the United States Department of Energy approved the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development (Solar PEIS) in six southwestern states. The Solar PEIS designated Solar Energy Zones that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy. The Solar PEIS also designated variance areas on BLM-administered public lands that are outside of the Solar Energy Zones and not otherwise excluded by the Solar PEIS. Variance areas are available for utility-scale solar energy development and are evaluated through the BLM’s established variance process. This Solar PEIS amended the existing Resource Management Plans for the individual offices affected.</p> <p>The planning for the proposed Rough Hat Clark County Project involves the solar application process, including application prioritization, the application evaluation process and variance process, and the National Environmental Policy Act process. Currently we are at the application evaluation process, which included coordination with federal, state, and local governments, tribes, and public outreach. If there is a favorable application evaluation determination made for the Project, the BLM would continue processing the application by initiating an environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process, which includes further scoping and review opportunities for agencies, tribes, and the public. Information on the BLM land use planning process can be found at the following website: https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/planning-101</p>
18	<p>Would there be any ground cover or post-construction ground treatment within the Project to maintain habitat value of the area during and after Project development?</p>	<p>It is anticipated that most of the site would be mowed instead of graded. It is anticipated that this would result in shorter-term impacts to vegetative resources, soils, and small mammal, bird, and reptile habitat.</p>
19	<p>That doesn't really respond to the issue of people not being able to deal with all this technology and would like to hear your answers.</p>	<p>A video of the meeting will be posted and can be reviewed following the meeting. There will also be an opportunity for providing public input following the Q&A. If you would like to make a comment during the Public Input session, we can add your name to the speaker list.</p>

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

20	I would like to know how or why this Project will be so close to Pahrump. It does not seem wise to stop any development to the town. This part of town is the most active as far as housing and this will be a hazard to all of us on this end of town because of air quality and water being removed from these areas.	The applicant, Candela Renewables, identified and applied for the proposed Project site. The lands being requested in the application were identified in the Solar PEIS as Variance lands, where solar energy development applications can be considered on a case-by-case basis. The BLM is currently considering the appropriateness of the application utilizing the Variance process that was identified in the Solar PEIS. The current public input meetings and public input period are a critical piece of the Variance process and will inform BLM’s decision on whether to continue processing the application (initiate the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process).
21	Again, how did they identify that site without someone advertising those sites?	The applicant, Candela Renewables, identified and applied for the proposed Project site. The lands being requested in the application were identified in the Solar PEIS as Variance lands, where solar energy development applications can be considered on a case-by-case basis. The BLM is currently considering the appropriateness of the application utilizing the Variance process that was identified in the Solar PEIS. The current public input meetings and public input period are a critical piece of the Variance process and will inform BLM’s decision on whether to continue processing the application (initiate the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process). To look at the siting of solar comprehensively, the BLM and the United States Department of Energy approved the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development (Solar PEIS) in six Southwestern States. The Solar PEIS designated Solar Energy Zones that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy. The Solar PEIS also designated variance areas on BLM-administered public lands that are outside of the Solar Energy Zones and not otherwise excluded by the Solar PEIS. Variance areas are available for utility-scale solar energy development and are evaluated through the BLM’s established variance process. This Solar PEIS amended the existing Resource Management Plans for the individual offices affected.
22	Again, the issue of trying to read tiny type on our phones means your answers are unreadable - it's an access issue.	I am sorry that you are having trouble reading the responses on your device, we are doing our best to provide responses to the questions being received. The answers can also be reviewed later as part of the video that will be posted, and a transcript can be provided.
23	Why not disperse smaller projects instead of concentrating large projects?	(live answered) BLM is responding to the applicants proposals and so they generate the proposal and then we have the responsibility to respond to those. So that is kind of similar to the question answered a little bit earlier.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

24	How much water will this Project replace to the local community?	Candela Renewables has stated in their preliminary Plan of Development that water would primarily be needed for the construction phase of the Project. Water use after construction would be relatively low during operation. Candela Renewables has estimated approximately 800 acre-feet of water for construction and approximately 16-acre feet per year for operation. Water would be provided by either developing an onsite well, following State of Nevada requirements, or delivering water from a local provider via truck or pipeline. The Nevada Division of Water Resources is responsible for the allocation of water resources within the State of Nevada. If the Project receives a favorable Variance Determination, the BLM will consider impacts from water use during the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process. BLM considers water, both surface and groundwater, within the broader context of all resources on BLM administered lands and their interaction as they relate to BLM responsibilities.
25	How many neighbors of proposed projects are in favor of this?	The BLM is currently seeking public input on the Rough Hat Clark Project. The public input will help inform the BLM's decision on whether to continue processing the application, and then initiate the environmental review process. If the Project receives a favorable determination and continues into the environmental review process, there will be additional public input opportunities during that process.
26	Will desert tortoises be allowed to re-enter the site? If so, how do they get across Tecopa Road?	If the Project is approved, desert tortoises would be impacted by the construction of the solar facility. The BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service work in coordination to reduce those impacts by requiring that tortoises be translocated prior to construction of the solar facility. The BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Trout Canyon and Stump Springs Translocation Areas that can potentially be used as recipient sites for the tortoises from the Rough Hat Clark Project. Measures to reduce impacts could include post construction monitoring for 12 months, health assessments, treatment if needed. Specific measures would be developed in a desert tortoise translocation plan during the environmental review process.
27	Hello, I registered to comment, can you put me on that list?	There are two pages of registered speakers. We have you on the list to comment.
28	I don't need to speak.	Thanks for letting us know, please let us know if you decided you would like to speak.
29	Format moved on without answering all questions.	We will continue to answer questions in the Q&A during the meeting. Please feel free to continue to submit questions.
30	I will email comment. This format is of concern.	Just in case you are not seeing the responses being provided, there is a response linked to the question that you need to click on to expand it. In addition to accepting comments during the meeting, the BLM is accepting comments through December 22, 2021. Please submit questions/comments through: Email: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov Mail: BLM – Las Vegas Field Office Attn: Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Variance, 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/8/2021

		Las Vegas, NV 89130
31	I do not have a comment at this time. My name may have been entered into the "speaker" section in error. Thank you.	Thank you for letting us know. Please let us know if you change your mind.
32	You must be having technical problems.	Please let us know if you are experiencing a technical problem and we'll try to assist in resolving it.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

#	Question	Answer(s)
1	I don't see a mute button, are we muted?	Participants are muted during the meeting. During public input, speakers will be unmuted to provide their verbal comment.
2	Thanks.	You are welcome.
3	Hello, other people are having log in issues. You need to make this a bit easier to join.	I am sorry to hear that some people are having login issues. They can contact Victoria Gaston at 864-901-3832 for assistance.
4	Who receives the power from this Project?	(live answered) The Project sponsor Candela Renewables has indicated that a purchaser for the power proposed to be generated from the Project has not yet been identified. The point of interconnection at the Trout Canyon Substation means that energy would flow into the California Independent System operation grid system, which manages portions of the grid, including Valley Electric Service.
5	Have you determined how many Mojave yuccas are on the site? It is 93,000 for Yellow Pine.	(live answered) So there are 69,000 cacti and yucca within the Project area.
6	How many Joshua trees are found on the Project?	(live answered) No Joshua trees were identified within the proposed Project area.
7	What is the proposal for getting water for the Project?	(live answered) Candela Renewables has stated in their preliminary plan of development that water would primarily be needed for the construction phase of the Project, water use after construction would be relatively low during operations. Currently, Candela Renewables has estimated approximately 800 acre feet of water for construction and approximately 16 acre feet per year for operation, water would be provided by either developing an onsite well, following state of Nevada requirements for delivering water from a local provider via truck or pipeline, the Nevada division of Water Resources is responsible for the allocation of water resources within the state of Nevada, and the Project receives a favorable variance determination, the BLM will consider impacts from water use during the environmental review or in the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

8	Is there a current route inventory for the land and a travel management plan on place for the land?	(live answered) No, we do not have a current route inventory for the Project area. There is not a complete travel management plan yet.
9	Would a water pipeline across BLM land need additional NEPA review?	(live answered) Yes. However, if the pipeline is included in part of the proposed action, that would be included in the NEPA review.
10	In your environmental impact research did you take all solar sites into account before drafting one?	Currently, BLM is in the early stages of the application review. The BLM has made no determination at this time, whether the Project will move forward for processing. The input received from the public during the public comment period is critical to help inform the BLM's decision on whether the application will be processed further with the initiation of the NEPA process.
11	To follow up on Kevin's question, what are they going to do with the Yuccas?	(live answered) Mitigation measures have not yet been developed at this time, we're currently requesting information about the potential impacts within the site. If the Project does receive a favorable variance determination, when we go through the NEPA process, and it's initiated, relevant mitigation would be identified and addressed as part of the environmental review process, which could include the use of the yuccas. Additionally, we will have applicable design features required by the solar PVs, which include methods to minimize effects to vegetation species.
12	Without a route inventory how will BLM understand the impacts to recreation?	(live answered) The BLM is currently requesting information about potential impacts to public access and recreation within and adjacent to the proposed site. Helpful information to submit at this time could include local knowledge of trails and routes used within the Project area and impacts to the recreational experience on the trails. If the Project receives a favorable Variance Determination and continues to be processed, the specific impacts from the proposed solar Project to recreation use and trails within and adjacent to the proposed Project would be analyzed during the environmental review/National Environmental Policy Act process. Additionally, applicable design features required by the Solar PEIS include methods to minimize access and recreation conflicts.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

13	Why is the chat disabled?	BLM is committed to an accessible public meeting experience. To ensure this, SNDO follows a standard process and agenda for virtual meetings. Meetings are recorded and posted with closed captions. Input during public comment is transcribed and included as part of the public comment period. Questions are taken using the Zoom Q&A feature and are answered by a mix of typing some answers, which all participants can see, as well verbally answering some questions, which participants can hear. Questions are answered in both formats to ensure as many questions as possible are answered during the meeting time. Zoom Q&A and chat features are 508 and WCAG compliant and video of meeting is closed captioned. Phone in options are available and instructions are included specifically for those using that functionality to provide comment. A phone number is provided on the news release and website to ask questions outside meeting times. Questions and comments may also be emailed and mailed until the December 22, 2021, deadline.
14	Has Candela built similar Projects in NV? If so, what management practices have been adopted in other projects to preserve recreation access and recognized trails and routes?	(live answered) While we do not have that information available this evening, we can provide some information about recreation access and how it would be considered in the process. The BLM is currently requesting information about potential impacts to public access and recreation within and adjacent to the proposed site, like we talked about before in our slides as helpful information. At this time, would include local knowledge of trails and routes used within the Project area and impacts to the recreational experience on trails. If the Project does receive a favorable variance determination and continues to be processed, specific impacts from the proposed solar Project to recreation use and trails within and adjacent to the proposed Project too, would be analyzed during the environmental review process or the National Environmental Policy Act process or NEPA, and then additionally applicable design features required by the solar PEIS would include methods to minimize access and recreation conflicts.
15	When and how was the site evaluated for Joshua trees? They are there, just not in high numbers.	Belt transects were distributed randomly throughout the site and numbers of cacti and yucca were extrapolated from the data from the belt transects. Joshua trees were noted as an observed species in the preliminary botanical report but were not captured in the belt transects.
16	Can I send in my photos and GPS locations to BLM of the many Joshua trees I have found on what I think is the Rough Hat Clark Project site?	(live answered) Yes, we would appreciate you sending that information during this time, please send your information to that email address that we put into the chat.
17	It seems this and other solar projects are being rushed or getting much quicker attention than other land use concerns, is there a reason for this?	(live answered) The BLM has identified the Pahrump Valley Projects has a high priority for application processing over other renewable energy applications in the district. For the Rough Hat Clark Project, we are in the application review process that includes the Variance process. The BLM will review the applications in accordance with all laws, regulations, and policies, including public engagement.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

18	Why doesn't the BLM try to have the solar energy projects use the SEZs which are "suited to solar development" before allowing variance applications?	(live answered) So the BLM is working on both the Dry Lake East designated leasing area and the Amargosa solar energy zone, the high priority projects are being considered, in addition to development of those preferred areas.
19	Are all of the solar PEIS (?) lands already in process and going forward? Why the need to expand into lands that were not "most suitable"?	(live answered) So the solar PEIS identified solar energy zones and designated leasing areas, in addition to providing for applications to be considered in variance areas. For projects in variance areas and that are subject to the variance process, the BLM will consider those applicable variance factors determined in the solar PEIS. The variance factors include documentation about the proposed Project related to land use, plan documents, Project, use of existing facilities and roads, design features, environmental resources like fish and wildlife habitat, visual resource management, wilderness, hydrological resources, also access and recreational opportunities and applicant coordination with state and local governments. For permitting requirements, we do have a full list of the variance factors that can be found at the following website, I believe we posted that in the chat earlier, and then we can repost that if you have any input on these variance factors that would be helpful at this time.
20	What are the plans to mitigate impacts to the Mojave Desert tortoise?	(live answered) If the Project receives a favorable variance determination and moves forward and is approved, desert tortoises would be impacted by the construction of the solar facility, the BLM and Fish and Wildlife Service work and coordination to reduce those impacts by requiring that tortoises be translocated prior to construction of the solar facility, the BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service designated the Trout Canyon and Stumps Springs translocation areas that can potentially be used as recipient sites for the tortoises from the Rough Hat Clark County Project. Measures to reduce impacts could include post construction monitoring for 12 months, health assessments and treatment if needed. Specific measures would be developed in a desert tortoise translocation plan during the environmental review processes.
21	Why was Pahrump Valley identified as low conflict? If you identify high conflicts now during the public comment processes, will you revise this designation?	(live answered) So the prioritization determination worksheet which is part of our prioritization process provides detail on the resources considered in making the determination and can be posted on the Project website. The planning for the proposed Rough Hat Clark County Project involves solar application process, which also includes our prioritization process and the application evaluation and variance processes, and then finally, if it does receive a favorable determination, it would move on to the NEPA process. Currently we are at the application evaluation process, which we are coordinating with federal, state, and local governments, tribes and offering public outreach and requesting input. If there is a favorable application evaluation determination made for the Project, the BLM would then continue

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

		processing that application information on the BLM land use planning process we provide it in the chat as well if folks would like more information.
22	Why aren't preliminary plans for the mitigation of the existing conditions, plants, animals required in this application? So, you approve it and then find the mitigations, is that the process?	(live answered) So right now we are in the application evaluation process and also the variance process. So, we will be reviewing the application at this time. And if a favorable variance determination is made, then we would move on to our environmental review, which is when we would start looking at impacts and assigning or developing mitigation measures prior to Project approval.
23	Prior that's the word. Thanks.	You are welcome.
24	I don't have a comment tonight. Thanks.	Thanks for letting us know.
25	Kevin Emmerich's computer is having problems, so he will comment on Laura Cunningham's computer, I will raise hand.	Thank you.
26	This computer process you are using is very difficult to use for public comment, I think many people are having technical problems.	We are sorry to hear that people are having technical problems. Please share this contact information with anyone having issues - For Zoom technical issues, call Victoria Gaston at 864-901-3832.
27	Where is the best place to find the documentation that is required for the variance application?	Here is that link again: The full list of variance factors can be found at the following website: https://blmsolar.anl.gov/variance/process/factors/
28	I have that link, but that just outlines the factors that require documentation. Where is the actual documentation?	At this point, the documentation to support the Variance request is still being compiled. Once the information is compiled (including the public input), it will be presented to the State Director. The State Director, with concurrence from the Director, will make the Variance determination on whether to continue processing the application.
29	Thank you. It was an interesting format.	Thanks for the feedback.

Question Report Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project Virtual Public Information Forum 12/9/2021

30	For example, this is a factor: Documentation that the proposed Project is in an area with low or comparatively low resource conflicts and where conflicts can be resolved. This factor implies that some form of documentation will be produced. Is the documentation publicly available?	The documentation is being compiled and is not yet in a final form that is publicly available. Once the Variance Report is complete, including supporting documentation, it can be made publicly available.
31	Is the Trout Canyon Substation part of the Variance Process?	The Trout Canyon Substation was approved as part of the Yellow Pine Solar Project.
32	The prioritization process allows BLM to reverse a decision on priority status. New information on translocated tortoise mortality by badgers on the Yellow Pine Solar Project indicates drought may be having significant impacts to tortoise populations and translocation efforts, so will the BLM priority status of this Project be re-evaluated?	The BLM made the priority decision and then continued processing the application. We are now considering the application as part of the application evaluation, which will include the Variance process. The BLM does not plan to revisit the prioritization decision. The next step in the process will be to compile information, in accordance with the regulations and Variance process, and present the Report to the State Director for a determination on whether to continue processing or deny the application.
33	Which Native American tribes will be consulted and how will the BLM reach out to them? Which representatives of each tribe will be consulted?	The BLM has initiated government-to-government consultation with Tribes for this Project. The Tribes include: 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe, Moapa Band of Paiutes, and Timbisha Shoshone Tribe. This has included formal correspondence, meetings, and site visits with tribal members.

Appendix D - Public Input from Virtual Public Information Forums

Jon Belak	42:55	Thank you, and thanks for the meeting and the opportunity to comment tonight. I just wanted to note, as has already been noted by the previous presenter at the beginning that this Project has been allowed as a variance project, so it's basically an exception to the landscape level planning process that the BLM did for the solar program PEIS. So, Audubon's main concern as always is for the loss of habitat. This could result in this Project, but we're also concerned about the precedent set by this Project approval, and I just wanted to note that, because of this variance situation, the bar for review and details should be very high in this Project, and that all concerns should be addressed. Thank you.
David Perlman	47:22	Thank you again for sponsoring this this forum and I would just like to say I'm absolutely opposed to this, it's, it's just an eyesore. It's, it's going to be an eyesore during the construction phase. It's going to be destruction of our beautiful desert, but my main concern is that during their presentation to the Nye County Commission or maybe it was the, the Public Land Advisory Committee here in Nye County. They mentioned that they're going to use 800, acre feet of water. While the desert is the perfect place, I'm sure for solar it's also a place where there's not a lot of water, we put that in perspective we're talking about 260 million gallons of water just to build this thing. And then they say they're going to use 5-20 acre foot annually. So that's a 40% variance. Let's just say they make up 40% variance underestimate in their 800-acre feet that you're going to use in the beginning, we don't have that kind of water. I mean, in my end of town which is kind of close to where they're building it, we've already had people that are digging their wells deeper and still not hitting water. So my comments are I'm absolutely opposed, and the individuals who have spoken already, I support what they've said, and I again thank you for this opportunity to speak.
Joyce Barishman	49:47	Yes, I would. Can you hear me? OK, well, during the meeting on the 30th that we had in Pahrump. They spoke about we would lose property value. And it was said that there would be a 5% loss in our property values around the Project in Pahrump. So, who's going to pay for that? Where does that money come from and they, and I'm sure that it will be more than 5%. And what about the school? What about the elementary school being so close to children? How can that be allowed? That would be my public input at this point.

<p>Judy Branfman</p>	<p>52:24</p>	<p>I'm, you know I'm calling from Los Angeles so thanks for the opportunity for letting us Angelenos and others, you know across the country who care about the desert, you know, speak. I, you know, as a past urban planner I don't understand how the BLM sees this is good stewardship. It really appears there isn't any real planning, you aren't looking at the big picture of needs you know across the whole region. But just seemingly responding to application by application from, you know, from corporations who don't have the desert or the community, or even the region's interest at heart. It's not responsible stewardship. So real planning might include things like looking at the locations that might receive the energy from these projects and seeing if those cities and other entities are actually doing the maximum to do their part in greening, you know, with rooftop solar and parking lot coverage everywhere. I can tell you in Los Angeles, that is not happening, so it seems problematic that the BLM is willing to sacrifice, you know, our carbon sequestering public lands. When cities and manufacturers aren't doing what they should be doing locally to attack the problem. I'm just really stunned. Um, your goal should be good stewardship, not responding to corporation's interest. So why not do a legitimate planning process, you know where everyone who's involved actually looks at the big picture and comes up with a plan? I'm afraid in a few years, it'll be clear that greed and not green was driving these projects. I wanted to say when you're on a phone you can read those teeny words and people can't benefit from other people's questions. It's really not a public process. It's just very, sort of difficult to navigate and it's not accessible. So, thank you.</p>
<p>Kevin Emmerich</p>	<p>55:50</p>	<p>Okay, thank you. I'll make this comment I'll try to say it in this time frame. When you issued the high priority status. You did so using local considerations. And you said there are low conflicts, a lot of that was based on your desert tortoise surveys, and when you made that determination in August 2020, you're going by surveys that occurred 31 years ago. The company did actually come in and do surveys in May of 2021, but that as you know was a record-breaking drought year. They said they did it with a confidence interval of 95% but an agency biologist told me it was 64% and that sounds very accurate in drought conditions. Yellow Pine Solar, when they cleared the tortoises out, they got 139 and predicted 53. They said at the time it was 3.04 per square mile. The same that they're saying for Rough Hat Clark, but after they cleared those tortoises out they got a lot more than they said. They said 11 per square mile on the Yellow Pine site so how could the Rough Hat Clark site, be only 3.04 per square mile. That is an underestimate, and you need to order them to do a new survey, you really need to do that because the Rough Hat Clark site is even higher than Yellow Pine and has Joshua Trees on the site. And it actually could be even more abundant numbers of desert tortoise. The fact that Candela just wants to get this done quick and wants to do their surveys in a drought year. It's frivolous and it's unprofessional to allow that. Do another survey, make them do another. Thank you.</p>

Michael Fender	58:32	<p>Okay, well first of all I'm not a totally opposed to solar but what I'm opposed to is the location of the solar projects. I honestly believe that these the proximity of these projects in these residential areas are not really helpful, number one. And I believe there will be a loss of property value if all of these projects were to happen, not just this one because I understand is at least five proposed for this area, and exceeding 18,000 acres, and if so doing that's a lot more water than 800 square, excuse me, 800-acre feet of water per system. That's a lot of water that'd be utilized during the construction phase. So, if these five projects or solar farms are to happen this would make the south end of our Pahrump Valley literally a commercial reflective wasteland in my opinion. I would highly recommend that other places or pieces of property within the BLM regime be utilized so that are not in close proximity to this semi-residential area known as Pahrump Valley. Well thank you for your time. I really appreciate it. That's all I have. Thank you very much.</p>
Edward LeBlanc	1:02:08	<p>Great. I just wanted to piggyback on Judy and Michael about the proximity of this Project that's right up against near Kellogg and Hafen Ranch. For the life of me I don't understand, who in your right mind would put something like that right in a community. And then also the panel's—the farm surrounds two ranches that are in the middle of this. And they have to drive all the way around. I was just totally aghast when I heard that at the meeting. And there's plenty of land between here to the other side of Tecopa that could be these things could be stuck in instead of putting it right in the middle of our place. And I'm just appalled at why somebody is doing this to us. So my other concern is our well system, you know we are on wells here. My question is, is that when I run out of water, who's going to pay to have my well dug deeper? That could be a class action suit that we can all rise up and do something about it to this corporation that's trying to move in on our property here. That's all I got to say thanks for your time.</p>
Tina Bond-Kuglin	1:04:54	<p>I know fighting our government, trying to get them to stop these projects is like pulling teeth. But there has to be a way that we could put stipulations on these projects for 1,000 feet from our houses is not an option. It should be a minimum of at least a mile. Second of all, we should put a stipulation that the employees are all from Pahrump or at least 90% of the employees come from Pahrump, if we have to. If it is all about greed, and they're going to spend the money, why can't they get with homeowners and offer to put solar on our houses, instead of putting them out in the middle of the desert. It helps the proper residence, and then all the extra energy that we would produce can help other cities and states. Isn't there a way, or can we get together and put stipulations on these projects? I mean there's six of them just trying to go here alone, right now, but I hear there's 18 on list, and they're six other states that they're trying to do this to. So why can't we figure out a way that everyone gets something out of this? Thank you.</p>

<p>Carolene Logue</p>	<p>1:07:16</p>	<p>Yes. Can you hear me? Great, thank you. And I appreciate your assistance and getting my Zoom working. The issue I'd like to address is the ingress and egress of vehicles for construction purposes. That will be going down Hafen Ranch Road to the construction site and it passes Hafen School and Hafen Ranch Road. It's not a heavily traveled road at this time, and construction traffic will be very difficult to be handled on this small two-lane road that wasn't meant for heavy traffic, it, it's already bearing a lot of traffic for the home construction that's going on the south end of town. So, at the public hearings, it was mentioned that there's a possibility of taking another road, or building another road, is what would be needed. But that road is only on the planning maps and isn't in any use right now because if it doesn't extend the 160 and that is Kellogg, it only goes from Hafen Ranch then west down Kellogg. And if that road is extended who's going to extend it and who's going to pay for it and how is it going to be maintained and is it going to be through taxpayer funds again to construct that road? And it's certainly does seeing that going by an elementary school, where the children come out at that that road would be very, very difficult to maintain safety. Thank you.</p>
<p>Mike Barishmann</p>	<p>1:12:15</p>	<p>Thank you. My name is Mike Barishman. I think this is a complete abomination. I think you really should be ashamed of yourself trying to push this agenda on our little community. This is something that you would not have in your community, right next to an elementary school. All we heard from the last meeting is that, oh you know we're only going to suffer a little bit of dust; we're only going to suffer a little bit of the ambient heat temperature around, we're only going to suffer mowing down the desert instead of digging it up, oh how great! We're only going to suffer maybe about 5% of our property loss, this is, this is really an abomination. This is nothing but greed. This is an attempt of vampires wanting to suck the lifeblood of the water out of our aquifers. And nothing at all has been offered to us at all, nothing. \$16 million in 30 years going into the tax economy? That's trinkets and beads. You think we send our children to school barefoot or something? I'm completely thoroughly disgusted. You would not have this in your neighborhood. Everyone who is part of this Project doesn't even live here in the state. So, you know, we are fiercely against it. You would not have this in your backyard, you would not have this happening by your children or grandchildren schools, and I don't see how you could have any kind of credence in wanting to push this agenda. You should be ashamed of yourself and that's it.</p>

Ryan Gallagher	1:14:41	<p>All right, greetings all. To follow up on what the previous gentleman just said, the applicant has in several meetings in the community toted that they're going to provide this, you know, significant fund of tax to the community. And it's my understanding under state law that that's not, there's there would not be a property tax component of this, and it's just something that I've been concerned about because I've heard them say it several times. And I realize it's nothing to do with the Bureau of Land Management. But it just it concerns me that this has been a narrative of what I at least perceived as a false promise, coming from this particular applicant. Thank you.</p>

Erika Gerling	52:25	Can you hear me? Yes. I just like to say that I think the company's really all, not just this one in particular but all of them need to do a lot better job on outreach to the communities, before they start their projects and submit their applications.
Kevin Emmerich	54:50	Thank you. Sorry about that problem. I did want to point out some things from your speech that are just, well it's not true. You can see Joshua Trees on that site from highway 160, and it's easy to find this site I mean it borders the highway for quite a while. You wrote that they did belt transects. The company actually admitted to us that there are Joshua Trees on that site; you simply have that incorrect. Another question that you got was how will they remove the 69,000 Mojave yuccas? That's called mastication. They use these really big shredders, and they completely mulch these old growth plants to the ground. Dr. Rebecca Hernandez, from UC Davis made a determination they don't grow back when they're shredded. I've seen it at Ivanpah Valley. They start to grow back but the heat generally kills the new growth. On desert tortoise, the company told us, they're going to mow the vegetation and allow tortoises back on the site. But since you're taking the tortoises to the translocation area at Stump Springs about five miles away, they'd have to cross Tecopa Road, and no plans that I know, to put trenches or culverts under that road, they're gonna fence it off. There's no way that tortoises are going to return to the site. This will actually be a complete loss of the habitat. I just want to point that out. Thank you.
Ben Burr	58:30	Yeah. Hey, I just have a quick comment. I've looked at the links you put on the chat. And it looks like when I review the requirements for the variance process that they're just as a request for a lot of documentation. Almost every one of these bullet points does request some form of documentation that the right-of-way, should be allowed in the variance area, but I'm not seeing where I can review any of the documentation that's been produced. Am I missing something? Alright, sorry am I still heard? Yeah, and so I just want to say I have visited this area with the locals from Pahrump. I've ridden through some of the trails in this area. We will have a strong interest, sounds like, that will be analyzed at a different part of the process. I will be submitting a written comment to help document that so you can analyze it appropriately.

Patrick Donnelly	1:00:00	<p>Okay. Um, my name is Patrick Donnelly. I'm Nevada State Director with the Center for Biological Diversity. I also lived in the Pahrump valley for five years, although I recently moved away. I think the majority of what I wanted to say is regarding zoning. You know, I think, probably a lot of folks on this call and there at BLM were around 10-11 years ago when the PEIS was being hashed out. And the idea was we would cite large scale development of solar in the zones. And it wasn't to say that there was a prohibition on variance projects, but the idea with variance was not that we would just come up with new zones and permit all the projects as if they were standalone entities, you know? Part of the premise wasn't just to streamline solar development, but it was to, you know, part of the PEIS premise was to evaluate the cumulative impacts of development in those zones all at once. So permitting these four projects right next to each other, and sort of pretending they're all isolated projects and not one large connected action is kind of, not really adhering to the spirit of the PEIS and we'd have to get into a debate about the letter of the PEIS is as it applies to that, but uh you are, you know, to permit these projects would be to create a new de facto solar zone in the Pahrump valley. That's never been analyzed and needs independent analysis as to whether that's appropriate and additionally, you know the Pahrump Valley I think is very underappreciated and is incredibly rich habitat, you know you recently gave low priority to a project out on Lower Mormon Mesa and habitat that is a far lower quality than Pahrump Valley. This is an extremely ecologically valuable place. So, it seems very clear that these projects should be put on low priority.</p>
Shannon Salter	1:28:52	<p>Yeah, hi, and I'm sorry that I joined late I'm sorry that I missed the presentation, but I appreciate you guys doing this. You know, I just want to say that I've been spending a lot of time in this valley. I've been walking all over the Rough Hat Clark site, and it's just like an incredibly biologically diverse place. It's super dense with yucca, and the soils, of course, are really really exceptionally intact. And I know that there's like a massive plan for all over the Pahrump Valley and the Yellow Pine Project is already underway and then we've also got a proposal for Sagittarius and Rough Hat Nye County and Copper Rays of course. And I know they're building the Trout Canyon Substation, but you know I'm just super super disappointed that the Yellow Pine facility got approved because that's also equally as biologically diverse and dense with yucca just like the Rough Hat Clark County Project. So, I just, I think it would just be like such a terrible shame to see any more of these projects approved. I, for one really want to see distributed energy generation, something put in place over parking lots, and in the city where we're not disrupting wild land because you know also scientists are just understanding that the soils sequester carbon, so I mean of course all of the plants sequester carbon, but the soils do as well. And like I said I've been spending a lot of time now out walking at both, all the sites, the Yellow Pine site, and the Rough Hat Clark site as well as the ones in my county and the Sagittarius site. I do not want to see any more of these approved. I think Yellow Pine was a terrible mistake. And I just do not want to see any more of our wild Mojave land destroyed for solar projects, because I just, I think it's I think it's like, it's form of ecocide.</p>

Shannon Salter	1:32:33	Yeah, you know, I actually have a question and it's about which Native American Tribes would be consulted with the Rough Hat Clark County Project? I was also curious about the Yellow Pine Project I know that, you know, the BLM is just looking at these one at a time instead of looking at you know what's going on a, you know, looking at the big scale the Big Valley, but I noticed that in the Yellow Pine Project it said that the US Army Corps of Engineers consulted tribes, and I was curious about which tribes those were? And I know perhaps you can't answer that since it's about the Yellow Pine and not the Rough Hat Clark, but the same question applies to the Rough Hat Clark County. Which tribes would be consulted and how would the BLM reach out to the tribes by what method? I don't know if you can answer that question now, or if it needs to be later.
Laura Cunningham	1:36:14	Is the Trout Canyon Substation part of the variance process? And I'll read my second question. The prioritization process allows BLM to reverse a decision on priority status of a renewable energy project. New information on translocated tortoise mortality by badgers on the Yellow Pine Solar Project has come to light, indicating that the drought may be having significant impacts to tortoise populations in Pahrump Valley and impacting translocation efforts and tortoise mortality. So will the BLM priority status of this Project, Rough Hat Clark, be reevaluated? Thank you.
Shannon Salter	1:42:07	Yeah, thank you. I just wanted to make a couple more comments on, you know, one thing is that, you know, I've lived in Southern Nevada since 2009, and one of the main things that I like about it is the access to public lands. And I, I live in Las Vegas, but I frequently go to this area in the South Pahrump Valley, and this is like one of my main hiking spots on the backside of Mount Charleston. And I've also like always appreciated that this area is home to the Salt Songs of the Southern Piute. And it's like, so it's a really spiritually powerful area for the Native Americans in the area and I've always thought that to be able to see Mount Charleston from the other side and think about, like, you know, like the spiritual and physical pathway that the songs traveled, and I also appreciate all the history of the area, like the Old Spanish Trail. The fact that this area has been used for like, you know, literally thousands of years but hundreds of years with the Old Spanish Trail. So, I really like being out there and feeling myself a part of history. And I really feel like, like my quality of life in Southern Nevada is going to be reduced significantly and I might like, I don't even, I won't even probably want to really want to live in Southern Nevada, if all these solar things go in. You know, they already approved Gemini along the 15 and then now Yellow Pine in this Pahrump Valley, so I just think it's like just too much, you know, as a resident here. Then one of the things that I'm concerned about dust exposure because we have naturally occurring asbestos in Southern Nevada and we have elevated rates of mesothelioma amongst women and young people even though this was not a hotspot for asbestos. I'm really concerned about what's in the dust like we just don't know.

Appendix E - Agency Input

From: [Townes, Daniel W CTR OSD OUSD A-S \(USA\)](#)
To: [BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects](#)
Cc: [Kiernan, Scott E CIV OSD OUSD A-S \(USA\)](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Response Letter for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project
Date: Tuesday, December 14, 2021 10:05:40 AM
Attachments: [IR - Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project - Response Letter.pdf](#)

Good afternoon Ms. Wirthlin,

Attached is the Informal Review Response Letter for the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project.

Thank you for the opportunity to review your project.

Respectfully,

Dan Townes
Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Sustainment)
Desk: 571-372-8414 (*temporarily unavailable*)
NIPR: daniel.w.townes.ctr@mail.mil



SUSTAINMENT

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3500

December 14, 2021

Whitney Wirthlin
Project Manager
Bureau of Land Management, Southern Nevada District Office
4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89130

Dear Ms. Wirthlin,

As requested, the Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse coordinated within the Department of Defense (DoD) an informal review of the Rough Hat Clark County Solar Project. The results of our review indicated that the solar project, located in Clark County, Nevada, as proposed, will have minimal impact on military operations conducted in the area.

Thank you for working with us to preserve our military's operational, training, and testing capabilities. We have assigned the tracking code 2021-11-S-BLM-18 to this project. If you have any questions, please contact me at scott.e.kiernan.civ@mail.mil or at 571-255-9507.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott E. Kiernan", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Scott E. Kiernan
Deputy Director
Military Aviation and Installation
Assurance Siting Clearinghouse

From: [Brad Hardenbrook](#)
To: [Wirthlin, Whitney J](#)
Cc: [Jasmine Kleiber](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Government/Agency Input on Proposed Pahrump Valley Solar Energy Projects
Date: Thursday, December 16, 2021 7:45:43 PM
Attachments: [NDOW_Gila_Monster_Protocol_5Feb2020.pdf](#)

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

Good evening,

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) again thanks the BLM team and proponents in facilitating recent summary presentations of BLM's proposed project determination process and individual solar energy projects on December 2nd. While receipt of reports and documentation relevant to biological resources was anticipated before this email, better informing us of initial findings for the Rough Hat - Nye, Rough Hat – Clark, and Copper Rays solar generation proposals, we can understand the possibility for delays in the virtual working environment we all are experiencing. Having said this, we can appreciate BLM's project determination decisions resting on many factors additional to biological and relevant natural resources on which wildlife under NDOW's management interests rely. Hence, NDOW's present understanding specific to each proposed project led to, but is not limited to the following observations, questions, and concerns.

- Two species of heightened conservation interest and potentially in the area are the State protected Gila Monster and Western Burrowing Owl. The former can be difficult to detect (see attached encounter protocols), and both are BLM – Nevada sensitive species.
- Potential desert tortoise translocations into nearby habitats are under consideration. These areas are affected by long-term drought and present a mitigation viability question regarding intended outcomes and lessons learned from previous translocation efforts.
- While vegetation mowing and avoidance of drainage habitats is anticipated, it is unclear to what extent native vegetation will remain and retain native plant community function and sustainability providing for species like the desert tortoise and other resident fauna remaining on site.
- During recent public presentation of the Copper Rays Solar Project, thousands of individual Mojave yucca, Joshua tree, and a variety of cacti was disclosed within the proposed ROW area. This is not an insignificant count and represents similar outcomes at other development sites. The future of these plants was uncertain and is a concern as they are integral to local wildlife habitat form and function.
- The large reflection area by PV arrays of any individual or combined project area may increase confusion to species like the endangered Ridgeway's Rail known to inhabit nearby Ash Meadows or other night-time migrants. Would there be a monitoring program designed and implemented for timely recovery of birds from the field and has feasibility for care and transport to suitable release sites under consideration; are other contingencies being posed?

- Each solar project has merit in lessening reliance on fossil-fueled energy generation, however are the present climate change effects understood and accounted for in developing measures to offset or mitigate effects to sensitive biological resources and ecosystem services consequential to these projects?
- While water use is minimal for PV-based generation facilities compared to other energy generation facilities, to our understanding there is still need for washing PV panels and facility appurtenances. The context of amounts needed with present and future regional demand-supply and appropriations for the Pahrump Valley are germane. Should we be mistaken, have advances in PV panel design resulted in dust-repelling surfaces?
- Should any one or all solar projects move forward for development, other present land uses will be displaced by available acreage. Is the amount and resiliency of nearby open space able to accommodate additional visitation or uses, e.g. various recreation and access (including those valued as potential translocation areas for select flora and desert tortoises), and other wildlife populations connectivity?

As the BLM progresses in project determinations, we are gently reminding of our information request for gaining additional perspective on current site knowledge and the ability to discuss with our BLM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife partners opportunities to share in our collective expertise.

Please contact me for additional assistance.

Sincerely,

D. Bradford Hardenbrook
Supervisory Habitat Biologist
NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE, SOUTHERN REGION
3373 Pepper Lane
Las Vegas, Nevada 89120
702.668.3960 Desk
bhrdnbrk@ndow.org

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NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE SOUTHERN REGION

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5 February 2020

GILA MONSTER STATUS, IDENTIFICATION AND REPORTING PROTOCOL FOR OBSERVATIONS

Status

- The **Gila monster** (*Heloderma suspectum*) is secretive, difficult to detect, and seemingly rare relative to other species. These attributes led the **State of Nevada** decades ago to classify the species as **Protected** (Nevada Administrative Code 503.080). Their populations are also vulnerable to poaching, the cumulative effects of habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, and climate changes (Wildlife Action Plan Team 2012).
- Therefore, a person shall not hunt or take any protected wildlife, or possess any part thereof, without first obtaining the appropriate license, permit or written authorization from the Nevada Department of Wildlife (Nevada Administrative Codes 503.090 and 503.093).
- The USDI Bureau of Land Management has recognized this lizard as a sensitive species since 1978 and is to manage public lands in a manner to avoid the necessity of higher federal protections (BLM Manual 6840 – Special Status Species).
- In Clark County’s Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), the Gila monster is an *Evaluation Species*, meaning inadequate information exists to determine if mitigation from MSHCP implementation would demonstrably cover conservation actions necessary to ensure its persistence without additional protective intervention as provided under the federal Endangered Species Act.
- While the Gila monster is the only venomous lizard endemic to the United States, its behavioral disposition is somewhat docile and avoids confrontation. But it will readily defend itself if threatened. Most bites are considered *illegitimate*, not caused by Gila monster aggression, but resulting from human harassment or careless handling. Gila monsters are not dangerous unless molested or inappropriately handled and should never be harmed or killed.
- The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) has ongoing management studies for greatly improving our understanding specific to Nevada’s banded Gila monster populations; hence, **additional sightings and descriptions for this species distribution, habitat, and biological information is of utmost interest.**
- In assistance to gathering additional information about Nevada’s Gila monsters, **NDOW will be notified whenever a Gila monster is encountered or observed,** and under what circumstances (see Reporting Protocol below).

Identification

The banded Gila monster (*H. s. cinctum*) is the only wild subspecies occurring in Nevada, and is restricted to Clark, Lincoln, and Nye counties. Found mainly below 5,000 feet elevation, its geographic range approximates that of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) in Nevada. Gila monster habitat requirements center on complex rocky landscapes of upland desert scrub overlapping desert wash, spring, and riparian habitats, often characteristic of alluvial fans (bajadas) and adjacent rocky fields. Gila monster habitat overlaps that of both the desert tortoise and chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater*).



Gila monsters are recognizable by a striking black and orange-pink coloration and bumpy, or beaded, skin. In keeping with its name, the banded Gila monster (shown left) retains a black chain-link, banded pattern into adulthood. Sometimes other non-venomous lizards are mistaken for the Gila monster. Of these, the western banded gecko (*Coleonyx variegatus*) and the chuckwalla are the most frequent. All three share similar habitats.

To untrained eyes, the color pattern and finely granular skin of the western banded gecko (right) may have the looks of a baby or juvenile Gila monster. But gecko heads are more pointed at the snout and the relatively large eyes have *vertical* pupils befitting their nighttime habits. Gila monsters may be both nocturnal and diurnal; the smallish eyes have *round* pupils. Snouts are bluntly rounded. Newly hatched Gila monsters vary in length at 5-7 inches with a vivid orange and black, banded pattern. Western banded geckos are generally smaller than 4 inches with cream to yellow background colors and brown to purple banded patterns.



Chuckwalla adults (left) and juveniles have a body shape somewhat suggestive of the Gila monster, but they lack the coarsely beaded skin and showy black and orange-pink body pattern. While juvenile chuckwallas can have orange and black banded tails, this colorful banding fades as chuckwallas mature. From nose to tail tip, adult chuckwallas may reach 17 inches long, rivaling that of the Gila monster. Chuckwallas are herbivorous. When alarmed, they are fast movers seeking cracks and crevices into which they can wedge themselves by inflating their bodies with air. Chuckwallas are diurnal and rock dwellers.

Reporting Protocol

Field workers (e.g. construction foremen, bio-monitors) must at least know how to: (1) identify a Gila monster by distinguishing it from other lizards like the chuckwalla and western banded gecko (see **Identification** above); (2) Report any Gila monster observation to the NDOW; (3) Be aware of the consequences of a Gila monster bite resulting from carelessness or unnecessary harassment; and, (4) Be advised of protective measures provided under state law and federal management policies.

- 1) Live Gila monsters found in harm's way in the construction site will be captured and then detained by the project biologist or equivalent personnel in a cool ($\leq 85^{\circ}\text{F}$), shaded environment (air-conditioned vehicle or trailer is okay) until a NDOW biologist can arrive for biological documentation prior to its release. Although a Gila monster is venomous and can inflict a serious bite, its relatively slow gait allows for it to be easily coaxed or carefully lifted into an open bucket or box using a long handled instrument like a snake hook, tongs, or shovel (*Note: it is not the intent to request unreasonable action to facilitate captures; additional coordination with NDOW will clarify logistical points*). For safe detainment, an unused or sterile 5-gallon plastic bucket with a secure, vented lid; an 18"x18"x4" plastic sweater box having a secure, vented lid; or, a tape-sealed cardboard box of similar dimension may be used. And, written information identifying the mapped capture location, Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) using North American Datum (NAD) 83 Zone 11 along with date, time, and circumstances (e.g. biological survey, construction monitoring) and habitat description (e.g. vegetation, slope, aspect, substrate) will also be provided to NDOW.
- 2) Injuries to Gila monsters may occur during excavation, blasting, road grading, or other construction activities. In the event a Gila monster is injured, it should be transferred to a veterinarian proficient in reptile medicine for evaluation of appropriate treatment. Therapy or euthanasia expenses will not be covered by NDOW. However, NDOW will be immediately notified of any injury to a Gila monster and which veterinarian is providing care for the animal. If an animal is killed or found dead, the carcass will be immediately frozen and transferred to NDOW with a complete written description of the discovery and circumstances, date, time, habitat, and mapped location (GPS coordinates in UTM using NAD 83 Z 11).
- 3) Should NDOW's assistance be delayed, biological or equivalent acting personnel on site should detain the Gila monster out of harms way until NDOW personnel can respond. **The Gila monster should be detained until NDOW biologists have responded.** Should NDOW not be immediately available to respond for photo-documentation, a digital camera (≥ 5 mega-pixels) will be used to take good quality images of the Gila monster *in situ* at the location of live encounter or dead salvage. The pictures will be provided to NDOW at the address above or the email address below along with specific location information including GPS coordinates in UTM using NAD 83 Z 11, date, time and habitat description. Pictures will show the following information: (1) Encounter location (landscape with Gila monster in clear view); (2) a clear overhead shot of the entire body with a ruler next to it for scale (Gila monster should fill camera's field of view and be in sharp focus); and, (3) a clear, overhead close-up of the head (head should fill camera's field of view and in sharp focus).

Please Remember: Gila monsters are considered sensitive species and sharing of observation information to sources outside of NDOW or other permitting agencies may result in adverse conservation or administrative consequences.

Contact NDOW Biologist Jason L. Jones at 702.668.3938 (office), 208-240-0194 (cell; leave message or text), 702.486.5127 (front desk) or by e-mail at jjones@ndow.nv for additional information regarding these protocols.

Rough Hat Nye, Rough Hat Clark, and Copper Rays Projects

Frisbie, Margaret X <Margaret_Frisbie@nps.gov>

Mon 12/6/2021 9:54 PM

To: BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects <BLM_NV_SND_EnergyProjects@blm.gov>

Good a. ernoon,

Many thanks for hos ng the agency mee ng for the proposed Rough Hat Nye, Rough Hat Clark, and Copper Rays projects in Pahrump Valley. The Na onal Park Service, Na onal Trails Office is concerned with poten al impacts to the Old Spanish Na onal Historic Trail (NHT), which travels approximately five miles south of the project area. If possible, we would appreciate receiving copies of any visual impact assessments when available. I would also like to request that the Old Spanish Trail Associa on (OSTA) be kept informed of project developments. Paul Ostapuk, President of OSTA, can be reached at: postapuk@gmail.com.

I have just looked at previous email correspondence, and we have the geospa al data for these three projects on file.

Thanks so much!

Meg

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<p>Debra Strickland, Nye County Commissioner</p>	<p>Our Pahrump Public Lands Advisory Committee met and is going to advise the Board of County Commissioners that they cannot support the projects that are currently slated for these areas, and we will be hearing that as the Board of County Commissioners on 12/16. I'm sure you'll have a follow up letter of non-support for these projects moving forward. They will be needing to have a Special Use Permit in order to build these projects and you'll probably find, I can't speak for entire Board, that a Special Use Permit will not be granted. So, we will not have approval from this entity here in Nye County. Thank you.</p>
<p>Brett Waggoner, Director of Planning Nye County</p>	<p>We have a lot of proposals on the south end of Pahrump and the north end of the County, too. There is a lot on the pipeline right now, as far as applications, I know you guys are receiving them. I want to make sure they are getting where they need to be directed. I do believe within the last couple of months we did issue a letter on behalf of the planning department and the Natural Resources Department for Nye County just as a general notice to the BLM that any applications were going to require SUPs and possibly development agreements. I just wanted to make note of that somewhere.</p>
<p>Debra Strickland, Nye County Commissioner</p>	<p>This is a nice forum. I want to commend the BLM for reaching out so early so that we can work coordinating these projects moving forward. I want to express that Nye County is not anti-solar. Specific locations on the most southern border of Nye are causing a lot of controversy and Rough Hat Nye has been doing an excellent job of reaching out to the constituents in that area by publicly coming and speaking during presentations; you're doing a great job, but this is a hard win guys. That (Yellow Pine) laid on the Clark County side and we didn't have eyes on that as it was moving forward so I thank you for that clarity, so we are awaiting the opportunity for more input with the BLM. I'd like to direct that directly to the Commissioner of Clark County, Mr. Romero, and I appreciate him attending this also. Thank you.</p>

<p>Scott Carey, Nevada Division of State Lands</p>	<p>Appreciate the invitation and the BLM for putting this forum together. Just because of the earlier comments and discussion I thought I'd chime in with a general comment and pose a question. Part of my role here with the state is I serve as staff to the State Land Use Planning Advisory Council and in July the Council approved a letter of endorsement for the Smart from the Start</p> <p>https://lands.nv.gov/uploads/documents/SLUPAC_Endorsement_of_Concept_Smart-From-the-Start_Letter_(As_Approved).pdf) planning concept. I think this is a concept that the BLM is well aware of but hopefully it's being incorporated into planning for this Project and as the NEPA process goes forward in the future but kind of based on some of the comments from the local governments who are joining the meeting and wanted to chime in and talk about the SLUPAC (State Land Use Planning Advisory Council) letter of endorsement for this concept and I think really the heart of it was to support local governments and trying to work with federal entities and making sure that local government land use plans are incorporated into the planning process to the degree as much as possible. That those local land use plans are adhered to and consistent with federal land use plans as well, too. I'll put in the chat a link to that letter for everyone to look at. I was also curious where the energy from these Projects would be going. Would they be in NV or out of state to other markets?</p>
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