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02/11/2010 02:41 PM

Please respond to
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To ca690@ca.blm.gov
cc
bcc
Subject Please Protect Desert Wildlife from Negative Impacts from Renewable Energy Development

DOCKET
07-AFC-5
DATE 02/11/10
RECD. 08/05/10

Feb 11, 2010

Mr. George Meckfessel
1303 South U.S. Highway 95
Needles, CA 92363

Dear Mr. Meckfessel,

As someone who cares about conservation, I'm all for ending America's deadly addiction to fossil fuels -- and investing in renewable energy

that can power our nation without destroying the planet in the process. But there's a right way and a wrong way to do it.
I have heard about BrightSource Energy's application to construct a utility-grade solar facility on more than 4,000 acres of ecologically sensitive lands in the Ivanpah Valley, and I'm concerned that if it

proceeds as planned, it could push the endangered desert tortoises that live there even closer to extinction.
The California Energy Commission concluded that this project "would have major impacts to the biological resources of the Ivanpah Valley, substantially affecting many sensitive plant and wildlife species and eliminating a broad expanse of relatively undisturbed Mojave Desert habitat."
The stretch of the Mojave where BrightSource wants to build its 400-megawatt solar power plant is spectacular and almost totally

pristine. If the company were to move its project closer to Highway 15, BrightSource could dramatically reduce the negative impacts of the project on the desert tortoise -- and its sensitive habitat in the Ivanpah Valley.
For this important reason, I urge you to consider examining an alternative project location that is closer to Highway 15.
Decisions about how to "do" renewable energy will have long-term -- and potentially irreversible -- consequences for California's desert wildlife and ecosystems.

With energy developers eyeing nearly a million acres in the California

desert for utility-grade solar, wind and geothermal energy projects, we can't afford to make mistakes that could destroy our irreplaceable desert landscapes and the amazing wildlife they support. We need to do everything we can to get it right the first time.
Many people assume the desert is the best place to put large-scale solar facilities because they think of the desert as a barren place that's devoid of life. But in reality, this couldn't be further from the truth.

California's Mojave and Sonoran Deserts are home to some of the most unique and endangered wildlife in the world, from desert tortoises to bighorn sheep to burrowing owls.

Big solar projects will have big impacts. That's why we need to ensure these projects are located in appropriate places that will have the least impact on the desert's fragile wildlife and ecosystems -- areas that are near existing highways, cities and transmission lines.

There is plenty of land in the California desert that is well-suited to accommodate a utility-grade facility, but won't cause unnecessary destruction to what are now nearly pristine, ecologically sensitive lands.
The BrightSource project is the first big solar project to go through this review process, with more than one hundred other large-scale applications in line behind it. The decisions that state and federal

government agencies make right now will set a powerful precedent -- and could have devastating and irreversible consequences for wildlife in California and beyond.
We don't have to choose between moving forward with renewable energy projects and making sure desert tortoises, bighorn sheep and other

imperiled wildlife are protected -- we just have to do renewable energy development right the first time.
Thank you for considering my views on this important subject. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Mr. Thomas Kindle
2674 Capella Dr
Merced, CA 95341-7723