

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Land Management**

[CACA 47740, LLCAD07000,
L51030000.FX0000, LVRAB109AA01]

**Notice of Availability of the Draft
Environmental Impact Statement/Staff
Assessment for the Stirling Energy
Systems Solar Two Project and
Possible California Desert
Conservation Area Plan Amendment**

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the California Energy Commission (CEC) have prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Draft California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment, and Staff Assessment (SA) as a joint environmental analysis document for the Stirling Energy Systems (SES) Solar Two Project and by this notice are announcing the opening of the comment period.

DATES: To ensure that comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the Draft EIS/SA within 90 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or mailings.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the SES Solar Two Project by any of the following methods:

- *Web site:* <http://www.energy.ca.gov/sitingcases/solartwo/index.html>.
- *E-mail:* Cmeyer@energy.state.ca.us.
- *Fax:* (818) 597-8001.
- *Mail or other delivery service:*

Christopher Meyer, Project Manager,
Siting, Transmission and Environmental
Protection Division, California Energy
Commission, 1516 Ninth Street, MS-15,
Sacramento, California, 95814.

Copies of the SES Solar Two Draft
EIS/SA are available from the CEC at the
above address and in the BLM El Centro
Field Office, 1661 S. 4th Street, El
Centro, California, 92243.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For
further information contact Jim
Stobaugh, BLM Project Manager, by
telephone at (775) 861-6478; through
mail at Bureau of Land Management,

P.O. Box 12000, Reno, Nevada 89520; or
by e-mail at Jim_Stobaugh@blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: SES has
submitted an application to the BLM for
development of the proposed SES Solar
Two Project, a concentrated solar
electrical generating facility capable of
generating 750 megawatts of renewable
power. The entire project encompasses
approximately 6,144 acres of BLM-
managed lands. The project site is in
Imperial County, California,
approximately four miles east of
Ocotillo and 14 miles west of El Centro.
Generally, the site is bounded on the
north by the San Diego Metropolitan
Transit System/San Diego & Arizona
Eastern Railway and on the south by
Interstate 8. The eastern boundary is
approximately 1.5 miles west of
Dunaway Road and the western
boundary is the westerly section line in
Section 22 in Township 16 South,
Range 12 East. An additional 110-acre
construction area is proposed east of
Dunaway Road.

SES proposes to use SunCatcher
technology on the site. A SunCatcher is
a 25-kilowatt solar dish designed to
automatically track the sun and collect
and focus solar energy onto a power
conversion unit (PCU), which generates
electricity. The system consists of a 38-
foot high by 40-foot wide solar
concentrator in a dish structure that
supports an array of curved glass mirror
facets. These mirrors collect and
concentrate solar energy onto the solar
receiver of the PCU.

The project also includes an electrical
transmission line, water supply
pipeline, and an access road. A new
230-kilovolt (kV) substation would be
constructed in approximately the center
of the project site near a main services
complex that is also part of the
proposal. The substation would be
connected to the existing San Diego Gas
and Electric Imperial Valley Substation
by about a 10.3-mile long, double-circuit
230 kV transmission line.
Approximately 7.6 miles of this new
line would be outside the project area
but is included in the analysis. The
transmission line would require the use
of approximately 92 acres.

The BLM's purpose and need for the
Solar Two project is to respond to SES'
application under Title V of FLPMA (43
U.S.C. 1761) for a right-of-way (ROW)
grant to construct, operate, and
decommission a solar thermal facility
on public lands in compliance with
FLPMA, BLM ROW regulations, and
other applicable Federal laws. The BLM
will decide whether to approve, approve
with modification, or deny a ROW grant
to SES for the proposed Solar Two

project. The BLM will also consider
amending the CDCA Plan in this
analysis. The CDCA Plan (1980, as
amended), while recognizing the
potential compatibility of solar
generation facilities on public lands,
requires that all sites associated with
power generation or transmission not
identified in that plan be considered
through the plan amendment process. If
the BLM decides to grant a ROW, the
BLM would also amend the CDCA Plan
as required.

In the draft EIS analysis, the BLM's
proposed action is to authorize the SES
Solar Two project and approve a CDCA
Plan amendment in response to the
application received from SES. In
addition to the proposed action, the
BLM is analyzing the following action
alternatives:

- Authorize the proposed action;
- Authorize a smaller 300 MW
alternative and amend the CDCA Plan;
- Authorize the project as described
in the Drainage Avoidance #1
alternative that may reduce impacts to
primary water drainages of the U.S. and
amend the CDCA Plan; and
- Authorize the project as described
in the more restrictive Drainage
Avoidance #2 alternative that may
substantially reduce impacts in eastern
and western high flow water drainages
of the U.S. and amend the CDCA Plan.

As required under the California
Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and
NEPA, the EIS analyzes three no action
alternatives:

- Deny the application and not
amend the CDCA Plan;
- Deny the project but amend the
CDCA Plan to allow other solar energy
power generation projects on the project
site; and
- Deny the project and amend the
CDCA Plan to prohibit solar energy
power generation projects on the project
site.

The BLM will take into consideration
the provisions of the Energy Policy Act
of 2005 and Secretarial Orders 3283
*Enhancing Renewable Energy
Development on the Public Lands* and
3285 *Renewable Energy Development by
the Department of the Interior* in
responding to the SES application.

The BLM has entered into a
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
with the CEC to conduct a joint
environmental review of solar thermal
projects that are proposed on Federal
land managed by the BLM with the CEC
as the lead agency preparing the
environmental documents. The BLM
and CEC have agreed through the MOU
to conduct joint environmental review
of the project in a single combined
NEPA/CEQA process and document. In

addition, the BLM and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) entered into an MOU to formalize the Corps as a Federal cooperating agency in developing the EIS. The BLM and CEC, in coordination with the Corps, have prepared the Draft EIS/SA evaluating the potential impacts of the proposed Solar Two Project on air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, water resources, geological resources and hazards, land use, noise, paleontological resources, public health, socioeconomics, soils, traffic and transportation, visual resources, and other resources. The Corps requirements under the Clean Water Act (CWA), Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines are to identify and authorize only the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative which maximizes avoidance and minimization of impacts to aquatic resources of the U.S. The Corps and the applicant are working with the BLM and CEC to identify the project proposal that would reasonably comply with the Corps' requirements under the CWA and 404(b)(1) Guidelines. The applicant has applied to the Department of Energy (DOE) for a loan guarantee under Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended by Section 406 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Public Law 111–5. Should the DOE decide to enter into negotiation of a possible loan guarantee with the applicant, the DOE would become a cooperating agency in developing the final EIS. A Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS/SA and Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment for the Proposed SES Solar Two Project in Imperial County, California was published October 17, 2008 (see 73 FR 61902). The BLM held two public scoping meetings in El Centro, California, on November 24 and December 18, 2008. The formal scoping period ended January 2, 2009.

Please note that public comments will be available for public review and disclosure at the above address during regular business hours (8 a.m. to 4 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6; 40 CFR 1506.10; and 43 CFR 1610.2.

Vickie Weed,

Field Manager, El Centro Field Office.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R2–ES–2010–N016; 20124–1113–0000–C2]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) Recovery Plan, First Revision

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability; revised recovery plan.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow (*Hybognathus amarus*) Recovery Plan, First Revision. The Rio Grande silvery minnow was listed as endangered in 1994, its first recovery plan was approved in 1999, and critical habitat was designated in 2003.

ADDRESSES: An electronic copy of the recovery plan can be obtained from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Library/>. Copies of the recovery plan are also available by request. To obtain a copy, contact Jennifer Bachus by U.S. mail at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna Road, New Mexico 87113; by phone at (505) 761–4714; or by e-mail at Jennifer_Bachus@fws.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Bachus (see **ADDRESSES**).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Rio Grande silvery minnow was listed as federally endangered in 1994 (July 20, 1994; 59 FR 36988) and critical habitat was designated in 2003 (February 19, 2003; 68 FR 8087). The species was extirpated from about 93 percent of its historical range, currently persisting in only one 280-kilometer (km) (174-mile (mi)) reach of the Rio Grande River in New Mexico, downstream of Cochiti Dam to the headwaters of Elephant Butte Reservoir. In December 2008, silvery minnows were introduced into the Rio Grande River near Big Bend, Texas, as a nonessential, experimental population under section 10(j) of the ESA (December 8, 2008; 73 FR 74357).

Throughout much of its historic range, the decline of the Rio Grande silvery minnow is attributed primarily to destruction and modification of its habitat due to dewatering and diversion of water, water impoundment, and modification of the river (channelization). Competition and predation by introduced non-native species, water quality degradation, and other factors also have contributed to its decline.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), requires the development of recovery plans for listed species, unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species. Recovery plans help guide the recovery effort by describing actions considered necessary for the conservation of the species, establishing criteria for downlisting or delisting, and estimating time and costs for implementing the recovery measures. The recovery criteria form the basis from which to gauge the species' recovery and subsequent risk of extinction.

The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow Recovery Plan includes updated scientific information about the species and provides criteria and actions needed to downlist and delist the species. We may consider downlisting the Rio Grande silvery minnow from endangered to threatened when three populations (including a stable middle Rio Grande population and at least two additional populations that are self-sustaining) have been established within the historical range of the species and have been maintained for at least five years, as well as habitat sufficient to support three such populations. We may consider delisting the species when three self-sustaining populations have been established within the historical range of the species and have been maintained for at least 10 years, as well as habitat sufficient to support three such populations. The revised recovery criteria provide objective measures by which populations of silvery minnow is determined to be self-sustaining.

The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow Recovery Plan also describes actions needed to recover the Rio Grande silvery minnow. These include developing a thorough knowledge of the Rio Grande silvery minnow's life history, ecology, and behavior, and the current status of its habitat. It is also necessary to restore, protect, and alter habitats as necessary to alleviate threats to the Rio Grande silvery minnow, to ensure the survival of the species in its current habitat, and to reestablish the species in suitable habitats within its historical range. By implementation and