

utilities in California must increase to 20% by 2010 and 33% by 2017.

The site selection study for the proposed solar plants and related facilities was conducted in 2006–07. Several sites were identified as being suitable for this form of concentrating solar technology. The EIS/FSA will describe and analyze the proposed project as proposed and will include: (1) BLM measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on the environment; (2) A smaller plant alternative; (3) The “No Action” alternative (no new solar power generation facility); and (4) Alternative site locations for constructing and operating Ivanpah SEGS. Through public scoping BLM expects to identify various issues, potential impacts and mitigation measures. As proposed, the solar plants have been sited to take advantage of high solarity, to be located in areas identified in the CDCA Plan as suitable for wind and solar development, and to avoid special status species habitat. The plants are dry-cooled to reduce water consumption and would be located near existing gas and electric transmission facilities to reduce land disturbance. BLM has identified a potential list of issues that will need to be addressed in this analysis including but not limited to: Air quality; social and economic impacts, including impacts to the public from traffic; ground and surface water quantity and quality impacts; plant and animal species including special status species; cultural resources; visual resource impacts; and land tenure adjustment (grazing and mining). If approved, these solar energy projects on public lands would be authorized in accordance with the FLMPA and the federal regulations at Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations 2800.

(Authority: 43 CFR part 1712 and 43 CFR Part 1761).

Dated: October 31, 2007.

J. Anthony Danna,

Deputy State Director, Natural Resources (CA-930).

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

SUMMARY: The MMS has prepared a final programmatic EIS in support of the establishment of a program for authorizing alternative energy and alternate use activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), as authorized by Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct), and codified in subsection 8(p) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA). Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the MMS is announcing the availability of this final programmatic EIS. As part of its efforts to develop a regulatory program for alternative energy and alternate use activities, this final programmatic EIS examines the potential environmental effects of the program on the OCS and identifies policies and best management practices that may be adopted for the program. Several alternatives available to the MMS for implementing an alternative energy and alternate use program on the OCS are analyzed in this final programmatic EIS, including the “no action” alternative.

The MMS intends to prepare a separate NEPA analysis, tiered from this EIS, to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed rule for alternative energy and alternate use activities on the OCS. Further, separate lease sale, activity-specific, and proposal-specific NEPA analyses will be prepared as appropriate.

Authority: The NOA is published pursuant to the regulations (40 CFR 1506.6) implementing the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.* (1988)).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 388 of the EPAct, granted the Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior (Secretary) discretionary authority to issue leases, easements, or rights-of-way for activities on the OCS that produce or support production, transportation, or transmission of energy from sources other than oil and gas, and are not otherwise authorized by other applicable law. The Secretary delegated this authority to the MMS. Examples of the general types of alternative energy project activities that MMS has the discretion to authorize may include, but are not limited to: Wind energy, wave energy, ocean current energy, solar energy, and hydrogen production.

The MMS has also been delegated discretionary authority to issue leases, easements, or rights-of-way for other OCS project activities that make alternate use of existing OCS facilities

for “energy-related purposes or for other authorized marine-related purposes,” to the extent such activities are not otherwise authorized by other applicable law. Such activities may include, but are not limited to: Offshore aquaculture, research, education, recreation, and support for offshore operations and facilities.

This programmatic EIS analyzes the environmental impacts from potential activities that may arise from the establishment of an alternative energy and alternate use program on the OCS in the reasonably foreseeable future, defined in the EIS as 5–7 years. The MMS chose to prepare this programmatic EIS to assist its efforts to develop a comprehensive program and to complete the proposed rule. The programmatic EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts that could result from the development of alternative energy and alternative use projects on the OCS and identifies potential mitigation measures. As such, the programmatic EIS process:

(1) Provides for public input, through scoping meetings, hearings, and written comments, concerning the scope of national issues associated with offshore alternative energy and alternate use activities;

(2) Identifies, defines, and assesses generic environmental impacts associated with potential offshore alternative energy and alternate use activities to increase the agency understanding of the environmental consequences of future actions;

(3) Evaluates and proposes policies and best management practices that may be adopted for any rulemaking by MMS; and,

(4) Establishes a foundation for future NEPA analyses required for the implementation of the alternative energy and alternate use program.

The preferred alternative of this final programmatic EIS combines elements of the proposed action and the “case-by-case” alternative. This combination provides MMS flexibility to issue and manage leases, easements, or rights-of-way on the OCS for alternative energy and alternate use activities during the rulemaking process. Areas of the OCS that are assessed in this programmatic EIS are limited to those not expressly excluded under Section 388 of the EPAct, such as any areas on the OCS within the exterior boundaries of any unit of the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, National Marine Sanctuary System, or any National Monument.

EIS Availability: To obtain a single printed or CD-ROM copy of the final programmatic EIS, you may contact the

Minerals Management Service, Environmental Assessment Branch (MS 4042), 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170. An electronic copy of the final programmatic EIS is available at the MMS's EIS Web site at: ocsenergy.anl.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Minerals Management Service, Mr. James F. Bennett, Environmental Division, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170, (703) 787-1660.

Dated: October 25, 2007.

Robert P. LaBelle,

Acting Associate Director for Offshore Minerals Management.

[FR Doc. E7-21792 Filed 11-5-07; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Request for Information and Nominations of Areas for Leases Authorizing Alternative Energy Resource Assessment and Technology Testing Activities Pursuant to Subsection 8(p) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, as Amended

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Request for information and nominations.

SUMMARY: The Minerals Management Service (MMS) invites comments concerning the authorization of activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) involving the installation of meteorological or marine data collection facilities to assess alternative energy resources (e.g., wind, wave, and ocean current) or to test alternative energy technology to produce or support production of alternative energy. The MMS intends to adopt an interim policy to authorize such facilities (e.g., meteorological towers or wave and current data collection instruments and wave or current generators or other developing technology) under subsection 8(p) of the OCS Lands Act, as amended by section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Parties wishing to obtain such authorizations should submit detailed and specific nomination and application information as described below.

DATES: The MMS requests comments by January 7, 2008. We will begin review on that date and consider all comments received by that time.

ADDRESSES: You may submit your comments by one of two methods:

(1) Commenting electronically using the MMS Public Connect online commenting system (<https://occonnect.mms.gov>).

(2) Mailing your comments to the following address: Minerals Management Service, Offshore Minerals Management, Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Team, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Ms. Maureen Bornholdt, Minerals Management Service, Offshore Minerals Management, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817, (703) 787-1300, Mail Stop 4080.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: *Public Comment Policy.* Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your submission, you should be aware that your entire submission—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may 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.

The MMS will protect privileged or confidential information that you submit as allowed by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Exemption 4 of FOIA applies to trade secrets and commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential. If you wish to protect the confidentiality of such information that you submit, clearly mark it and request that the MMS treat it as confidential. The MMS will not disclose such information, subject to the standards of FOIA. However, the MMS will not treat as confidential any aggregate summaries of such information or comments not containing such information. Please label privileged or confidential information "Contains Confidential Information" and consider submitting such information as a separate attachment to your comments.

Background. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 amended the OCS Lands Act by adding subsection 8(p), which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to grant a lease, easement or right-of-way on the OCS for activities that are not otherwise authorized by the OCS Lands Act or other existing law and that (1) produce or support production, transportation, or transmission of energy from sources other than oil or gas; or (2) use for energy-related purposes or for other authorized marine-related purposes, facilities currently or previously used for activities authorized under the OCS Lands Act. This

authority was delegated from the Secretary to the MMS Director on March 20, 2006. This Notice pertains only to the activities covered in (1) above.

The MMS is developing an Alternative Energy and Alternate Use (AEAU) program and associated regulations. We also are analyzing the environmental consequences of establishing an AEAU program in a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) being prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The MMS began the rulemaking process by issuing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on December 30, 2005. The MMS started the preparation of the PEIS with a Notice of Intent issued on May 5, 2006. Subsequently, we held scoping meetings around the country in Spring 2006, issued a draft PEIS for comment on March 21, 2007, and held hearings on the draft PEIS in Spring 2007. The MMS issued its final PEIS on November 6, 2007. Later this year, the MMS will issue its Record of Decision on the PEIS and plans to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. This Notice is not part of the rulemaking process.

While the MMS is developing the AEAU program, we have adhered to a policy of not considering proposals for new alternative energy projects until after completion of the PEIS and issuance of a final rulemaking. During this time, we have proceeded with environmental analyses under NEPA on only two projects identified in the "savings provision" included as section 388(d) of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Interim Policy for Authorization of Resource Data Collection and Technology Testing Facilities. Among the first steps of alternative energy project development is the collection of resource data. Such data are often required by component manufacturers, such as wind turbine suppliers, and by financial backers. Thus, initial site assessment activities, such as meteorological tower installation and operation, are properly considered a first phase of commercial alternative energy production on the OCS. Similarly, activities involving the installation and operation of facilities to test alternative energy generating technologies advance the development of an alternative industry offshore and support the ultimate deployment of commercial-scale alternative energy production on the OCS. For these reasons, installation and operation of resource data collection and technology testing facilities on the OCS are deemed by the MMS to support production of alternative energy and therefore leases