



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

**Solar Energy**

Category: Renewable Energy

**BLM**

Washington D.C.

## Solar Energy Studies Accelerated With Increased Funding

The availability of ARRA funding has allowed the BLM to study more than 1,000 square miles of land for large-scale solar energy development. This is expected to greatly accelerate the process of getting renewable energy to the end-user.

In early 2009, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar issued Secretarial Order 3825 making the production, development, and delivery of renewable energy one of the Department's highest priorities. Part of the order called for the identification and prioritization of specific locations best suited for large-scale production of solar energy. Working with field officials, the BLM identified 13 areas as possible solar energy zones and then selected 24 tracts within those areas for in-depth environmental analysis. The 24 tracts, totaling 670,000 acres, are located in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah.

With ARRA funding, the BLM has contracted for detailed environmental analyses of the 24 potential solar energy zones. This will help the BLM identify areas with the highest potential for large-scale development and the fewest environmental and social conflicts. In late 2009, a \$9.9 million contract was awarded to Argonne National Laboratory to prepare

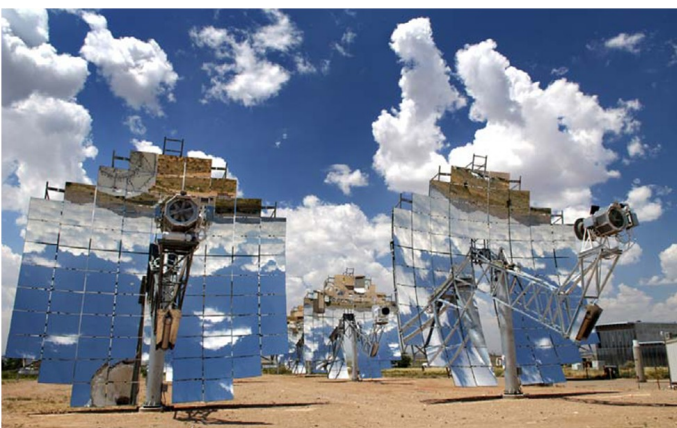


View of solar energy generating system on private land in Calif. Similar technology could be used on public lands. (H. Hartmann. Argonne)

the environmental analyses. A draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for all 24 study areas will be released to the public by late 2010. Also in 2009, a \$1.5 million contract was awarded to Otak, Inc. to prepare visual resource inventories and to enter the information into the BLM's visual resource geodatabase. The inventories and geodatabase will help the BLM manage for visual resources and for solar energy development.

BLM is also working with Argonne to identify areas where solar energy development could have a significant impact on cultural resources and sacred landscapes. This will help the BLM determine whether ethnographic studies in certain areas would contribute to the knowledge base for culturally appropriate resource management strategies.

In addition to the high technology jobs directly created from these studies, the longer term benefit will be continuing jobs from the eventual large-scale energy projects facilitated by these studies, as well as the long-term availability of renewable energy to end-users.



Stirling dish engines at the Stirling Energy Systems Test Facility in Albuquerque, New Mexico, set a record for solar to grid conversion efficiency. (Randy Montoya. Sandia National Lab 2008)

**BLM Contact:** Linda Resseguie, Washington D.C., 202-912-7337

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

