

For Immediate Release
July 2, 2008

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<http://solareis.anl.gov>

BLM to Continue Accepting Solar Energy Applications

In response to public interest in solar energy development, the Bureau of Land Management is announcing that it plans to continue accepting applications for future potential solar development on the public lands. The BLM will process these applications, while continuing to identify issues during public scoping currently underway for the programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).

“We heard the concerns expressed during the scoping period about waiting to consider new applications,” said BLM Director James Caswell, “and we are taking action. By continuing to accept and process new applications for solar energy projects, we will aggressively help meet growing interest in renewable energy sources, while ensuring environmental protections.”

The BLM had previously advised that it was temporarily suspending acceptance of new solar applications pending completion of the PEIS, while the agency processed the 125 applications previously received. With today’s announcement, the BLM will now accept additional applications for solar energy projects and process them with the 125 already submitted.

The public scoping period for the programmatic EIS continues through July 15, 2008. During this time, the public may continue to comment on the scope of the PEIS either online through the online comment form at <http://solareis.anl.gov/involve/comments> or by mail to Solar Energy PEIS Scoping, Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 S. Cass Ave. – EVS/900, Argonne IL 60439. Three public scoping meetings remain, July 8 in Tucson, Arizona; July 9 in San Luis Obispo, California; and July 10 in El Centro, California. Details about meeting locations are available on the project website, <http://solareis.anl.gov/involve/pubschedule/index.cfm>.

“The BLM has a longstanding commitment to advancing renewable energy development,” added Caswell. In 2005 the BLM completed a PEIS for wind energy development on public lands and recently published for public comment a Draft PEIS on geothermal energy development. These efforts and the current solar energy initiative will facilitate opportunities for renewable energy development on the public lands.

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.