Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

Richard J. Bruckner
Director

November 16, 2010

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

PROJECT NO. R2009-02239-(5)
VESTING TENTATIVE TRACT MAP NO. 071035
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 200900026
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. 200900027
APPLICANT: AV SOLAR RANCH I, LLC
353 SACRAMENTO STREET, SUITE 2100
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94111
ANTELOPE VALLEY WEST ZONED DISTRICT
FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT (3-VOTE)

Attached is an additional submittal by the applicant, First Solar.

KKS

First Solar

Hand Delivered

November 15, 2010

Chairwoman Molina and Honorable Supervisors
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Antelope Valley Solar Ranch One Project – November 23, 2010 Agenda

Honorable Supervisors:

I am writing to introduce you to First Solar and the AV Solar Ranch One project ("AVSR1"), a 230 megawatt photovoltaic ("PV") solar facility being developed by First Solar in the Antelope Valley area of the Fifth Supervisorial District. The Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission ("Commission") voted unanimously to approve a Conditional Use Permit ("CUP") and parcel map and to certify its related Final Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") to facilitate construction of AVSR1 at its regularly scheduled meeting on September 15, 2010. On September 24, 2010, however, an appeal to your Board of Supervisors was filed by Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation ("NGSC"). The hearing on the appeal is scheduled for November 23, 2010.

The AVSR1 project is larger than any solar project operating in the world today. Unlike many other solar projects being proposed for the high desert in Los Angeles and Kern Counties, AVSR1 has all of the pieces necessary to start construction and put people back to work:

- A 25 year power purchase agreement with Pacific Gas & Electric Company to purchase the project's output;
- Land for the project site owned in fee by AVSR1;
- An interconnection agreement with Southern California Edison at a location with available transmission capacity;
- Advanced permit status;

First Solar, Inc.
353 Sacramento Street, Suite 2100
San Francisco, CA 94111
Telephone 415 935 2500
Facsimile 415 935 2101
www.firstsolar.com

- A financially strong sponsor in First Solar with extensive experience constructing large scale solar projects.

AVSR1 is poised to commence construction this year and will create up to 400 much-needed jobs in the economically depressed area of North Los Angeles County over a multi-year period. More importantly, it will serve as an engine for long-term economic recovery and growth in the area by establishing the Antelope Valley as a highly visible and welcoming locus for renewable energy development and generation.

This letter will provide an introduction to First Solar, a discussion of the AVSR1 project itself, an overview of the important state and federal policy context of the AVSR1 project, and a brief discussion of the circumstances of NGSC's appeal. A comprehensive response to the appeal will be filed on our behalf in advance of the November 23rd public hearing. My colleagues and I at First Solar welcome any questions that you have regarding AVSR1, and we would be pleased to meet with you or your staff at any time prior to the hearing on November 23.

About First Solar

First Solar (Nasdaq, FSLR) is the world's largest manufacturer of thin film photovoltaic panels. Ranked Number 1 by Forbes Magazine as the fastest growing U.S. technology company., First Solar currently has annual manufacturing capacity in excess of 1,400 megawatts worldwide and has announced plans for expansion of its manufacturing capabilities in the U.S. and worldwide. First Solar has produced over 3,000 megawatts of solar photovoltaic modules globally. With its recent acquisitions of NextLight Renewable Power, LLC, and of OptiSolar's and Edison Mission Energy's solar development portfolio, First Solar's project portfolio in the U.S. contains over 2,000 megawatts of capacity in development under long term contracts with major U.S. utilities, including Southern California Edison Company and Pacific Gas & Electric Company. First Solar recently dedicated the world's largest PV solar facility in Ontario, Canada. First Solar employs approximately 5,500 employees worldwide, including approximately 1,500 in the U.S. More information regarding First Solar can be found at www.firstsolar.com.

About AVSR1

AVSR1, a 230 megawatt photovoltaic solar generating facility will produce enough clean, renewable electrical energy to power over 75,000 typical California homes each year. The

Project will contribute much needed on-peak power to California's electrical grid and will help California meet its statutory and regulatory goal of increasing renewable power generation. In addition, the proposed Project will create "green" jobs for local residents during construction and operation of the facility, produce sales tax revenue, and increase property tax revenue. The Project also will serve as a catalyst for local business and renewable energy technology innovation.

AVSR1 is located in the Antelope Valley in unincorporated Los Angeles County approximately 15 miles northwest of downtown Lancaster and at the intersection of State Route 138 and 170 Street West. The AVSR1 site consists of approximately 2,100 acres of previously-disturbed agricultural land in production since at least the 1950s and last farmed in 2004. As a result of these agricultural activities, most native vegetation has been removed from the site, and there is only one mature Joshua tree remaining on the site, which will be preserved. AVSR1 is located in an area with suitable solar radiation characteristics, flat terrain, low population density and close proximity to existing electrical transmission facilities.

The AVSR1 project will result in the development of approximately 1,955 acres within the overall 2,100 acre site and includes a 230-kV transmission line for interconnecting the electrical output of the Project to the regional transmission system. The proposed transmission line is approximately 4.25 miles long, including 0.75 miles on the Project site and 3.5 miles off-site along 170th Street West in Los Angeles County and Kern County, and will interconnect to the Southern California Edison's planned Whirlwind Substation north of the Project site in southern Kern County. The Los Angeles County portion of the "gen-tie" line will be buried underground in the 170th Street West road right-of-way.

The Project is currently planned to commence construction in the fourth quarter of 2010 and to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2013. Major project components consist of the solar panels and supports, inverters that will convert the direct current (DC) electricity generated by the solar panels to alternating current (AC), medium voltage (34.5 kV) transformers and circuit breakers, a high voltage on-site substation to step up the 34.5 kV power to the transmission grid voltage (230 kV), and the 230 kV transmission line to carry the Project electrical output from the on-site substation to SCE's Whirlwind Substation. The electricity produced by the proposed Project will be sold via a 25-year power purchase agreement with Pacific Gas and Electric Company ("PG&E") that provides a set and secure rate of financial return for the Project. The California Public Utilities Commission approved the PPA between the Project and PG&E in March 2010.

Extensive Project Outreach

AVSR1, LLC engaged in an early and ongoing outreach program to engage in a dialogue about the Project with agencies, interest groups, and the public. The outreach has involved presentations to and discussions with a wide variety of stakeholders over the course of the last two years, including:

- Antelope Acres Town Council
- Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District
- Poppy Reserve Mojave Desert Interpretive Assoc
- Desert & Mountain Conservation Authority
- CA State Parks Office
- CA State Parks Indian Museum
- Caltrans
- CA Regional Water Quality Control Board
- CA Department of Fish and Game
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
- Antelope Valley Farm Bureau
- Edwards Air Force Base
- Sierra Club-AV Chapter
- Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District
- Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce
- Antelope Valley Board of Trade
- Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance

A partial list of outreach meetings is attached at Tab A. As a result, the Project enjoys broad acceptance in the greater Antelope Valley area.

In addition, this important project is supported by a broad spectrum of local, State and Federal officials. Support letters for the project from Governor Schwarzenegger, Senator Feinstein, State Assembly Steve Knight, the Antelope Acres Town Council, the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance and the Antelope Valley Board of Trade and others, are attached at Tab B.

AVSR1 Supports Multiple State and Federal Policy Objectives

California is the nation's leader in renewable energy. With the enactment of its Renewable Portfolio Standard ("RPS") legislation in 2002 and subsequent amendments in 2006 and 2007, California now has an ambitious goal of achieving 20% renewable energy by 2010.

By executive order, Governor Schwarzenegger has directed the state's agencies to plan for 33% renewables by 2020, and the California Public Utilities Commission, the California Energy Commission and the California Air Resources Board have all implemented this directive.

Much of the State's technical development potential for renewable energy is found in Los Angeles County. Indeed, some of the best solar resource in the U.S. is located in Southern California, which also has the energy demand, suitable topography and transmission capabilities to make solar development economically feasible. The Antelope Valley area of Los Angeles County is particularly fertile ground for solar development because of its skilled workforce, access to transmission infrastructure, and flat, previously-disturbed, agricultural land. Photovoltaic solar technology, like that to be employed by AVSR1, is particularly desirable in this area because of its minimal water consumption for operations.

Recognizing this untapped potential, California has made the approval and construction of backbone transmission facilities in Kern and Los Angeles Counties a high a priority. AVSR1 is one of the first projects to utilize the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project's expanded capacity, and will interconnect into the transmission grid at Southern California Edison Company's planned Whirlwind substation in Kern County via a 4.25-mile "gen-tie" transmission line. Projects like AVSR1 that produce substantial quantities of clean, emissions-free renewable energy are the justification for California's investment in this infrastructure.

The Federal government has also recognized the importance of developing renewable energy resources as an engine for economic recovery in areas like the Antelope Valley, which have been particularly hard hit by the recession. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 ("ARRA") provides significant economic benefits to projects that are able to "commence construction" by the end of 2010, including eligibility for a cash grant equal to the 30% investment tax credit already available to solar developers of solar projects like AVSR1. From a policy perspective, the Federal government recognized in ARRA that creating incentives to expedite the construction of large scale renewable energy facilities like AVSR1 would create near term jobs that will stimulate local economies with tax revenues and secondary economic benefits. AVSR1 is one of the few projects in the State of California and in Los Angeles County that is capable of commencing construction in 2010 and meeting this goal of ARRA.

The EIR Determined that the Project Does Not Cause Any Significant Environmental Impacts

Because it is located on previously disturbed agricultural land in an area zoned for heavy agriculture, Regional Planning staff has concluded that AVSR1 has limited environmental impacts, and that all identified impacts mitigated to a less than significant level.

Regional Planning staff prepared a draft EIR for the Project, which was released for public review on June 16, 2010. The draft EIR thoroughly evaluated potential environmental impacts and provided mitigation to lessen any potential impacts to less than significant. The draft EIR concluded that, with mitigation, the Project will not result in significant environmental impacts. The draft EIR also evaluated a range of Project alternatives concluding the preferred alternative is a Project design that includes locating Project transmission lines underground.

At its regularly scheduled public meeting on September 15, the Commission unanimously certified the EIR and voted to issue a CUP and approve a parcel map for reversion to acreage of a 147 lot subdivided portion of the site. The EIR concluded that potential impacts to important resource areas – including aesthetics, biology, and water supply – were reduced to less than significant through Project design changes and/or mitigation.

We will be returning to your Board in the near future to request a Franchise Agreement with the County to locate the Project's 230 kilovolt transmission line underground along approximately 1.5 miles of the 170th Street West road right-of-way The EIR also concluded that impacts from construction of the transmission line will be less than significant.

NGSC's Appeal

Filed on September 24, 2010, NGSC's appeal asserts that the construction and operation of AVSR1 will interfere with the operation of NGSC's Tejon Test Facility, located approximately 11 miles away in Kern County. Essentially, NGSC asserts that any development of solar facilities in a vast, 150 square mile area in Los Angeles and Kern Counties would render its radar test facility "useless." Based on this premise, NGSC has filed an appeal of the CUP, parcel map and EIR approved by the Regional Planning Commission on September 15 for AVSR1, and has also intervened in several other proceedings involving environmental review and permitting of renewable energy projects in Kern County making the same assertions.

First Solar will address the merits of NGSC's appeal in a separate filing with the Board of Supervisors. However, we are troubled that NGSC failed to raise its claim earlier in the CEQA review process. Over the course of 18 months, Los Angeles County Regional Planning staff conducted a painstakingly thorough and transparent scoping and review process in fulfillment of the County's obligations under CEQA. This process fully complied with the public notice requirements to allow timely comments and orderly responses to those comments in due course. In addition, as noted above, First Solar conducted an extensive public outreach program, which included, among other things, multiple presentations to organizations of which NGSC is a member, such as the Antelope Valley Board of Trade.

NGSC and its attorneys have asserted on multiple occasions that NGSC first learned of AVSR1 in a newspaper article in the Antelope Valley Press ("AV Press") the day after the Regional Planning Commission's decision to approve the project. The AV Press has written numerous articles on AVSR1 since the project applications were filed in March 2009, many of which include maps of solar development in the area. Tab C. Further, as noted above, development of renewable energy in the area has long been a key policy objective of the State of California resulting in lengthy public hearings regarding the approval of the TRTP transmission facility, which transects the "keyhole" area claimed by NGSC; NGSC did not participate in these proceedings in anyway.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that NGSC has known or should have known of the AVSR1 facility for months in advance of the Planning Commission Action, and chose to time its claims solely for the purpose of delay the start of construction of the AVSR1 project at the 11th hour.

Conclusion

AVSR1 is one of the most prominent solar projects in development in California today. It promises to bring multiple near term economic benefits to the Antelope Valley area and to establish Los Angeles County as California's leader in the deployment of new renewable energy technologies. We strongly urge the Board to deny NGSC's appeal, allowing the project to proceed on schedule to commence construction this year.

Thank you for your consideration of these important issues regarding the Project. Please feel free to contact me at 626.404.6860 if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

James B. Woodruff
Vice President State & Local Government Affairs

Attachments

cc: Paul Novak, Planning Deputy, Fifth Supervisorial District (Hand Delivered)

A

AVSR1 STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH SUMMARY 2008-2010

AGENCIES AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

Federal

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Edwards Air Force Base Environmental Management Office
Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Lancaster
Tataviam/Fernadeno Band of Mission Indians Representatives

State

California Department of Fish and Game
California Department of Transportation and LADPW
California Department of Parks Superintendent Krueper and Planner Dingman
California Department of Parks Superintendent Weatherman and Planner Dingman
California State Park Indian Museum Curator, Lancaster
Native American Heritage Commission
Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
California Employment Development Department, Lancaster Office

County

Los Angeles County Planning Department Director and Staff
Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area Technical Advisory Committee
Los Angeles County Subdivision Committee
Los Angeles County CEO
Antelope Valley Air Quality Management District
Antelope Valley Resource Conservation District
Kern County Public Works and Planning Departments

Cities and Local Agencies

Antelope Acres Town Council President Vicki Nelson
Antelope Acres Town Council Executive Committee
Antelope Acres Town Council Full Membership
Antelope Valley Association of Town Councils Chair
Antelope Valley Association of Town Councils Full Membership
City of Lancaster Economic Development Department
City of Lancaster Office of City Manager
City of Lancaster City Council Presentation

City of Palmdale Office of City Manager
Rosamond Community Services District General Manager
Rosamond Community Services District Board of Directors Presentation
Southern California Association of Governments

ELECTED OFFICIALS
Supervisor Michael Antonovich and Staff
Assemblyman Steve Knight and Staff
Senator George Runner Staff Lisa Moulton & Drew Mercy
Assemblywoman Sharon Runner Staff Larry Grooms
Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein
Office of Senator Barbara Boxer
Congressman Kevin McCarthy
Governor REAT Team

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
Sierra Club President and Executive Committee, Antelope Valley Chapter
Sierra Club Chapter Full Membership, Antelope Valley Chapter
Desert and Mountain Conservation Authority Chair Jim Dodson
DMCA Site Visit with Dodson & Myerson
Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy
Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretive Association Pres. Milt Stark
Ginger Stout, Dean Webb, Jim Dodson

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Executive Director Josh Mann
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Executive Committee
Antelope Valley Board of Trade General Membership Presentation
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Business Conference Exhibitor 2009
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Business Conference Exhibitor 2010
Greater Antelope Valley Alliance Executive Director Mel Layne
Greater AV Economic Alliance (GAVEA) Executive Committee
Greater AV Economic Alliance (GAVEA) General Membership Presentation
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation
Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce President Ramon Ortega
Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce General Membership Presentation
Antelope Valley College and Technical Education Division
Westside School District Board Member
Antelope Valley Farm Bureau
Antelope Valley East Kern Water Agency
West Valley County Water District
South Central Coastal Information Center (Cultural Resources)

Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Southern California Edison Company

MEMBERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS
Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance Membership
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Membership
Antelope Valley Board of Trade Outlook Conference Sponsor-Exhibitor '09-10
Antelope Valley Chambers of Commerce Membership
Poppy Reserve Interpretive Foundation Life Time Member
Antelope Valley Fair Agriculture Youth Dinner Sponsor
Antelope Valley Salvation Army Holiday Contributions from NextLight Employees
Grace Resource Center Contributions from NextLight Employees
Poppy Reserve Video Sponsorship
State Parks/Poppy Reserve Trail Work Day Participation

INITIAL MEDIA INTERVIEWS
Valley Press News
Antelope Valley News
Time Warner Cable

OTHER SIGNIFICANT OUTREACH
LA County Scoping Meeting in Antelope Acres
LA County Planning Commission Hearing
AVSR1 Website Launch 1/1/09

B

GOVERNOR ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

November 9, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Re: NextLight Renewable Power's Antelope Valley Solar Ranch One (AVSR1) Project
Application for Energy Loan Guarantee

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I am writing to encourage your support of funding for the referenced project, which will bring much-needed economic investment into California.

As our nation's largest state, California is an economic powerhouse that accounts for more than 13 percent of the nation's GDP – which makes our 12.2 percent unemployment rate all the more challenging. Now is the time to invest in the people of California by investing in their long-neglected infrastructure. California has an impressive legacy of being at the forefront of innovation, and that is the kind of action that will help pull the United States out of this economic recession.

My administration is committed to using Recovery Act dollars efficiently and effectively. The people of California have identified ways we can work together in four key areas that will stabilize and expand our economy: investment in our infrastructure, energy security, stabilization of the housing market and assistance to meet the needs of the medically indigent.

I take great pride in recommending funding for high-quality projects in California. The investment will have no greater return for our nation than in the Golden State.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger

STATE CAPITOL • SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814 • (916) 445-2841

DIANNE FEINSTEIN
CALIFORNIA

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE - CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504
http://feinstein.senate.gov

November 17, 2009

The Honorable Steven Chu
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

I am writing to request that you give serious consideration to NextLight Energy's request for a loan guarantee for the AV Solar Ranch One, a proposed 230 megawatt solar project located on private land in Los Angeles County, California.

As you know, I strongly support federal policies that encourage the development of solar projects on disturbed private lands, which often lack the environmental sensitivity of more pristine public desert lands.

NextLight Energy has proposed a solar project on a site that has many of the attributes that I believe would make for a well-located solar project. Specifically, the developer informs me that the project will be built on privately owned former agricultural lands; has been unanimously endorsed by the local town council; will require no water for cooling; and is proposed on a site where field researchers have encountered no federal or state listed threatened or endangered species, despite looking for two seasons.

The location of the AV Solar Ranch appears to have been carefully selected. In addition to its environmental attributes, the project site is located in close proximity to the Los Angeles load center, reducing the need for new electric transmission lines. As a result, this project will likely avoid many of the problems faced by solar projects proposed for more sensitive lands or proposed farther from load centers.

I encourage you to conduct a thorough review of this project to determine whether it meets the specific requirements of the Title XVII loan guarantee program. If it does, I encourage you to view this as one of the ideal locations to support solar in California.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

DF/mbn

Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
SUPERVISOR

December 7, 2009

Mr. Steven Chu, PhD
Secretary of the Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Chu:

I am writing to express my support for NextLight's application for a loan guarantee from the Department of Energy ("DOE") for its Antelope Valley Solar Ranch One ("AVSR1") project.

The AVSR1 Project is located within the Fifth Supervisorial District of Los Angeles County, which I have represented on the Board of Supervisors since 1980. As the home to much of the aerospace industry, Antelope Valley has a long tradition of partnering with technology innovators. I see solar energy as a very logical fit for the Antelope Valley over the next decade: it has the necessary solar resources, the infrastructure, and the workforce capabilities. The AVSR1 Project is an opportunity to showcase the solar industry as a vibrant example of the nation's commitment to green energy.

This region has been particularly hard hit by the downturn in the economy, leaving many construction workers and others unemployed. The project will employ up to 400 workers during construction, and NextLight has committed to using local labor for construction. Because it will use PV technology, the project also will have very low water consumption for operations, a material consideration in the water-constrained environment of the high desert.

Although I can not speak to the merits of the project while NextLight's application for a conditional use permit is pending, it is clear to me that the project has strong development and economic fundamentals. The AVSR1 Project offers a means to reinvigorate the economy in Antelope Valley. In the long term, DOE's support for this project will provide the certainty and stability needed to facilitate utility-scale solar development in the region.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH
Supervisor

MDA:pno

ROOM 869 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION, 500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012
TELEPHONE (213) 974-5555 • FAX (213) 974-1010 • WEBSITE http://antonovich.co.la.ca.us/ • E-MAIL fifthdistrict@lacbos.org

COMMITTEES
LOCAL GOVERNMENT-VICE CHAIR
ACCOUNTABILITY AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW
JUDICIARY
NATURAL RESOURCES

Assembly
California Legislature

STEVE KNIGHT
ASSEMBLYMAN, THIRTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0036
(916) 319-2036
FAX (916) 319-2136

DISTRICT OFFICE
41319 12TH STREET W., SUITE 105
PALMDALE, CA 93551
(661) 267-7636
FAX (661) 267-7736

VICTORVILLE CITY HALL
14343 CIVIC DRIVE
VICTORVILLE, CA 92392
(760) 843-8045
FAX (760) 843-8396

October 27, 2009

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
500 West Temple Street, Room 869
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisor Antonovich:

I am writing to convey my support for NextLight Renewable Power's AV Solar Ranch One project in the western Los Angeles County portion of the 36th Assembly District. As an advocate of solar energy and the author of legislation to attract solar equipment manufacturers to California, I support NextLight's plans to develop and operate a low-profile energy facility to generate jobs for our local workforce while helping California to meet its renewable energy requirements.

As you know, the Antelope Valley is identified as one of the nation's most productive regions for solar energy plants such as the one NextLight has proposed in its responsible and community-minded application.

The NextLight site will make good use of abandoned farmland, will use minimal water and will employ people from the underemployed local workforce. The company has met with many constituent groups and received support from the Antelope Acres Town Council representing the local community.

AV Solar Ranch One is an excellent example of how our community can partner with business to make Antelope Valley the preferred location for the emerging green jobs. I encourage you and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to support NextLight and the AV Solar Ranch One project.

Sincerely,

STEVE KNIGHT, Assemblyman
36th District

Cc: Kim Szalay, Los Angeles County Planning Department
Jack Pigott, NextLight Renewable Power

Printed on Recycled Paper

Antelope Acres Town Council
Post Office Box 8176 * Lancaster, CA 93539
Phone: (661) 942-2198 * Fax: (661) 728-9352
E-Mail: bvnelson1@verizon.net

March 23, 2009

Mr. Jack Pigott
Director of Development
NextLight Renewable Power
101 California Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Mr. Pigott:

This letter will serve to confirm in writing the unanimous vote of the Antelope Acres Town Council ("Council") on February 18, 2009 to endorse the AV Solar Ranch One project ("AVSR1"). As presented by NextLight Renewable Power ("NextLight") to the Council and the residents of Antelope Acres, AVSR1 is a 230 MW photovoltaic solar generating facility that will be built on the former Larsen Ranch property located near the intersection of Highway 138 and Avenue 170th West. We appreciate NextLight's ongoing communications with the Council regarding AVSR1 and its recent presentation at Antelope Acres' meeting on February 18.

Moving forward, please keep us informed of the permitting and construction schedule for AVSR1. As indicated at the public meeting on February 18, the Council may request NextLight attend future public meetings to inform the Council and residents of Antelope Acres of developments concerning AVSR1.

Sincerely,

Vickie Nelson
Antelope Acres Town Council

cc: Supervisor Michael Antonovich, Los Angeles Office
Los Angeles County Planning Department

-------- Original Message --------
Subject: Re: Bonnie Hays Contact Information/Nextlight Solar Project
Date: Thu, 22 Jan 2009 14:36:38 -0800
From: Milt Stark <oms61121@verizon.net>
To: Bonnie Hays <haysconsulting@comcast.net>
References: <4978C4A4.4030401@comcast.net>

A discussion of the proposed NextLight project on Highway 138 (Ave. D) at the executive board meeting of the Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretive Association on Jan. 10, 2008 brought forth the following points:

1. At this point the executive board is not interested in a full presentation by NextLight of their project, that the presentation by Milt Stark and Mike Powell is sufficient. Three or four of the board members who wanted more information would go to the Sierra Club meeting should NextLight make a presentation to that organization.

2. At this time the executive board takes a neutral position as to the NextLight plan, believing that the land around and near the Poppy Reserve will be developed at some time and that the NextLight project will have a less of a negative effect on the Poppy Reserve than most others.

3. The board supports the development of alternative energy throughout the country.

4. The only reservation voiced was a concern that the feeder line goes north rather than east to hook up with the Edison line. The property at 140th St. West and Highway 138 is prime poppy land.

Submitted by Milt Stark, President of PR/MDIA

Sent to Bonnie Hays, Project Consultant for NextLight Renewable Power

ANTELOPE VALLEY BOARD OF TRADE

EXECUTIVE BOARD

DR. JACKIE FISHER, PRESIDENT
ANTELOPE VALLEY COLLEGE
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*PATRICIA FRIEDMAN CSA • TIME WARNER CABLE
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GRETCHEN GUTIERREZ • AV BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOC.
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RHONDA NELSON • NORTHROP GRUMMAN CORPORATION
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R. JARED PEARCE • UNDERGROUND GRAPHICS
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*CHRIS SPEIER • ANTELOPE VALLEY FIGHTER
TIM STOZA • JANSAIRCRAFT
DR. DAVID VIERRA • AV JOINT UNION HIGH SCHOOL DIST.
PAMELA VOSS • GREATER A.V. ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS
MARK WALKER • FOURKEY CORPORATION
BART YORK • CALIFORNIA PORTLAND CEMENT COMPANY
JOHNNY ZAMPOLA • WESTERN PACIFIC ROOFING COMPANY

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ROGER HEMME
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KURT ULLMAN
MONNIE WAGNER
COLLEEN WALKER
ART WALLACE

*DIRECTOR EMERITUS

April 21, 2009

Mr. Jack Pigott, Director of Development
NextLight Renewable Power
101California Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94111

Re: Support for AV Solar Ranch One

Dear Mr. Pigott,

After review by our organization, the Board of Directors of the Antelope Valley Board of Trade has voted to support NextLight Renewable Power's proposed AV Solar Ranch One project (AVSR1).

As an economic development organization, the Antelope Valley Board of Trade understands the need to expand the region's industrial base, while striving to meet California's ambitious environmental goals. We believe that the 230 megawatt AVSR1 project represents a positive step forward for both NextLight Renewable Power and the Antelope Valley in delivering clean, renewable energy to the grid and creating sustainable economic growth. In addition, the three hundred construction jobs and up to twenty permanent positions, will continue to develop "green" industry employment opportunities for the regional workforce.

For over fifty years the Antelope Valley Board of Trade's mission has been "to promote diverse business and industry, quality infrastructures, and a strong legislative voice for the benefit of our members and the greater Antelope Valley." It is with this mission in mind that we are pleased to support the Antelope Valley Solar Ranch One project. We look forward to working with NextLight Renewable Power to expand "green" job opportunities and promote a sustainable solar energy project that will contribute to a healthy economic climate for businesses and families throughout Antelope Valley.

Respectfully,

Dr. Jackie Fisher
President

cc: Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, 5th District
Los Angeles County Department of Planning

548 West Lancaster Blvd., Suite 103 • Lancaster, CA 93534 • (661) 942-9581 • Fax (661) 723-9279
Email: info@avbot.org • Website: www.avbot.org

GREATER ANTELOPE VALLEY
ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Labor, lifestyle, and Los Angeles all within your reach!

May 14, 2009

Mr. Jack Pigott
Director of Development
NextLight Renewable Power
101 California Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Mr. Pigott:

The Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance endorses NextLight Renewable Power's AV Solar Ranch One (AVSR1) project. Our Executive Committee reviewed your project on May 14, 2009 and we are pleased to offer this letter of support.

We understand that the AVSR1 solar project will provide much needed employment opportunities for Antelope Valley residents, result in local purchases of goods and services, and generate clean, emission free electricity. We welcome you and your company to Antelope Valley and look forward to working together to create employment opportunities in the clean energy sector.

Sincerely,

Mel Layne
President
Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance

CC: Los Angles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
Los Angeles County Department of Planning

1028 West Ave. L-12 #101 Lancaster, CA 93534
661/945-2741 FAX 661/945-7711
www.aveconomy.org

ANTELOPE VALLEY
Chambers of Commerce
Est. 1902

Received
NOV 0 3 2009
NextLight

October 27, 2009

Jack Pigott
Project Director
NextLight Renewable Power
353 Sacramento Street, Suite 2100
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Mr. Pigott

The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce and the Rosamond Chamber of Commerce are pleased to provide this letter of support for NextLight Renewable Power's AV Solar Ranch One (AVSR1) project. As presented, AVSR1 is a 230 MW solar photovoltaic project proposed for the former Larsen Ranch property located twenty miles west of Lancaster near Avenue D and 170th Street West.

The AVSR1 energy project will generate needed employment opportunities for our local workforce and result in the purchase of goods and services within Antelope Valley. We understand the solar plant will employ 300 workers during construction and up to 20 permanent employees once complete. Equally, important, AVSR1 will showcase Antelope Valley as a leader in the green technology sector, and will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warning.

The Lancaster Chamber and the Rosamond Chamber are pleased to provide this letter of support and we look forward to working with NextLight Renewal Power to expand job opportunities and promote a state-of-art solar energy project that will contribute to the region's healthy business climate.

Respectfully,

Ramon Ortega
President & C.E.O.

ACCREDITED
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
☆ ☆ ☆

Main Office: 554 West Lancaster Blvd. • Lancaster, CA 93534-2534 • Website: www.avchambers.com • (661) 948-4518 • Fax (661) 949-1212
Rosamond Office: 2861 Diamond St. • Rosamond, CA 93560 • (661) 256-3248 • Fax (661) 256-3249

lancaster ca
it's positively clear.

Received
DEC 01 2009
NextLight

R. Rex Parris Mayor
Ronald D. Smith Vice Mayor
Ken Mann Council Member
Sherry Marquez Council Member
Ed Sileo Council Member
Mark V. Bozigian City Manager

November 17, 2009

Mr. Jack Pigott
Director of Development
NextLight Renewable Power
101 California Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Mr. Pigott:

As City Manager for the City of Lancaster, I am pleased to offer support for NextLight Renewable Power's AV Solar Ranch One (AVSR1) project. As presented to the City, AVSR1 is a 230 MW solar photovoltaic project proposed for the former Larsen Ranch property located northwest of Lancaster.

The AVSR1 energy project will generate needed employment opportunities for our local workforce and result in the purchase of goods and services within Antelope Valley. We understand the project will employ 300 workers during construction and up to 20 permanent employees once complete.

I am pleased to provide this letter of support and we look forward to working with NextLight Renewable Power to promote jobs for our local workforce.

Sincerely,

Mark V. Bozigian
City Manager

MVB:JC:ad

cc: Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, 5th District
Los Angeles County Department of Planning

PALMDALE

a place to call home

October 12, 2009

Received
OCT 26 2009
NextLight

Mr. Jack Pigott
Director of Development
NextLight Renewable Power
101 California Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, California 94111

Dear Mr. Pigott:

The City of Palmdale endorses NextLight Renewable Power's AV Solar Ranch One (AVSR1) project. As presented to the City Manager, AVSR1 is a 230 MW solar photovoltaic project proposed for the former Larsen Ranch property located northwest of Palmdale.

The AVSR1 energy project will generate needed employment opportunities for our local workforce and result in the purchase of goods and services within Antelope Valley. We understand the project will employ 300 workers during construction and up to 20 permanent employees once complete.

The City of Palmdale is pleased to provide this letter of support and we look forward to working with NextLight Renewable Power to promote jobs for our local workforce.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Williams
City Manager

cc: Mayor & Members of the City Council
Los Angles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, 5th District
Los Angeles County Department of Planning
Laurie Lile, Assistant City Manager
Danny Roberts, Assistant Executive Director/CRA
Betsy St. John, Director of Finance

JAMES C. LEDFORD, JR.
Mayor

STEVEN D. HOFBAUER
Mayor Pro Tem

LAURA BETTENCOURT
Councilmember

MIKE DISPENZA
Councilmember

TOM LACKEY
Councilmember

38300 Sierra Highway

Palmdale, CA 93550-4798

Tel: 661/267-5100

Fax: 661/267-5122

TDD: 661/267-5167

Auxiliary aids provided for communication accessibility upon 72 hours' notice and request.

C

AVSR1 PRESS COVERAGE SUMMARY 11/11/10

5/11/09
Antelope Valley Press
Solar Plant Proposed for Farmland Site
Charles Bostwick Managing Editor

5/18/09
Antelope Valley Press
Studies Slated to Look at Effects Of Proposed Facility
Charles Bostwick Managing Editor

7/11/09
Antelope Valley Press
Region Becomes Solar Nexus for Power Plants
Allison Gatlin Staff Writer

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Solar Plant to Begin Operations in 2011
Jim Skeen Business Reporter

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First Customer Plugs Into Solar Facility
Charles Bostwick Managing Editor

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New Power Lines: Going Underground
Craig Currier Staff Writer

4/29/10
Fist Solar Press Release
First Solar To Acquire NextLight Renewable Power

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Buy Out No Danger To Solar Ranch Plan
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Underground Power Lines to Be Studied
Charles Bostwick Managing Editor

6/21/10
Antelope Valley Press
Planned Move Forward for Solar Ranch
AV Press Staff

9/16/10
Antelope Valley Press
Solar Power Project Gets Approval
Charles Bostwick Managing Editor

9/30/2010
Antelope Valley Press
Northrop Grumman Challenges Solar Farm
Jim Skeen Business Editor

9/30/10
Antelope Valley Press
Solar Energy Facility At Starting Line (Story on Tusseo w/Solar Map of AVSR1&Others)

Other Related Solar Articles
7/30/09
Antelope Valley Press
Solar project for base a 'win, win' (EAFB)
This story appeared in the Antelope Valley Press
Allison Gatlin Staff Writer

6/22/09
Antelope Valley Press
Parris: We will be capital of alternative energy
Council to consider land annexation for development
Bob Wilson Staff Writer

4/30/10
New Solar Power Plant Proposed (Sempra project)
Allison Gatlin Staff Writer

1/18/10
First Solar Takes on New Power Projects
Allison Gatlin Staff Writer

7/10/10
Open House Set For Solar Plant in West Rosamond (Sempra Project)
Allison Gatlin Staff Writer

Solar plant proposed for farmland site
This story appeared in the Antelope Valley Press Monday, May 11, 2009.

By CHARLES F. BOSTWICK
Valley Press Managing Editor
LANCASTER - A 230-megawatt solar power facility has been proposed on 2,100 acres of fallow farmland 11/2 miles north of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve.

Environmental studies overseen by Los Angeles County planning officials have started on the project, which is proposed at 170th Street West and Avenue D by San Francisco-based NextLight Renewable Power and which is planned to tie into Southern California Edison power lines that cross the Antelope Valley.

A meeting to describe the proposal and to solicit suggestions from the public and local organizations on what environmental issues should be examined is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday at Westside Community Church, 47707 90th St. West, in Antelope Acres.

Named AV Solar Ranch One, the project is proposed in answer to a state law ordering power companies like Edison to get 20% of their electricity from so-called "renewable" sources such as wind and solar energy by next year. New power lines are already being built across the western Antelope Valley, through Leona Valley and across the San Gabriel Mountains to serve new wind-turbine farms northwest of Mojave.

AV Solar Ranch One is proposed to consist of thousands of photovoltaic panels - which convert sunlight into electricity - mounted on motorized tracking units that point them at the sun as it moves across the sky. The electricity is to be sent along new power lines running 3.5 miles north along 170th Street West to a new Edison substation.

NextLight bought the former farm land last August, director of development Jack Pigott said. The firm picked the spot after looking for a large parcel of land that was flat, near power lines and in an area with plentiful sunshine, he said. The firm also wanted land that was previously disturbed, rather than virgin desert, so there would be no endangered plants or animals living on it.

The property has been farmed since the 1940s and was last farmed in 2004, county officials say. During the Antelope Valley's late 1980s housing boom, the acreage was proposed to be part of a 35,000-home master-plan community called California Springs, but the plan stalled when the housing boom collapsed in the early 1990s.

NextLight officials hope the environmental impact report is finished and accepted by April 2010 and that they get county approval for the project by July 2010. They hope to begin construction in October 2010 and start producing electricity in summer 2011.

The project is allowed under the area's "heavy agriculture" zoning, but it also requires a conditional use permit from the county's Regional Planning Commission, said Norm Hickling, an aide to Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich.

Antonovich has not taken a position on the proposal but has directed NextLight officials to meet with local residents and organizations to seek their opinions, Hickling said.

The Antelope Acres Town Council, which represents a community about seven miles to the east, voted 5-0 to support the solar facility. The solar facility would not put as much traffic on Antelope Acres roads as a housing development on the same land, or use as much water, and it will not eliminate Joshua trees or displace endangered species, town council President Vicki Nelson said.

"I personally, and the town council, think that's much better," she said.

The Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretive Association, whose members previously helped quash a wind-turbine project proposed on the poppy reserve's southwest corner and are fighting an auto racetrack proposed just north of the reserve, is not opposing the solar power project, President Milt Stark said.

Because of the intervening Fairmont Butte, only one remote part of the solar arrays will be visible from the poppy reserve, Stark said, adding that the old ranch land will undoubtedly be developed eventually and

that a solar power facility is better than other possibilities.

"Our feeling is it's a very benign kind of installation, not like windmills or a racetrack," Stark said.

cbostwick@avpress.com

Solar plant to begin operations in 2011

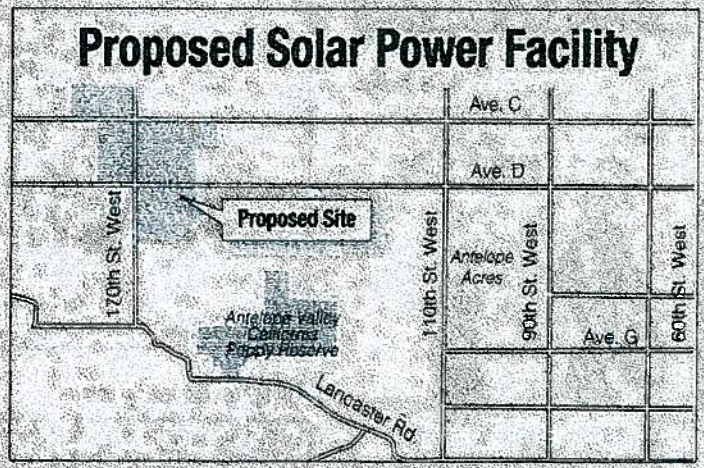
By JIM SKEEN
Valley Press Business Editor

LANCASTER — Around this time next year, NextLight Renewable Power LLC expects construction to start on a $1.2 billion, 230-megawatt photovoltaic solar plant west of Lancaster, the project manager said Tuesday.

The proposed project, dubbed AV Solar Ranch One, would be on 2,100 acres of former farmland at 170th Street West and Avenue D, northwest of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve. Plans call for construction to begin in October 2010 and for the first power to be delivered to the grid in the summer of 2011.

Full commercial operations would begin by December 2013, said Jack Piggott, the company's project manager for AV Solar Ranch One.

"There was an available property that was previously disturbed, and, of course, sunlight is great in the Antelope Valley," Piggott said of the project site selection.



Piggott provided an overview of the project's development during a luncheon of the Antelope Valley Board of Trade, an organization that has endorsed the project.

The project site property has been farmed since the 1940s and was last farmed in 2004, county officials say. During the Antelope Valley's late 1980s housing boom, the acreage was proposed to be part of a 35,000-home master-plan community called California Springs, but the plan stalled when the housing boom collapsed in the early 1990s.

The company has a contract with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to purchase the electricity eventually produced by AV Solar Ranch One.

The project site is also 3.5 miles south of a planned Edison substation.

The project is under review by the Los Angeles County planning department.

NextLight officials hope to have a draft environmental impact report finished in January and accepted by April and that they get county approval for the project by July.

Piggott said the project's environmental impact will be minimal. The land had already been disturbed from its previous use as farmland; there will be a staff of up to 20 people, meaning there would be little in the way of traffic; and the highest structure to be built is 13 feet tall, meaning few visual obstructions would be present.

The photovoltaic technology also means the plant will use relatively little water, approximately 12 acre-feet a year, Piggott said.

During the expected three-year building time, the project would employ about 300 construction workers.

San Francisco-based NextLight Renewable Power LLC has 1,000 megawatts of power in various stages of development throughout the Southwest.

"We are interested in doing other projects here, but we don't have any concrete plans yet," Piggott said.

One of the nation's largest producers of renewable energy is proposing to build a $1 billion, 250-megawatt solar plant in the northeast corner of the Antelope Valley.

Through a subsidiary known as Beacon Solar LLC, Florida Power & Light Energy LLC is planning to build a $1 billion, 250-megawatt solar power plant on roughly 2,000 acres near Highway 14, approximately four miles north-northwest of the northern boundaries of California City.

The Beacon project has run into some controversy over its expected use of approximately 1,600 acre-feet of water a year.

jskeen@avpress.com

New solar power plant proposed

By ALLISON GATLIN
Valley Press Staff Writer

4/30/10 AVPress

ROSAMOND — If all goes as planned, a photovoltaic solar power plant on 960 acres in southwestern Rosamond could be producing 100 to 200 megawatts of electricity in the coming years.

The plant, one of more than a dozen under review in Kern County, has been proposed by San Diego-based Sempra Generation, the power-production arm of Sempra Global.

"We're all turning our attention to renewable energy," Marilyn Burke, director of project development for Sempra, told members of the Rosamond Community Services District board during a presentation Wednesday.

California has mandated that 20% of all power generated in the state must be by renewable means this year and up to 33% by 2020.

The proposed Rosamond facility will help meet that goal.

The site is former agricultural land between Holiday and Kingbird avenues, and 150th and 135th streets west. It is adjacent to the Antelope Valley Water Bank, operated by Rosamond Community Services District.

It is near the existing Southern California Edison transmission lines and a soon-to-be-built substation, where the solar plant will tie into the transmission line.

Approximately 300 construction jobs are expected to be generated during the year it will take to build the power plant. Once operational, it is expected to employ about six to eight full-time employees and an additional 10 or so contract employees for specific maintenance duties.

"This would not be considered an unmanned, jobless site," Burke said.

Photovoltaic solar plants require only permitting from local governments, not the California Energy Commission. Sempra's application with Kern County asks for changing the zoning of the site to make it uniformly agricultural across all the parcels.

At present, the zoning is a patchwork of estate residential — in two different sizes — commercial and industrial, Burke said.

The company also must obtain a vacation of an easement through the property for a county road that has never been built.

The required environmental study is under way, with hearings by the Kern County Board of Supervisors scheduled for September.

Sempra also must secure an agreement to connect to the state electrical grid, expected in late 2011 or early 2012.

Pending approvals from Kern County and the connection agreement, construction could begin in 2012, Burke said.

It will begin delivering power shortly after construction begins, with the installation of the first few solar panels, she said.

Sempra has experience with photovoltaic power plants, operating a 10-megawatt plant on 80 acres adjacent its natural gas-fired power plant in Boulder City, Nev.

"It's nice to site power facilities near each other. They can share things like transmission lines," Burke said.

That plant has been in operation since December 2008. The company's success there has led it add a second, 48-megawatt photovoltaic plant on adjacent land.

Once complete, this Copper Mountain solar plant will be the largest operating photovoltaic facility in North America, according to Sempra. Under construction now, it is expected to be completed by the end of this year or early 2011.

The district has been negotiating with Sempra on access to the project site across the Antelope Valley Water Bank land adjacent.

"We've enjoyed working with Sempra on this project," RCSD General Manager Jack Stewart said. "We think it's going to be an exceptionally good long-term relationship."

agatlin@avpress.com

Solar power plants planned

1. **eSolar.** Sierra Highway and Avenue G. 5 megawatts. Operating.
2. **NextLight Renewable Power.** Avenue D at 170th Street West. 230 megawatts. Proposed.
3. **Beacon Solar.** Highway 14 south of Red Rock Canyon State Park. 250 megawatts. Proposed.
4. **Edison Mission Energy.** East of 240th Street East, south of Avenue S. 150 megawatts. Proposed.
5. **Edwards Air Force Base/Fotowatio Renewable Ventures.** Northwest corner of Edwards Air Force Base. In negotiations.
6. **Palmdale.** Sierra Highway at Avenue M. 617-megawatt hybrid natural gas-solar thermal. Proposed.
7. **Fallbrook Energy/Rosamond Community Services District.** Patterson Road at Edwards Air Force Base border. 46 megawatts/ 72 megawatts. Proposed.
8. **Sempra Generation.** 135th Street West and Holiday Avenue. 120 megawatts. Proposed.
9. **Edison Mission Energy.** East of Highway 14, south of Business Route 58. 140 megawatts.
10. **DTE Energy.** HMojave Air and Space Port. 20 megawatts. In negotiations.
11. **Los Angeles World Airports.** East of Air Force Plant 42. Seeking developer.

Antelope Valley Press, 6/21/10
Plans move forward for Solar Ranch

ANTELOPE ACRES - A draft environmental impact report for a 230 megawatt solar power facility proposed on 2,100 acres of old farmland recommends the operators buy and preserve nearly 225 acres of wildflower land adjoining the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve and another 225 acres elsewhere as habitat for other desert plants and animals.

The report also calls for searching for and moving out burrowing owls, kit foxes and a horned lizard specials to avoid killing them during construction. Construction work must stay at least 500 feet from owl burrows containing eggs or young, and artificial owl burrows should be built on a part of the property where solar panels will not be installed, the report said.

Released last week, the report will be the subject of a public hearing before the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission at 9 a.m. Wednesday, June 30, in the Regional Planning Commission Hearing Room, 320 West Temple St., Los Angeles.

Named AV Solar Ranch One, the project would install thousands of photovoltaic panels on both sides of Highway 138 - also known there as Avenue D - at 170th Street West, or about 15 miles northwest of central Lancaster and six or seven miles west of Antelope Acres.

The site is 1 miles north of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, but separated from it by Fairmont Butte. The Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretive Association, whose members previously helped quash a wind-turbine project proposed on the poppy reserve's southwest corner and are fighting an auto racetrack proposed just north of the reserve, is not opposing the solar power project.

The solar facility was proposed by San Francisco-based NextLight Renewable Power in answer to a state law ordering power companies to get 20% - 33% by 2020 - of their electricity from so-called "renewable" sources such as wind and solar energy. AV Solar Ranch One's electricity is to be sent along new power lines running 3.5 miles north along 170th Street West to a new Edison substation.

NextLight picked the spot after looking for a large parcel of land that was flat, near power lines and in an area with plentiful sunshine, its officials said. The firm also wanted land that was previously disturbed, rather than virgin desert, so there would be no endangered plants or animals living on it.

The property has been farmed since the 1940s and was last farmed in 2004, county officials say. During the Antelope Valley's late 1980s housing boom, the acreage was

proposed to be part of a 35,000-home master-plan community called California Springs, but the plan stalled when the housing boom collapsed in the early 1990s.

In response to suggestions from Antelope Acres residents, the power facility's fences along Highway 138 are to be screened by a 10-foot-wide strip of landscaping Joshua trees and other desert plants.

The report also examined the possibility of installing underground the 230,000-volt power line that will draw electricity from the plant, calling the idea "a viable and environmentally superior alternative" to running the lines above ground on pylons. The line would reappear above ground at the Kern County line, where the report said officials are proposing that future power lines share a common path and common pylons.

NextLight officials have already agreed to install the power line underground. Under a proposal by Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, county officials are studying whether it's feasible to require that all new electrical transmission lines be installed underground, to avoid complaints like those that have come from Acton, Leona Valley and other communities crossed by new lines.

Individuals and organizations can submit comments on the report through July 30. The report, which takes up several hundred pages, is available for review online at planning.lacounty.gov/case/all, as County Project No. R2009-002239. County officials said copies are also available for review at several libraries, including the Quartz Hill Library, 42018 50th St. West; the Lancaster Library, 601 West Lancaster Blvd.; and the Lake Los Angeles Library, 16921 East Ave. O.

Antelope Valley Press, 9/16/2010
Solar-power project gets approval

By: Charles F. Bostwick

LANCASTER - California's largest solar-power project gained approval Wednesday from Los Angeles County planners, clearing the way for construction to start in time to acquire potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in federal aid before a Dec. 31 deadline.

If no appeal is filed by Sept. 27 with the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, preliminary construction on infrastructure such as roads and a well will start on the 230-megawatt AV Solar Ranch One at 170th Street West and Avenue D, with more work coming in early 2011, a spokesman said.

"This is the major milestone for the project. It's the last discretionary permit that is required to proceed with the project," spokesman James Woodruff said after Wednesday's approval by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission.

Like other renewable-energy projects, Solar Ranch One is eligible for a cash grant in lieu of a tax credit equal to 30% of the eligible capital cost under a U.S. Department of Treasury program that has distributed $5.1 billion in the last 18 months, according to an Associated Press report.

Part of the 2009 federal stimulus enacted as financing evaporated after the 2008 global financial crisis, the program is due to expire Dec. 31, so energy firms and some lawmakers are pushing Congress to extend it until 2012.

Woodruff declined to specify a cost for Solar Ranch One but said it is in the "hundreds of millions of dollars." Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance President Mel Layne said he has heard a figure of $1.3 billion.

Solar Ranch One will be good for the Antelope Valley, Layne said.

"This sends a signal that this can be done in the Antelope Valley and this can be done in Los Angeles County," said Layne, who spoke in favor of the project at Wednesday's hearing in Los Angeles. "It's exciting to see something of this magnitude come into the Antelope Valley."

Solar power facilities are a good use for the Valley's unused farm land, he said. If Solar Ranch One is valued at $1.3 billion, he said, that means an extra $1 million a year in property tax revenue for Los Angeles County.

No one testified Wednesday against the project.

The solar facility was proposed by San Francisco-based NextLight Renewable Power, which was acquired in July by Arizona solar-cell manufacturer First Solar Inc., in answer to a state law ordering power companies to get 20% - 33% by 2020 - of their electricity from so-called "renewable" sources such as wind and solar energy.

Solar Ranch One's electricity is to be sent along new power lines running 3.5 miles north along 170th Street West to a new Southern California Edison substation that has yet to be built.

NextLight picked the spot - 2,100 acres of old farmland - after looking for a large parcel of land that was flat, near power lines and in an area with plentiful sunshine, its officials said. The firm also wanted land that was previously disturbed, rather than virgin desert, so no endangered plants or animals would be living on it.

As part of the approval, the developers must buy and preserve nearly 225 acres of wildflower land and another 225 acres as habitat for other desert plants and animals.

The developers hope to have the plant ready to produce electricity by late 2011, though they expect the new substation it needs won't be done until spring 2012.

While the renewable-energy credit is due to expire in less than three months, Layne said he has been told First Solar plans more Valley solar projects that will take 10 years to build.

"From what they're saying today, they're here for the long term," Layne said.

cbostwick@avpress.com