Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

DOE/EA-1784

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY LOAN GUARANTEE FOR FOTOWATIO NEVADA SOLAR, LLC'S APEX SOLAR POWER PROJECT IN CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy, Loan Guarantee Program Office

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is adopting an environmental assessment (EA) completed by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in August 2010 that analyzed the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and startup of Fotowatio Nevada Solar, LLC's (Fotowatio's) Apex Solar Power Project (Apex) located in Clark County, Nevada. BLM prepared the EA to assist its decision whether to grant a transmission line right-of-way across BLM land. DOE was a cooperating agency in preparing the BLM EA pursuant to an MOU between DOE and BLM Nevada signed in April 2010. BLM issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR) for the Apex project.

The DOE Loan Guarantee Program Office is considering whether to provide a federal loan guarantee pursuant to Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct 05), as amended by Section 406 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, 42 U.S.C. 16516 (Recovery Act), to support the construction and startup of the proposed project. The purpose of Title XVII is to enable rapid deployment of renewable energy projects and related manufacturing facilities, electric power transmission projects, and leading edge biofuels projects.

John Hancock Life Insurance Company (John Hancock), as Lender-Applicant, on behalf of Fotowatio, submitted an application to the DOE Loan Guarantee Program for a Federal loan guarantee for Apex in response to DOE's October 7, 2009, solicitation, "Federal Loan Guarantees for Commercial Technology Renewable Energy Generation Projects under the Financial Institution Partnership Program." For this Solicitation DOE is implementing the application process by directly working with certain qualified financial institutions through a set of procedures established by DOE for its Financial Institution Partnership Program (FIPP). In general, the FIPP is intended to expedite the loan guarantee process and expand senior credit capacity for the efficient and prudent financing of eligible commercial projects under Section 1705 of Title XVII of EPAct 05. Under FIPP, proposed borrowers and project sponsors may not apply directly to DOE but must instead work with a financial institution that meets DOE qualification as a Lead Lender.

The Apex project is a conventional solar photovoltaic power project. The project's configuration consists of 70 full photovoltaic (PV) arrays, 20 partial PV arrays, a substation with step-up transformer, and a new 1,100 foot 69kV transmission line. The project is expected to produce 20 megawatts of renewable electricity annually. The entire output from the Project will be purchased by NV Energy and utilized to fulfill NV Energy's renewable portfolio standard (RPS) requirements. The project will create approximately 200 jobs during construction and is expected to produce enough energy during operations to power about 5,000 homes annually.

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All discussion and analysis related to the potential impacts of construction and operation of the proposed Apex project are contained in the BLM's Final EA (DOE/EA-1784), which DOE adopts and incorporates herein by reference. BLM examined potential impacts on the following resources and found none to be significant: floodplains; wetlands; water resources and water quality; threatened or endangered species and critical habitats; prime or unique farmlands; geology and soils; visual, recreational, and aesthetic resources; property of historic, archaeological, or architectural significance; Native American concerns; environmental justice; public health and safety; air quality; waste management; transportation; socioeconomic conditions; global climate change; intentionally destructive acts; and noise. The DOE Loan Guarantee Program Office reviewed the BLM analyses and determined that they adequately cover all areas of concern necessary to support DOE's FONSI.

DETERMINATION: On the basis of the Final EA, DOE has determined that providing a federal loan guarantee to Fotowatio Nevada Solar, LLC for construction and startup of the Apex Solar Power Project located in Clark County, Nevada, will not have a significant impact on the human environment. The preparation of an environmental impact statement is therefore not required.

Copies of the Final EA are available at the DOE Loan Guarantee Program Office website at http://www.lgprogram.energy.gov/NEPA-1.html or from

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Additional information on the DOE NEPA process is available from

Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance
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202-586-4600 or 1-800-472-2756

Issued in Washington, DC on the 1st day of October in the year 2010.

Jonathan M. Silver
Executive Director, Loan Programs