

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Bureau of Indian Affairs**

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**Final Environmental Impact Statement
for the Soboba Band of Luiseno
Indians' Proposed 534-Acre Trust
Acquisition and Casino Project,
Riverside County, California**

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: This notice advises the public that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) as lead agency, with the City of San Jacinto and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as cooperating agencies, intends to file a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) with the EPA for the Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians' (Tribe) proposed fee-to-trust acquisition and hotel/casino project to be located in Riverside County, California. This notice also announces that the FEIS is now available for public review.

DATES: The Record of Decision on the application will be issued on or after 30 days from the date the EPA publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. Any comments on the FEIS must arrive on or before that date.

ADDRESSES: Mail or hand carry written comments to Amy Dutschke, Regional Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pacific Region, 2800 Cottage Way, Sacramento, California 95825. See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for directions on submitting comments and the public availability of the FEIS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Rydzik, (916) 978-6051, or at john.rydzik@bia.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Tribe has requested the BIA to acquire into trust 34 parcels totaling 534.91+/- acres of land currently held in fee by the Tribe, of which the Tribe proposes to develop approximately 55 acres into a destination hotel/casino complex (Proposed Action). Approximately 300 acres (56 percent) of the project site is incorporated in the City of San Jacinto, California, while the remainder is within unincorporated Riverside County, California. The proposed hotel and casino complex would be generally located at the intersection of Soboba Road and Lake Park Drive, in Riverside County and about the existing Soboba Springs Country Club.

The Tribe proposes to relocate its existing casino, which presently resides on trust lands, to the project site. In

addition to the fee-to-trust action and casino relocation, the Proposed Action also includes the development of a 300-room hotel, casino, restaurants, retail establishments, a convention center, an events arena, and a spa and fitness center, within a 729,500+/- square-foot complex. The Proposed Action also includes a Tribal fire station, and a 12-pump gas station with a 6,000 square-foot convenience store.

In addition to the Proposed Action described above, the FEIS included the following alternatives: (1) Reduced Hotel/Casino Complex, (2) Hotel and Convention Center with No Casino Relocation, (3) Commercial Enterprise with No Casino or Hotel, and (4) No Action Alternative. The BIA must conduct a complete evaluation of the criteria listed in 25 CFR part 151 prior to making a final decision. The BIA may, in its Record of Decision, select an alternative other than the Proposed Action, including the No Action Alternative or another alternative analyzed in the FEIS.

Environmental issues addressed within the FEIS included land resources, water resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural/paleontological resources, economic and socioeconomic conditions, transportation, land use, agriculture, public services, hazardous materials, noise, visual resources, and recreational resources. The FEIS examines the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each alternative on these resources. Mitigation measures to address adverse impacts are also identified in the FEIS.

The BIA has afforded other government agencies and the public opportunities to participate in the preparation of this EIS. On December 12, 2007, the BIA sent out cooperating agency letters to various agencies, of which the City of San Jacinto and the EPA agreed to participate. The BIA published a Notice of Intent in the **Federal Register** on December 14, 2007, describing the Proposed Action, announcing the BIA's intent to prepare an EIS for the Proposed Action, and inviting comments. The public comment period was extended to January 25, 2008, to ensure that all parties had an opportunity to submit comments; however, comments received after this deadline and until March 11, 2008, were accepted. The BIA held a public hearing on January 8, 2008, at the Hemet Public Library. Prior to public circulation, an administrative version of the Draft EIS was circulated to the cooperating agencies (EPA and City of San Jacinto) for review and comment. Comments were taken into consideration and changes were made

based on these comments before the public release of the document. The Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS was published in the **Federal Register** on July 2, 2009. A public hearing was held in the City of Hemet on August 5, 2009. Approximately 250 comments were received during the comment period, including those submitted or recorded at the public hearing. Comments were considered in the preparation of the FEIS; responses to the comments are included in Appendix E of the FEIS and relevant information was revised in the FEIS as appropriate to address those comments.

Locations where the FEIS is Available for Review: The FEIS is available for public review at the San Jacinto Public Library, 500 Idyllwild Drive, San Jacinto, California 92583, telephone (951) 654-8635; and the Hemet Public Library, 2nd Floor, 300 E. Latham, Hemet, California 92543, telephone (951) 765-2440. An electronic version of the FEIS can also be viewed at the following Web site: <http://www.sobobansn.gov>.

Directions for Submitting Comments: Please include your name, return address, and the caption, "FEIS Comments, Soboba Horseshoe Grande Fee-to-Trust Project" on the first page of your written comments and submit comments to the BIA address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

To obtain a compact disk copy of the FEIS, please provide your name and address in writing or by voicemail to John Rydzik, Chief of the Division of Environmental, Cultural Resources Management and Safety, at the address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice, or at the telephone number listed in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this notice. Note that individual paper copies of the FEIS will be provided only upon payment of applicable printing expenses by the requestor for the number of copies requested.

Public Comment Availability: Comments, including the names and addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BIA mailing address shown in the **ADDRESSES** section, during regular business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. Before including your address, telephone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—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.

Authority: This notice is published in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR part 1500 et seq.) and the Department of the Interior regulations (43 CFR part 46) implementing the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), and is in accordance with the exercise of authority delegated to the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs by part 209 of the Departmental Manual.

Dated: November 12, 2013.

Kevin Washburn,

Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Land Management

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Notice of Availability of the Draft Joint Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report and California Desert Conservation Area Plan Amendment for the Proposed Soda Mountain Solar Project, San Bernardino County, CA

AGENCY: Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared a Draft Joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan Amendment for the Soda Mountain Solar Project (Project), San Bernardino County, California, and by this notice is announcing the opening of the comment period.

DATES: To ensure that comments will be considered, the BLM must receive written comments on the Draft EIS/EIR and Draft CDCA Plan Amendment within 90 days following the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the **Federal Register**. The BLM will announce future meetings or hearings and any other public involvement activities at least 15 days in advance through public notices, media releases, and/or mailings.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments related to the Soda Mountain Solar Project Draft EIS/EIR and Draft CDCA

Plan Amendment by any of the following methods:

- **Web site:** <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/cdd.html>.
- **Email:** sodamtnsolar@blm.gov.
- **Fax:** 951-697-5299, Attn: Jose M. Najar.

• **Mail:** California Desert District Office, Attn: Jose M. Najar, 22835 Calle San Juan de los Lagos, Moreno Valley, CA 92553.

Copies of the Soda Mountain Solar Project Draft Joint EIS/EIR and CDCA Plan Amendment are available in the California Desert District Office at the above address and at the Barstow Field Office, 2601 Barstow Road, Barstow, CA 92311.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jose M. Najar, Project Manager, telephone 951-697-5387; address 22835 Calle San Juan de Los Lagos, Moreno Valley, CA 92553; email sodamtnsolar@blm.gov. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339 to contact the above individual during normal business hours. The FIRS is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to leave a message or question with the above individual. You will receive a reply during normal business hours.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The BLM has received a right-of-way (ROW) application from Soda Mountain Solar, LLC, to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant facility proposed on 4,179 acres with solar fields occupying approximately 2,557 acres of BLM-administered public lands in San Bernardino County, California. The Project would utilize solar panels and would be built in several phases. The Project would connect to the existing Los Angeles Department of Water and Power 500kV transmission line to the west of the project using a transmission interconnect from the proposed substation. The Project would not require any expansion of the existing transmission line or any upgrades.

The Project would be adjacent to Interstate 15 (I-15), South of Blue Bell Mine Road, about 6 miles southwest of Baker, California, and 12 miles northeast of Barstow, California.

The proposed project site is located near the National Park Service's Mojave National Preserve, Soda Mountain and Cady Mountains Wilderness Study Areas, and the Razor Off Highway Vehicle and Afton Canyon Special Recreation Management Areas within the BLM's CDCA. A portion of the Blue Bell Mine Road lies north adjacent to the project site at its closest point, and runs approximately east to west.

All proposed project components would be located on BLM-administered lands subject to a ROW grant. The proposed Project components would include solar array fields; access roads; collector lines; a substation with switchyard and interconnection; ancillary buildings; six groundwater production, test, and observation water wells; water tanks; a water treatment and storage facility; brine ponds; warehouses; fencing; berms; other infrastructure; and laydown areas. The existing roads would provide access to the proposed project site. New minor internal roads would be constructed among collector lines, substation, arrays and sub arrays, and other ancillary facilities. The interconnection to the proposed substation and collector lines from the arrays would be via underground trench, including underground trenching of I-15. Once approved and operational, the proposed Project is expected to have up to 358 megawatts of generating capacity. In connection with its decision on the proposed Soda Mountain Solar project, the BLM will also include consideration of potential amendments to the CDCA land use plan, as analyzed in the Draft EIS/EIR alternatives. The CDCA plan, while recognizing the potential compatibility of solar energy facilities on public lands, requires that all sites associated with power generation or transmission not identified in the Plan be considered through the land use plan amendment process. The BLM is deciding whether to amend the CDCA Plan to identify the Soda Mountain Solar project site as available or unavailable for solar development.

The Draft EIS/EIR describes the following six alternatives: Alternative A: The Proposed Action—358 MW on 2,557 acres; Alternative B: 264 MW project on 2,127 acres; Alternative C: 298 MW project on 2,354 acres; Alternative D: 250 MW project on 2,134 acres; Alternative E: No action alternative/no project approval—no issuance of a ROW Grant, no county approval of a groundwater well permit, no Land Use Plan (LUP) amendment; Alternative F: BLM approves project with no county approval of a groundwater well permit; and, Alternative G: Planning decision identifying the area as unsuitable for solar, with no BLM ROW—LUP Plan Amendment (PA), no issuance of a ROW Grant, and no county approval of a groundwater well permit. All of the action alternatives, except Alternative E, would include an amendment to the CDCA Plan. Alternative A is the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS.