

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR****Bureau of Land Management**

[BLM\_NV\_FRN; MO4500179291]

**Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Libra Solar Project, Lyon and Mineral Counties, Nevada****AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Libra Solar Project, Lyon and Mineral Counties, Nevada.

**DATES:** The BLM will not issue a decision on the proposal for a minimum of 30 days after the date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes its Notice of Availability (NOA) of the Final EIS in the **Federal Register**. The EPA usually publishes its NOAs on Fridays.

**ADDRESSES:** The Final EIS and documents pertinent to this proposal are available for review on the BLM National NEPA Register website at <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022592/570>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lisa Ross, Public Affairs Specialist, telephone: (775) 885-6107; address: 5665 Morgan Mill Road, Carson City, NV 89701; email [blm\\_nv\\_ccdo\\_libra\\_solar@blm.gov](mailto:blm_nv_ccdo_libra_solar@blm.gov). Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services for contacting Ms. Ross. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action**

The BLM's purpose and need is to respond to the right-of-way (ROW) application submitted by the Applicant under FLPMA Title V (43 U.S.C. 1761). The need for this action is to fulfill the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA and its ROW regulations to manage the public lands for multiple uses, including the generation of electric energy. FLPMA, as amended,

established a multiple-use mandate for the BLM's management of Federal lands, including "systems for generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy, except that the proponent shall also comply with all applicable requirements of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission under the Federal Power Act, including part I thereof (41 Stat. 1063, 16 U.S.C. 791a-825r)." (43 U.S.C. 1761(a)(4)). The BLM must consider compliance with FLPMA, BLM ROW regulations, the BLM NEPA Handbook, Department of the Interior NEPA regulations, and other applicable Federal and State laws and policies.

**Proposed Action and Alternatives**

Under the Proposed Action, the Applicant would construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a 700-megawatt alternating current (MW ac) solar photovoltaic (PV) power generating facility with battery storage and associated components on approximately 5,141 acres of public lands administered by the BLM Stillwater and Sierra Front Field Offices in the Carson City District Office. The proposal also includes the development of a 24.1-mile-long generation tie-line, of which 22.9 miles would be located on BLM managed lands, to connect the solar site to the Fort Churchill Substation in Lyon County, as well as improvement of a largely-existing access road on BLM lands providing access to the solar site. The total ROW requested for the project is 5,778 acres. The Project would result in the permanent disturbance of approximately 3,420 acres within the 5,778-acre ROW. Under the Proposed Action, the Applicant would reclaim surface disturbances and prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands. The final reclamation would occur at the end of the 30-year ROW grant term, if it is not renewed.

The three action alternatives analyzed in the Final EIS are as follows: Action Alternative 1: Major Drainage Avoidance, Fenced Corridors, and Vegetation and Topography Maintenance; Action Alternative 2: Alternative Supplemental Access During Construction; and Action Alternative 3: Alternative Gen-tie Connecting to the Proposed Greenlink West Transmission Line. Action Alternative 1 includes the use of specific construction methods to reduce impacts to vegetation, drainage, and topography within the solar array areas. Action Alternative 2 focuses on reduction of impacts associated with East Walker Road (the project's mostly unpaved access road) by providing

supplemental access during construction. Action Alternative 3 entails connecting the generation tie-line from the project to the proposed Greenlink West Transmission Project through a new switching station under the proposed Greenlink West line, which would reduce impacts to air, vegetation, soils, wildlife, visual resources, and other resource areas from the 24.1-mile-long generation tie-line under the Proposed Action.

Under the No Action Alternative, the solar facility, generation tie-line, battery storage, substation, and associated facilities would not be developed because the BLM would not issue the ROW grant.

Based on the analyses contained in the Final EIS for the proposed Libra Solar Project, and after carefully considering input from the public and cooperating agencies, the BLM has selected a modification of the Proposed Action that combines Action Alternative 1 and Action Alternative 2; it requires the use of specific construction methods and provides supplemental access to reduce total traffic on East Walker Road during construction. An overlay of Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative since it reduces many of the resource impacts, including to vegetation communities, wildlife, and hydrology. It also allows for faster and more successful restoration at decommissioning, allowing for future uses of the land under multiple use.

**Public Participation**

In addition to making the Draft EIS available for public comment and review, the BLM hosted one virtual and one in-person public meeting in Yerington, Nevada, during the public comment period. The agency received 23 written comments, some of which were verbally presented and recorded during the meeting. The responses were incorporated in the Final EIS, as appropriate. The BLM hosted additional meetings in response to comments received from Native American Tribes to discuss construction practices and methods. The BLM will continue to consult with Indian Tribal Nations on a government-to-government basis in accordance with Executive Order 13175, BLM MS 1780, and other Departmental policies. Public comments received on the Draft EIS were considered and incorporated as appropriate into the Final EIS. Public comments and internal BLM review resulted in the addition of clarifying text but did not significantly change the impact analyses.

## Schedule for the Decision-Making Process

The BLM anticipates releasing a Record of Decision in the third quarter of 2024. The BLM will decide whether or not to approve and issue the ROW to build the project on 5,778 acres of public lands as proposed or with modifications.

(Authority: 40 CFR 1506.6, 40 CFR 1506.10)

**Kimberly D. Dow,**

*District Manager, Carson City District.*

[FR Doc. 2024-16258 Filed 7-25-24; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4331-21-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Land Management

[BLM\_NV\_FRN\_MO4500178495]

#### Notice of Availability of the Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment and Associated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Esmeralda Seven Solar Projects, Esmeralda County, Nevada

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended (FLPMA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Nevada State Director has prepared a draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) Amendment with an associated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for seven adjacent solar photovoltaic projects proposed on BLM-administered public lands in Esmeralda County, Nevada. This notice announces the opening of the 90-day comment period and provides the planning criteria for public review.

**DATES:** All comments on the draft RMP Amendment and PEIS must be received by October 24, 2024 or 15 days after the last public meeting, whichever is later.

**ADDRESSES:** You may submit comments on issues and planning criteria related to the RMP Amendment and associated PEIS by any of the following methods:

- BLM's National NEPA Register (ePlanning) at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2020804/510>.
- Email: [BLM\\_NV\\_BMDO\\_P&EC\\_NEPA@blm.gov](mailto:BLM_NV_BMDO_P&EC_NEPA@blm.gov).
- Fax: (775) 635-4034.
- Mail: BLM, Battle Mountain District Office, 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820.

Documents pertinent to this proposal may be examined online at: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2020804/510>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For further information and/or to have your name added to the mailing list, please send requests to: Scott Distel, Supervisory Project Manager, at telephone (775) 635-4093; address: 50 Bastian Road, Battle Mountain, NV 89820; or email: [sdistel@blm.gov](mailto:sdistel@blm.gov). Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This document provides notice that the BLM Nevada State Director has prepared a draft RMP Amendment with an associated PEIS for the Esmeralda Seven Solar Projects in Esmeralda County, Nevada, announces the beginning of the draft PEIS review process, and seeks public input on issues and planning criteria. The RMP Amendment would change the existing 1997 Tonopah Field Office Record of Decision and Approved RMP. The RMP Amendment is being considered to change the management direction for visual resources and slope to allow for the consideration of the proposed solar development projects.

The planning area is in Esmeralda County, Nevada, and encompasses approximately 118,630.9 acres of BLM-administered public lands.

#### Purpose and Need

The BLM's purpose for this Federal action is to respond to the solar projects' FLPMA right-of-way applications submitted under Title V of FLPMA (43 U.S.C. 1761) and to amend the visual and slope management direction in the Tonopah RMP in compliance with the FLPMA BLM right-of-way regulations (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 2800) and other applicable Federal and State laws and policies. In accordance with FLPMA, there is a need to consider the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources in the context of the multiple resource objectives in the Tonopah RMP planning area.

#### Preliminary Alternatives

Under Alternative A, the Proposed Action, there would be the potential for the development of seven utility-scale photovoltaic solar facilities within the

planning area. The proposed projects include the development of photovoltaic solar facilities, including solar arrays, energy storage, roads, and electric generation intertie (gen-tie) lines within the seven solar ROWs, as outlined in each project's plan of development.

Alternative B, the Soils and Vegetation Conservation Alternative, would be the same as the Proposed Action; however, there would be no amendment to the Tonopah RMP to change the slope requirement for the planning area to a maximum of 10 percent. Development on slopes greater than 5 percent would be based on the additional slope criteria outlined in the 2012 Solar PEIS Record of Decision (ROD). In addition, applicants would limit traditional construction grading methods, which remove all vegetation and compact the soil, to a maximum of 35 percent of the proposed development area. Applicants would use mowing in the rest of the development area to leave vegetation intact. In mowed areas, vegetation would be mowed to a height of 24 inches but no less than 18 inches, where justified.

Under Alternative C, the No Action Alternative, the BLM would not authorize the RMP Amendment or select an action alternative. Future solar development in the planning area would require separate NEPA analyses and reviews that would not tier to this PEIS or ROD. In addition, future development could be constrained by the existing visual resources management classifications or slope requirements.

#### Planning Criteria

The planning criteria serve as a guide for the planning effort and lay the groundwork for effects analysis by identifying the preliminary issues and their analytical frameworks. The planning criteria are available for public review and comment on the BLM's National NEPA Register (ePlanning) website (see **ADDRESSES**).

#### Summary of Expected Impacts

Through the RMP Amendment and PEIS, the BLM would change the visual and slope management direction in the Tonopah RMP and consider best management practices for use in future analyses of the individual projects. Prior to decisions on the individual solar projects, subsequent site-specific NEPA analysis would be required. Preliminary issues for the planning area have been identified by BLM personnel and from feedback received during early engagement conducted for this planning effort with Federal, State, and local