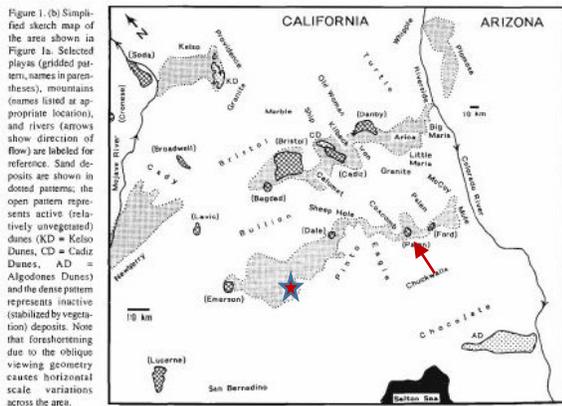


Palen Solar PV Project – The Third Time Around

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced in June 2016 that it is proposing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the rejuvenated 500 MW Palen Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Project on 4,200 acres of undisturbed desert ecosystem land east of Desert Center adjacent to the I-10 freeway (red arrow on map below). Palen’s two unrealized former lives included using solar troughs and a power tower (concentrated solar thermal) to generate energy from the sun. Both these projects were under the joint umbrella of the BLM (NEPA review) and the California Energy Commission (CEQA review). This time around it all falls on the BLM since the CEC’s jurisdiction does not cover PV installations. MBCA was a loud voice against the power tower arrangement for all the many environmental reason championed by other organizations. MBCA also brought to both agencies attention that the towers they each analyzed for the project had different dimensions. Very embarrassing and would have triggered a time consuming supplemental EIS except that BrightSource decided to drop the project the afternoon following MBCA’s morning comment post with an excellent illustration below of the boo-boo. See below. Palen letter September 26, 2014.

The Supplemental EIS for the Palen Solar PV Project will be on a fast track using studies and decisions generated during the earlier projects. With only a 30 day turnaround from the announcement Pat Flanagan attended a public meeting on June 29 in Palm Springs to get the scoop. The project is located on the Chuckwalla sand transport path and threatens to release unknown amounts of particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) when the vegetation is removed. The amount is unknown because, as Pat’s investigations revealed, there are no monitoring stations for fugitive dust anywhere along the sand transport path, which extends to Blythe on the Colorado River. The dust will, of course, extend further on the wind when released.



The sand transport path actually begins further west, in our own Copper Mountain Basin (red X on map below). The majority of the sand transport path is stabilized by the root systems of desert bunch grasses, such as Galleta Grass (*Hilaria rigida*), and Creosote. Pat became sensitized to the issue of destabilized sand and fine particle dust because she lives downwind of the 150 acre Cascade Solar and 120 acre Lear Avenue Solar in Desert Heights. Her research revealed that there are no monitoring stations east of Twentynine Palms in the Mojave Desert. Data to analyze the recently approved

Joshua Tree Solar Farm came from Victorville. (See MBCA Joshua Tree SF letter 3/2016) The monitoring data for the Palen Solar PV Project comes from Palm Springs and Indio. This, of course, is unacceptable and must be changed. Upgrading the monitoring ability of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District is on MBCA’s radar.

