

MBCA News
Wednesday, December 11, 2013

Renewable energy issues have been in the news and on our minds lately. Here are some updates.

1. San Bernardino County Solar Energy Ordinance

On December 3, The San Bernardino County Supervisors held a public hearing on a "proposed ordinance amending Development Code definitions and regulations for approval of commercial solar energy generation facilities, and establishing a fee for these facilities." This was developed by the County's Land Use Services Department in conjunction with a moratorium on solar development and with input from the Basin Energy Assessment Team (BEAT).

Desert area Supervisors James Ramos and Robert Lovingood have been particularly committed to progress on renewable energy siting issues, due in great part to the many Morongo Basin individuals and groups encouraging them. Many MBCA and California Desert Coalition members were part of the BEAT, whose input had significant influence on the ordinance.

More than a dozen Morongo Basin residents were present at the Supervisors meeting on December 3 via the video link at the Joshua Tree Government Center. Many of them spoke, both praising the Supervisors for taking this first step in doing solar "the right way," and also noting some continuing concerns with some aspects of the ordinance.

The four Supervisors present approved the ordinance and scheduled it for adoption on the Consent Calendar at their December 17 meeting. Yet to come, over the next year, will be the development of General Plan amendments to provide much-needed guidance for solar developers.

More details can be found in news stories at [KCDZ](#), the [San Bernardino Sun](#), and the [Riverside Press Enterprise](#) (click to link).

2. Palen Solar Generating System (PSEGS)

Director Pat Flanagan recently submitted on behalf of MBCA comments on the draft Supplemental EIS for the Palen Solar Energy Generating System (PSEGS). The [Palen Energy Project](#) is a 500 megawatt solar project located southeast of Joshua Tree National Park, north of I-10 in the vicinity of Desert Center. The company is in the process of

amending their plans from a trough-style project to solar towers. Pat's original comments on behalf of MBCA can be read [here](#). Additional information and concerns about PSEGS are noted by Chris Clarke at this KCET [Rewire article](#).

Pat subsequently addressed the California Energy Commission and the Bureau of Land Management to point out discrepancies in some details of their respective reviews of the Palen project in [this letter](#) on December 3. They responded with an inadequate explanation, so Pat sent [a follow-up letter](#). We are very grateful for Pat Flanagan's willingness to review technical documents and bring important details to light. Pat has written or contributed significantly to many of MBCA's formal comment letters.

3. Federal Renewable Energy Direction

In a recent ReWire entry, KCET reporter Chris Clarke has spotted a ray of hope in the federal government's historically wrong-headed approach of pushing for renewable energy development without any specification for preserving important undisturbed desert lands. Many of us in the Morongo Basin have been in a years-long battle against the bulldozer attitude we've perceived from federal and state entities of "full steam ahead" without much environmental consideration for desert lands. Our mantra has been "rooftop and locally distributed projects should be first." Chris has found a small section of a federal directive to federal agencies that actually directs agencies to "consider" using disturbed lands for renewable energy projects. It's small progress, but progress. Read more in Chris's article [here](#).

4. "We have a lot to fight for."

Many of you remember this emotional statement by CDC President April Sall at the 2009 meeting in Yucca Valley with David Nahai of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. When we saw this [wonderful video of Joshua Tree skies](#), we thought of that seminal event in the Morongo Basin's ongoing defense of our lands. Here is [background information](#) on the video. Enjoy.

Thanks for your ongoing support and best wishes for a warm and wonderful holiday season.

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(If you haven't yet joined the MBCA in our efforts to maintain a healthy and prosperous desert living environment in communities across the Morongo Basin, you can join us [here](#).)