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Thursday, November 12, 2009 at 1:34:24 PM - by Nate Lew

Interior Secretary details solar energy projects in the pipeline

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar spoke late this week on five solar energy developments that the department is fast-tracking for construction.

The projects are sited in California, one of the best locations for solar development due to its sunny climate. All six will be built on Bureau of Land Management land. The BLM - a division of the Interior Department - has identified 23 million acres of publicly-owned land well-suited to solar energy.

The department identifies fast-track projects as those that have made enough progress for the environmental review and public participation processes to occur.

DOI's recently announced fast-track solar installations are no smaller than 250 megawatts. The largest, in unincorporated Riverside County, will produce 968 megawatts through solar parabolic trough technology. A 400-megawatt solar energy project in the Ivanpah Valley uses similar technology. Both concentrate sunlight on a tower that is heated to produce steam and spin a turbine.

Salazar noted that "we are managing our public lands ... for environmentally responsible renewable energy production that will power our clean energy future." California hopes to generate 33 percent of its electricity through solar energy and other renewables by 2020.

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