

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

AZ Solar 1 Interconnection Project, La Paz County, Arizona DOE/EA-2098

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

BACKGROUND: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) proposes to approve AZ Solar 1 LLC's application to interconnect its proposed facility to the Little Harquahala to Harcuvar 115-kilovolt transmission line and enter into an interconnection agreement. WAPA operates and maintains this transmission line, which is part of the Central Arizona Project, on behalf of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Bureau of Land Management (BLM) previously issued a right-of-way (ROW) to Reclamation for this transmission line. The interconnection agreement's purpose is to ensure that the request will not degrade existing transmission reliability and service. Section 211 of the Federal Power Act requires that transmission service be provided upon request if capacity is available.

In association with the interconnection agreement, WAPA would:

- 1) Install and maintain a tap consisting of up to two new pole structures located in the existing transmission line ROW and associated overhead conductors;
- 2) Add guy wires and anchors at up to three existing pole structures;
- 3) Seek approval from Reclamation for the proposed changes to the transmission line;
- 4) Upgrade relays in existing control buildings at Harquahala and Harcuvar substations; and
- 5) Install a microwave dish at WAPA's existing Pete Smith Peak microwave site.

The proposed interconnection tap would be located on BLM land in the east half of Section 13 in Township 5 North, Range 14 West on the Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian (GSRBM).

BLM plans to respond to AZ Solar 1 LLC's application for an up to 100-foot-long ROW for an overhead transmission line connection from WAPA's proposed tap to the proposed solar energy facility. BLM would seek concurrence from Reclamation about any encroachments on the existing transmission line ROW.

AZ Solar 1 LLC plans to build, operate, and maintain a 32.5-megawatt photovoltaic solar energy generation facility on a 480-acre parcel of private land. An optional 27.5 megawatts of photovoltaic solar energy generation, 20 megawatts of battery storage, or both may be added within the parcel based on market considerations. AZ Solar 1 LLC would operate the entire facility such that the annual output is equal to or less than 50 average megawatts. AZ Solar 1 LLC would:

- 1) Install photovoltaic solar panels;
- 2) Install underground collection lines from each panel to a collection point switchyard;
- 3) Create access roads within the facility for construction and maintenance;
- 4) Build an on-site collection point switchyard covering five acres; and
- 5) Install an overhead transmission line, up to 100 feet long, between the solar energy facility and WAPA's tap, as well as apply to BLM for the associated ROW.

The facility would be located on private land approximately two miles west of Salome situated within portions of Section 18 in Township 5 North, Range 13 West on the GSRBM.

WAPA prepared a Final Environmental Assessment (FEA) analyzing the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative. It is titled "Final Environmental Assessment AZ Solar 1 Interconnection Project: DOE/EA-2098" and dated July 2019. WAPA is the lead Federal agency, and BLM (Lake Havasu Field Office) and Reclamation are cooperating agencies. WAPA incorporates this EA by reference.

On March 19, 2019, WAPA determined that the Proposed Action would not affect any species listed under the Endangered Species Act, because suitable habitat is not present in the project area. WAPA consulted with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and consulting parties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. On March 25, 2019, the SHPO concurred with WAPA's finding of no historic properties affected (SHPO-2018-1892(147705)).

DETERMINATION: Based on the analysis contained in DOE/EA-2098, WAPA finds that the Proposed Action to approve AZ Solar 1 LLC's application and enter into an interconnection agreement does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required, and WAPA issues this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Additional information and copies of the FEA and FONSI are available to all interested parties and the public from the following contact:

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The FEA and FONSI can be downloaded from WAPA's or DOE's website at:
<https://www.wapa.gov/regions/DSW/Environment/Pages/environment.aspx>
<https://www.energy.gov/nepa/nepa-documents>

For further information on DOE's NEPA process, contact:

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