

# NEWS

From the Office of

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### Mitzelfelt Supports Proposed Creation of Solar Energy Zones in Desert

SAN BERNARDINO – San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt supports the study of solar energy zones in the West announced today by Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar, and pledged to work with federal and state officials to ensure the voice of local government is heard and that critical desert resources are protected.

“As soon as this modern gold rush toward renewable energy started, I began calling for a comprehensive, detailed analysis of which areas appear to be suitable for solar energy development, and which areas should be off-limits,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt. “There is a broad consensus that we need to protect current resources and activities in the desert, and the best way to do that is by looking at these projects in the context of all competing uses, including mining, off-highway vehicle use, military needs, habitat protection, and scenic values that support recreation, tourism and filming.”

Secretary Salazar’s initiative will examine 24 areas covering 670,000 acres in six Western states where solar energy developers would receive expedited permitting for locations that have minimal conflicts with wildlife, other natural resources or land users. Projects outside those areas would continue to undergo rigorous environmental review. The Secretary’s goal is to have 13 solar plants under construction in the West by 2010. For more information go to [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov).

There are currently 66 applications for solar projects in California that would cover 574,915 acres or nearly 900 square miles. Of those, 33 proposals are in San Bernardino County and could cover up to 352,480 acres or 550 square miles. That is more than 61 percent of all the proposed acreage for solar development in the state. Most of the proposed projects are in Supervisor Mitzelfelt’s district.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt also called for close coordination among ongoing federal and state renewable energy initiatives with a strong role for local government. Those include California’s Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) and Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. Potential energy development on private and disturbed lands should also be examined, he said. San Bernardino County has a number of solar energy projects proposed for private land.

"While we know the Secretary and Department of Interior agencies have no authority on intermingled private and state lands we hope that all actions are fully coordinated with county planning and zoning and the use of private lands is integrated in the planning," Supervisor Mitzelfelt said.