

## Fast-track" renewable energy project # 8

Written by Wild Nevada

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The eighth "fast-tracked" solar development in the West--and the second in Nevada--was approved for construction yesterday by the BLM, in time to qualify for federal stimulus dollars. The project is the [Amargosa Farm Road Solar Energy Project](#), and approval came from the Southern Nevada District of the Bureau of Land Management who signed the [Record of Decision \(ROD\)](#)

The ROD gives the go-ahead to Solar Millennium, LLC to begin construction of the project, which will produce 500-megawatts of electricity from two dry-cooled solar power plants equipped with thermal energy storage capability. It is located just west of the town of Amargosa, NV on 4,350 acres of BLM-managed land. We have been monitoring this project since it began, and posting new information about it [here](#) (along with the other 11 fast-track projects in Nevada).

Throughout the permitting process, NWP and [The Wilderness Society](#) have been submitting written comments on the proposed plan, recognizing that in order to combat climate change and take dirty fossil-fueled plants offline, renewable energy will have to play a large role in our clean energy economy. NWP submits comments on these projects with the intention of improving them and lessening their impact on the land and wildlife.

"Early in the planning phase of the project, the developer and the BLM realized that a change in technology from wet to dry cooling was better suited for this site," said Greg Seymour, NWP's Renewable Energy Coordinator. "Using appropriate technology, in this case less water-intensive in a desert environment, is essential and part of taking a ["smart from the start"](#) approach to developing renewable energy."

Seymour said the project will be built on public lands that have no designated critical habitat for federally endangered or threatened species, and on land that is not a major migration corridor for wildlife. The project uses parabolic trough solar thermal technology, which means that after the sun sets, the plant will continue to provide power.

The Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge is seven miles southeast of the project site and not expected to be impacted by the solar development. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the Refuge, will require payments into a fund that can cover a range of off-site mitigation measures. This project will help Nevada's utility companies to meet our Renewable Portfolio Standard of 15 percent by 2012, and by the BLM's calculations, it is enough energy to power over 150,000 homes. While no large development on public lands is without impacts, we think the benefits of this one outweigh the negative impacts to wildlife and habitat.