

~~La Cuna de Aztlan~~ ~~Sacred Sites Protection Circle~~

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Frank McMenimen
BLM Project Manager
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1201 Bird Center Drive
Palm Springs California 92262

RE: Letter in Opposition of the Modified California NextEra Blythe Solar Project,
Meeting at Blythe City Hall, Blythe, California on March 5, 2014

Dear Mr. McMenimen:

We are totally perturbed by the California Energy Commission's recent decision of January 15, 2014 approving NextEra's Blythe solar project.

As stipulated in the Palo Verde Times newspaper, the Blythe Solar Power Amendment Committee said that the cumulative impacts that cannot be mitigated to less than significant levels are impacts to biological resources, cultural resources, land use, and visual resources. The CEC has now taken the same stance as the Genesis Solar Power's Attorney, Scott Galati, as stated in their defense against the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) preliminary injunction filing (TRO) against Genesis by allowing Genesis to continue its project at Ford Dry Lake. The Genesis attorney stated that **public interest in renewable energy was more important than preserving Native American Cultural Resources.**

We all know what happened at the Genesis Solar Site after Judge George H. Wu of the 9th District Federal Court denied the motion on June 28, 2012. During the construction, they committed one of the worst destructions of sacred sites and burials that were found just as the CRIT Elders had said were there. It is our recommendation that the BLM does not commit these same atrocities at the Blythe solar site.

The CEC's own cultural resources investigation had found an abundant of cultural resources as stipulated in their report. C-3 Cultural Resources Docket 09-AFC-8 C.3.1 Summary of conclusions dated 06/22/10 by Elizabeth A. Bagwell, Ph.D., RPA and Beverly E. Bastian: *Staff Finds that the GSEP construction impacts, when combined with impacts from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, contribute in a small but significant way to the cumulatively considerable adverse impacts for cultural resources at both the local I-10 Corridor and regional levels. **This analysis estimates that more than 800 sites within the I-10 Corridor and 17,000 sites within the Southern California Desert Region will potentially be destroyed. Mitigation can reduce the impact of the destruction, but not to a less-than-significant level.***

There has already been vast destruction by the Solar Millennium Company on the pristine desert site by the 300 foot wide transmission roadway, 5 miles long. At the end of the 5 mile roadway, there is 1 square mile of pristine desert leveled off.

At the meeting at Blythe City Hall in Blythe, California on March 5, 2014, it was stated by the NextEra representative that they are reducing the overall site acreage and also moving the transmission line roadway west

of the original roadway where the Kokopilli/Cicimtil geoglyph group have partially been destroyed. Though there will be a reduction of the acreage, the temple and other sacred sites that are located on the east portion of the proposed project will be destroyed such as the four circles that represent the four past suns of the Aztec Sunstone calendar. A large 10' by 10' eagle geoglyph that was located in the area can no longer be found. This eagle was one of the sites that Boma Johnson, the retired Yuma BLM archaeologist that is on our committee, would take the students from the Palo Verde College Indian Guides Student Program in the 70's to show them the sacred sites. This geoglyph eagle represents the eagle on the surface of earth and the large white limestone eagle (1/2 mile wide) that is on the Big Maria Mountains represents the cosmos as it lands on the peak of Granite Peak (Tamoanchan-where sky meets earth). This is the basis of the creation story as it is related by the Mexica codices and currently is represented in the Mexican flag. The creation story as it relates to this area is also told through the oral history of the tribes in the Colorado River Basin Valleys.

For the indigenous people, there would not be any authentic history if it wasn't backed up by the cosmic archetype. The visible part and the invisible of reality correspond mutually. All the geoglyphs and sacred sites have their duality in the cosmos.

The following is an excerpt of the book, *Tamoanchan/Tlalocan Places of Mist* based on the codices and written by Alfredo Lopez Austin that relates to Tamoanchan:

"The Earth and the Sky were created, from the body of Cipactli, and with them was also established, along with the great division of the feminine and the masculine of the cosmos, the four posts, represented by trees or gods, or men, were converted into the roads of the gods. They were the roads of the gods because through their hollow trunks flowed the opposite divine essence (man/sun and woman/earth) they flowed between the two halves of Cipactli."

Seeing the falling of the sky over the Earth, all four were ordered to make through its center of Earth, four roads to be able to enter and raise up the sky and to get help. Four men were created. One was called Cuauhtémoc; the other, Itzcoal; Izmalli; and the other, Tenexochilt. Cuauhtémoc is the southeast corner of the Nahui-Ollin for the four directions (swastika image). Cuauhtémoc's Nagualli(your animal spiritual representation) is the eagle during the descending Sun. The translation of Cuauhtli is Eagle and Temoc is descending. Cuauhtémoc means Descending Sun (Eagle) which is manifested by the sun descending on Eagle Mountain.

The Descending Sun when seen from the Ripley Intaglio during the Summer Solstice (June 21) sets on a large V that is on the southeast side of the Eagle Mountain range inside of Joshua Tree National Park. The V is the origin of Dragon Wash (the dragon represents Quetzalcoatl, the Plume Serpent). The Plume Serpent descends down to earth from the V where the sun sets.

The four corners of the base of the sky falling are shown in the Borgia Codex Plate 72, and its Earth's cosmic duality geographical site is Granite Peak. This is where sky meets earth and gives the image of the X or hourglass appearance. The top V of the X represents the cosmos and the upside down V of the X represents Granite Peak and Mother Earth.

During President Barack Obama's speech of January 28, 2014, he stated that "And while we are at it, I'll use my authority to protect more of our pristine federal lands for future generations." Also, 109 House Democratic members urged President Obama to protect National Monuments using the Antiquities Act.

The Obama administration is preparing to designate areas in New Mexico and California off-limits to development under its executive authority, a move that signals a bolder public-lands policy in the President's second term. One of the two sites, the nearly 500,000-acre Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks region near Las Cruces, N.M., is twice as large as the largest national monument established by President Obama. The other site is about 1,600 acres on California's central coast known as the Point Arena-Stornetta Public Lands.

We wholeheartedly support this effort by President Obama but would strongly encourage him to support the cultural resources that are related to the Native American creation story and support all the laws that have been approved by the United States government and the United Nations.

In the Smithsonian magazine of March, 2009, the featured article related to the must-see 10 endangered cultural treasures that included many of the sacred sites that should be preserved from all over the world. In the United States, they included Route Hwy 66 but no indigenous sacred sites.

The Blythe Solar Millennium Power Project is so close to the Palo Verde Valley that the orchards remaining near there are already being destroyed because water is no longer being used to irrigate them and is going to be used for the proposed solar power project instead. Due to the heat intensity of the project changing the atmospheric conditions, the agriculture will be affected more.

In a recent article regarding the Jenko Solar Project in China, the Chinese are setting an example in protesting against the large solar panel projects in their country because they have not only contaminated their water but also the climate change has ruined their agriculture industry. Apparently not even China is benefitting from these thousands of solar panel projects. The Jenko Solar Project is an excellent example of why we do not need these projects near agricultural land much less near the Colorado River where its water reserve in Lake Mead is barely 1/3 of its capacity and all of its water has already been allocated.

Currently California is suffering its worst drought since the records have been kept and this is a well-known fact. The Blythe Solar Power Project will drill wells from aquifers that lead to the Colorado River. The Colorado River Board of California has stipulated that all these aquifers within 50 miles go to the Colorado River and any water taken from these aquifers has to be approved by the Board of Directors.

On February 14, 2014, during his recent visit to Fresno, California, President Obama said he will direct federal facilities in California to curb water use, including a moratorium on new or unnecessary landscaping projects. Soitec Solar Development Project Company in Boulevard, California, found it had severely underestimated its water usage on the project and other high profile projects according to an East County magazine article by Mirian Rafferty. The solar power projects should be included in the moratorium because they require an abundance of water to function.

When the Blythe Natural Gas Plant was constructed, it destroyed 1,500 acres of citrus so they could obtain the water rights of those citrus orchards thus leaving about 550 citrus farm workers unemployed that worked with the Coachella Growers Citrus Company. Now the solar power projects are going to destroy all the existing citrus orchards for all the water rights causing further farm worker unemployment. These farm workers are all permanent residents of the Palo Verde Valley. Currently the Palo Verde Valley is suffering the highest unemployment rate in California with the exception of the Imperial and Yuma Valleys.

One of the most recognized butterflies is the Monarch Butterfly that has its massive migration from the Northern United States and Canada down to Michoacán in the winter. One of its migration routes is centered through the Colorado River/McCoy Valley and its representative is the Midland Mountain. The Monarchs, along with any other butterfly flying through the area will be completely destroyed as will the birds such as the eagles, herons, etc.

Last Spring, there were many complaints by the Mesa Verde residents of the bronchitis and other respiratory illnesses that related to the dust storms caused by the leveling of the pristine desert. Solar sites have been proposed all around the Mesa Verde area. Likewise, the suffering by the residents of East San Joaquin Valley parallel to I-5 north from Bakersfield to San Francisco, have been suffering grave Valley Fever. Inmates from the Correctional facilities in that area have died from Valley Fever which is being spread by the leveling of the land that was supposed to be farmed but was fallowed because of the lack of water. The fungus is carried by the dust of the fields that are fallowed.

The U.S. Government does not need to continue its manifest destiny policy of the 1900s. The Native American cultural cosmic tradition is still alive despite its 500 years of domination by the Spanish and English. We all know that the Taliban tried to destroy all remnants of the Buddha tradition in Afghanistan. In the United States, one of the most popular geoglyph images, the Kokopilli/Cicimiltl Twin Group of the Creator, recognized throughout the world especially the United States and Mexico is being threatened to be destroyed by the solar power companies.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has called for the USDA and the U.S. Forest Service to work more closely with tribal governments in the protection, respectful interpretation and appropriate access to Indian sacred sites. Vilsack said, "American Indian and Alaska Native values and culture have spirit and deserve to be honored and respected. By honoring and protecting sacred sites on national forests and grasslands, we foster improved tribal relationships and a better understanding of the Native people's deep reverence for natural resources and contributions to society."

We are also opposing to the construction of these solar power projects because of their gross violation to the following Indigenous, State, Federal and United Nations laws that support our demands and why these projects should not be constructed within sacred areas:

- **National Congress of American Indians:** Resolution #LNK-12-036, opposing the Department of Interior Fast-Track Policies of Renewable Energy Projects on Ancestral Homelands, June 17, 2012.
- **Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona: Resolution** 2012, opposing the Department of Interior Fast-Track Policies of Renewable Energy Projects on Ancestral Homelands, June 29, 2012. The Resolution specifies that whereas over 40 proposed solar and wind renewable energy projects are to be undertaken within a 50-mile radius of the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation which puts tens of thousands of acres of land within the ancestral territory homelands of CRIT as well as other Yuma tribes, at further risk of destruction.
- **Colorado River Indian Tribes Resolution and Letter to President Barack Obama:** opposing the construction of Solar Power Projects within 50-miles from the CRIT Reservation boundary of February 27, 2012.
- **United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People Resolution** of 2007: was adopted by the General Assembly during the 107th plenary meeting and was signed by President Barack Obama on December 15, 2010.
- **Native American Sacred Places**, March 6, 2003(S.B. 18)
- **Native American Sacred Lands Act**, June 11, 2003 (H.R. 2419)
- **The Sacred Land Protection Act**, July 18, 2002 (H.R. 5155)
- **The Native American Sacred Sites Protection Act**, February 22, 2002 (S.B. 1828)
- **Accommodations of Sacred Sites and Federal Land**, Signed by President Bill Clinton on May 24, 1996 (Executive Order 13007) This focuses on specific sites and Indian religion.
- **Native American Graves Protection & Repatriation Act** of 1990
- **Archeological Resources Protection Act** of 1979
- **American Indian Religious Freedom Act**, August 11, 1978
- **The Civil Right Act** of 1968
- **Antiquities Act** of 1906

We strongly urge that the BLM consider the above information and disapprove this notorious solar power project. It will behoove President Obama to continue his motivation and concern in protecting those sacred sites by enforcing the laws and establish a National Monument in the McCoy/Big Maria Mountains and Valleys.

Sincerely,

Alfredo Acosta Figueroa

Alfredo Acosta Figueroa
Elder/Historian/Chemehuevi Tribe Monitor

Patricia Robles

Patricia Robles
President of La Cuna de Aztlan Sacred Sites
Protection Circle

Enclosures included