

NEWS

From the Office of

Brad Mitzelfelt

Supervisor, First District
San Bernardino County

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For information, contact
Andy Silva (909) 387-4361
Cell (951) 237-4231
www.sbcounty.gov/mitzelfelt

Mitzelfelt Opposes Lifting of Moratorium on Solar Energy Applications

SAN BERNARDINO – The decision today by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to lift the moratorium on new applications for solar energy projects is “extremely disappointing,” San Bernardino County First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt said.

“All we are asking is that we slow down to make sure these projects don’t do irreparable harm to our shrinking desert,” said Mitzelfelt, who represents much of the Mojave Desert where scores of wind and solar energy projects have been proposed.

The BLM in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Energy just began work on a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement to review solar energy development in six western states.

Mitzelfelt supports the Programmatic EIS as the best way to take a broad overview of the challenges posed by developing these sprawling, land-intensive projects. The moratorium allowed the BLM some breathing room to develop policies and siting criteria to ensure that the proposed power plants do not do more harm than good.

Just in San Bernardino County, more than 50 applications for solar power plants that could cover as many as 800 square miles have been submitted to local BLM offices.

“At a time when we are trying to protect habitat, provide for recreation, maintain the expansive beauty of the desert while providing for responsible growth, not to mention the expansion of desert military bases, we cannot afford to surrender vast areas of public land to solar energy projects,” Mitzelfelt said. “We are not opposed to alternative energy; we just need to be careful and judicious when we are talking about taking away hundreds of square miles of land that belongs to the American people.”

The County recently entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the BLM for joint environmental review of alternative energy projects.

“I encourage the BLM to reconsider its decision so it can fulfill its responsibility to protect our public lands,” Mitzelfelt said.