Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for
Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States

- Establishes an initial set of 17 Solar Energy Zones on 285,000 acres across 6 Western States - Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah;

- Outlines a process for industry, the public and other interested stakeholders to propose new or expanded zones; efforts already underway include California's Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and the West Chocolate Mountains Renewable Energy Evaluation, Arizona's Restoration Energy Design Project, and other local planning efforts in Nevada and Colorado;

- Includes strong incentives for development within zones, including faster and easier permitting, improved mitigation strategies, and economic incentives;

- Sets a clear process that allows for development of well-sited projects on approximately19 million acres outside the zones;

- Protects natural and cultural resources by excluding 78.6 million acres from solar energy development;

- Identifies design features (best practices) for solar energy development to ensure the most environmentally responsible development and delivery;

- Establishes a framework for regional mitigation plans and a strategy for monitoring and adaptive management; the first mitigation pilot for the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone in Nevada is already underway;

- Recognizes the importance of bringing transmission to zones: in support of more detailed system-level analyses of transmission needs, the Bureau of Land Management is engaged in ongoing transmission planning efforts, including through the Transmission Expansion Planning Policy Committee and the Western Electricity Coordination Council's transmission study;

- Incorporates important feedback from interested stakeholders, including industry, conservationists, sportsmen, tribal, state and local governments. The BLM released the Draft Solar PEIS in December 2010, and in response to the over 80,000 comments received from cooperating agencies and key stakeholders, issued a Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS in October 2011. The BLM published the Final PEIS in July 2012.