

**QUARTZSITE SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**SCOPING SUMMARY REPORT**

*Prepared for:*



**U.S. Department of Energy  
Western Area Power Administration  
Desert Southwest Customer Service Region  
Phoenix, Arizona**

*Prepared by:*  
**URS Corporation**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

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BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
DOD	Department of Defense
DOE	Department of Energy
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
GIS	geographic information system
kV	kilovolt
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOI	Notice of Intent
Project	Quartzsite Solar Energy Project
QSE	Quartzsite Solar Energy, LLC
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
VRM	visual resource management
Western	Western Area Power Administration
WHA	Wildlife Habitat Management Area

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 OVERVIEW

The Western Area Power Administration (Western), an agency of the Department of Energy (DOE), is preparing an environmental impact statement (EIS) to identify the potential effects of Western's Federal action, the interconnection of the proposed Quartzsite Solar Energy Project (Project) to Western's electrical transmission system, as well as the potential effects of the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed Project. The EIS is being prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and associated regulations.

This report is a summary of the scoping process and results for the Quartzsite Solar Energy Project. Scoping is the first step and an integral part of the EIS process. It is "an early and open process for determining the issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action" (Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1501.7). During scoping, Western engaged potentially affected or interested Federal, State, and local agencies; American Indian tribes; and the public. Scoping commenced on January 14, 2010, with publication of a notice of intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* (Appendix A), and concluded on February 16, 2010.

### 1.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION

Quartzsite Solar Energy, LLC (QSE), a wholly owned subsidiary of SolarReserve, a privately held, independent power company, proposes to construct and operate a 100-megawatt solar generating facility in La Paz County, Arizona, on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Yuma Field Office. QSE has applied to Western to interconnect the proposed project to Western's electrical transmission system. Because interconnection of the proposed project would incorporate a major new generation resource into Western's electrical transmission system, Western has determined that an EIS is required to comply with NEPA and DOE NEPA implementing procedures. BLM is participating as a cooperating agency during preparation of the EIS because QSE has submitted a right-of-way application to construct and operate the facility and associated transmission line on BLM-administered land. BLM also is considering a right-of-way application for the substation, which would be owned, operated, and maintained by Western.

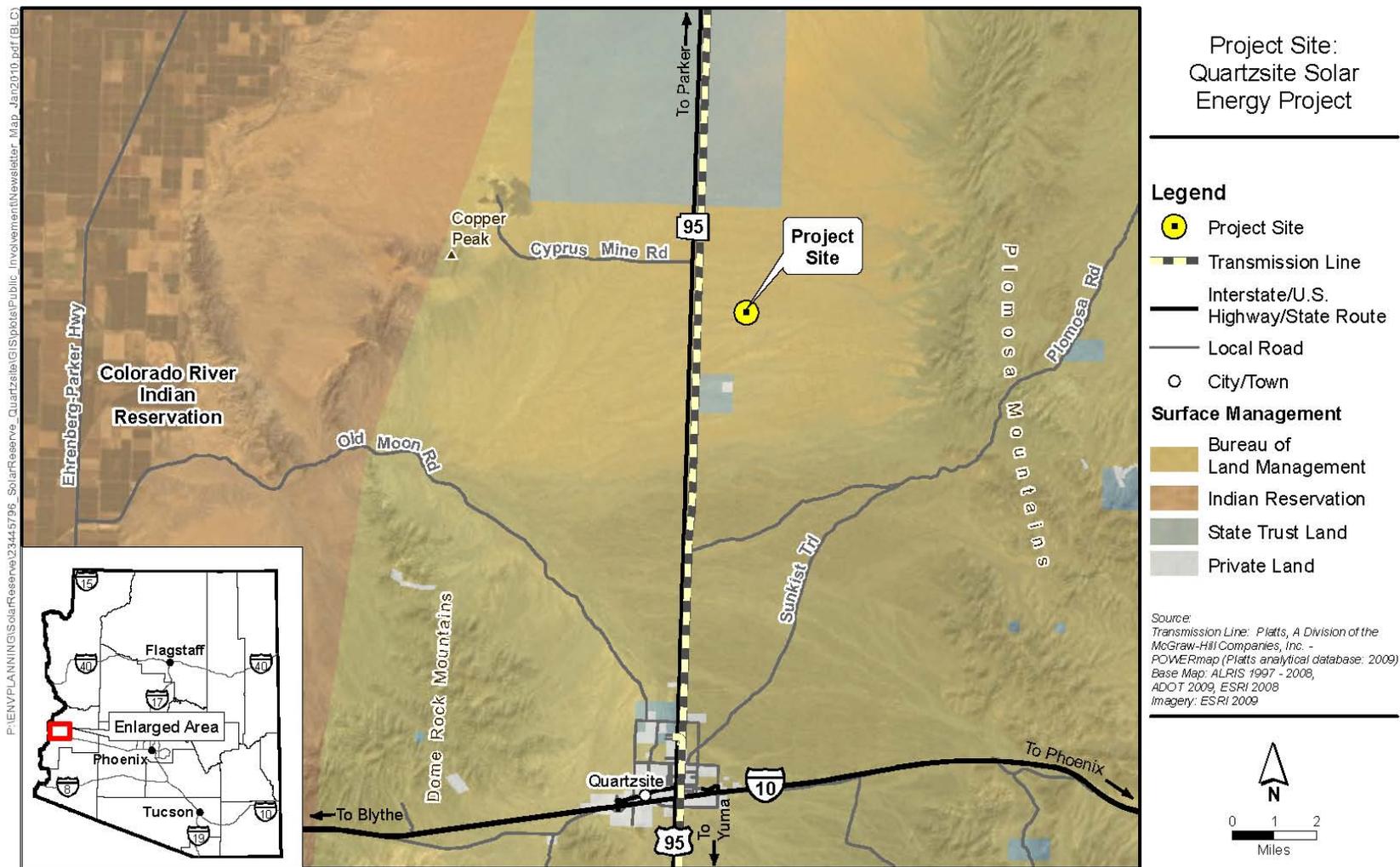
The primary components of the proposed project include:

- Up to 17,500 mirrors (heliostats)
- 538-foot-tall tower topped with a 100-foot-tall solar receiver and maintenance crane (total height of structure would be 653 feet)
- 230-kilovolt (kV) substation
- 230-kV transmission line that would extend approximately 0.5 mile from the solar facility boundary to the new substation
- Permanent and temporary access roads
- Operations and maintenance building
- Temporary laydown area

### **1.3 PROJECT LOCATION**

The facility would be located approximately 10 miles north of Quartzsite, Arizona (Map 1-1). QSE's right-of-way application to BLM includes 26,273 acres; project facilities would be constructed on about 1,450 acres of BLM-administered land. Because the project is at the preliminary project design stage, evaluating a larger area will allow QSE the flexibility to adjust the location of project facilities based on the results of environmental studies and determine an adequate buffer between project facilities and any adjacent or sensitive land uses or resources.

## MAP 1-1 PROJECT LOCATION



## 2.0 SCOPING PROCESS

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This section provides a summary of the objectives of scoping and a description of the scoping process and agency coordination for the Quartzsite Solar Energy Project EIS.

### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the scoping process include:

- Coordinate with affected Federal, State, and local agencies, American Indian tribes, and the public to:
  - Invite agencies to participate as cooperators in the EIS process
  - Establish a process to integrate and expedite environmental reviews
  - Establish the planning and decision-making schedule
- Determine the scope of the project and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS, including the range of alternatives and impacts.
- Identify:
  - Issues that have been covered by prior environmental review and can be eliminated from detailed study
  - Any environmental assessments and other EISs that are being or will be prepared that are related to but are not part of the scope of the EIS under consideration
  - Other environmental review or consultation requirements (e.g., Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act [NHPA]) so the required analyses and studies can be prepared and integrated with the EIS

### 2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SCOPING PROCESS

The following section describes the public participation process.

#### 2.2.1 Announcements

##### 2.2.1.1 Notice of Intent

The public was notified of the project and upcoming scoping meetings through the NOI published in the *Federal Register* on January 14, 2010 (Appendix A). The notice announced the intent to prepare an EIS and provided the specific dates, locations, and times of the public scoping meetings. In addition, the notice provided project information including a description of proposed facilities and project location, information on how to submit comments and why they are important, and contact information for Western.

##### 2.2.1.2 Newsletter and Poster

A newsletter announcing the scoping meetings was distributed to approximately 130 agencies, elected officials, potentially interested American Indian tribes, and special interest groups on January 12, 2010. The newsletter also was distributed to right-of-way holders and mining claimants within the right-of-way application area. In addition to meeting information, the newsletter also provided a general description of the project, and instructions on how to submit scoping comments.

The scoping meetings also were announced in a poster distributed by mail to libraries, community/senior centers, and other town or public facilities in Quartzsite and Parker, Arizona. The poster was intended to increase public awareness of the scoping meetings, particularly in Quartzsite, where the population is largely seasonal and may not have been effectively notified through direct mail or newspaper coverage. The newsletter, poster, and poster distribution list are included in Appendix A.

### 2.2.1.3 Media Contacts

Information was provided to the media to provide broad public notice of the project and upcoming scoping meetings. A display advertisement providing the project location, meeting information, and project website was published in the *Yuma Daily Sun* (January 11, 2010), *Parker Pioneer* (January 13, 2010), and *Palo Verde Valley Times/Quartzsite Times* (January 13, 2010) approximately two weeks prior to the scoping meetings. A press release was distributed on January 21, 2010 to local newspapers and radio stations in addition to county officials and other Federal agency representatives. A copy of the display advertisement, media outlets that the press release was sent to, and the press release are included in Appendix A.

### 2.2.2 Public Scoping Meetings

Three public scoping meetings were held (Table 2-1). Attendees were asked to sign in, and each person was provided with a project Fact Sheet, newsletter, and comment form to provide written comments during the meeting or by mail. Each meeting included a brief presentation during which QSE representatives described the project technology and Western discussed the NEPA process and purpose of the EIS. An open house format was held before and after the presentation. During the open house, attendees could browse informational display boards positioned around the room and speak informally to representatives from Western, BLM, QSE, and URS Corporation (the contractor assisting with the EIS).

**TABLE 2-1  
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING ATTENDANCE**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Attendance*</b>
Yuma, Arizona – BLM Yuma Field Office	January 26, 2010	8
Parker, Arizona – Blue Water Casino	January 27, 2010	4
Quartzsite, Arizona – Town Hall	January 28, 2010	30

\*Note: Attendance totals are based on meeting sign-in sheets. Not all meeting attendees signed in.

Questions and comments were received during and after the presentation, and informally during the open house. However, attendees were encouraged to submit written comments to ensure issues would be accurately stated and considered in the scoping report. Copies of scoping meeting materials including sign-in and comment form examples, fact sheet, QSE and Western presentations, and display boards are provided in Appendix B.

## 2.3 AGENCY COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION

The BLM has “jurisdiction by law”<sup>1</sup> for the project and the BLM Yuma Field Office is participating as a cooperating agency during preparation of the EIS. Other agencies at the Federal, State, or local level may participate as cooperating agencies. Cooperating agencies typically are affected by the project or have special expertise with respect to environmental issues that will be considered in the EIS.

<sup>1</sup> 40 CFR 1508.15 states “Jurisdiction by law means agency authority to approve, veto, or finance all or part of the proposal.” BLM must approve or deny the right-of-way application to construct and operate the project, which would be entirely located on BLM-administered land.

In addition to inviting agencies to participate as cooperators during preparation of the EIS, Western will coordinate with other interested agencies throughout the development of the EIS to identify issues and collect relevant data. In January 2010, Western distributed letters to potentially interested agencies to notify them of the project (Appendix C). The letter included a copy of the project newsletter and provided interested agencies with the chance to request an individual meeting during scoping. The letter was distributed to approximately 27 agencies and elected officials; no agency responses or meeting requests were received.

### **2.3.1 Tribal Consultation**

In recognition of the relationship of American Indian tribes with the U.S. Government, agencies are to consult with tribal governments on a government-to-government level. Tribes were notified officially of the proposed project through a tribal consultation letter sent in September 14, 2009 (Appendix C). The letter described the proposed project and announced a tribal consultation meeting and site visit on September 22, 2009. Members of the Cocopah, Hualapai, and Colorado River Indian tribes attended the consultation meeting and site visit. On October 28, 2009, Western also had a meeting with the Quechan Tribe regarding the proposed project.

Consultations with tribes that have an interest in the project will continue throughout the EIS process. Consultations with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA (Section 4.1.1) will be coordinated with tribal consultations, as appropriate.

## 3.0 SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a summary of agency concerns that were identified prior to public scoping and of public scoping comments received, including the method used to organize and analyze comments; how many comments were received; issues identified during scoping; and issues that will not be addressed in the EIS with justification as to why they will not be addressed. The scoping comments documented in this report were received or postmarked by February 16, 2010.

### 3.2 AGENCY-IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Western and BLM identified issues and resource concerns independent of the public and agency scoping process to help define issues that should be considered or studies that should be conducted for the EIS. The issues identified are summarized below.

#### 3.2.1 Western Area Power Administration

Western identified the following issues for consideration in the EIS. These issues were summarized in the NOI to help the public frame scoping comments.

- Impacts on protected, threatened, endangered, or sensitive species of animals or plants
- Impacts on migratory birds
- Introduction of noxious weeds, invasive and non-native species
- Impacts on recreation and transportation
- Impacts on land use, wilderness, farmlands, and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Impacts on cultural or historic resources and tribal values
- Impacts on human health and safety
- Impacts on air, soil, and water resources (including air quality and surface water impacts)
- Visual impacts
- Socioeconomic impacts and disproportionately high and adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations

#### 3.2.2 Bureau of Land Management

BLM issues and concerns were identified independent of public or agency scoping comments based on a review of the Resource Management Plan and input from BLM resource specialists. In addition to those issues identified by the public and Western, BLM identified the following concerns:

- Dunes Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHA) – The RMP states “The principle of managing this WHA would be that the amount of human disruption should decrease in proportion to the significance of the sand dune features, with more intensive use directed to sand dune areas of lesser significance or sensitivity.”
- Visual Resources – The project is located in a Visual Resource Management Classification three (VRM Class III) area. VRM Class III is defined “to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Visual

resources should be evaluated to see how the project may affect the character of the landscape from key observation points.”

### 3.3 COMMENT ORGANIZATION

The comment forms, electronic (e-) mail messages, faxes, and mailed letters received at scoping meetings and in writing through February 16, 2010 were reviewed, documented, and entered into a database. Using the experience and professional judgment of the study team, the comments were organized according to 15 major issue categories as they relate to the EIS. These 15 main issues can generally be categorized as relating to actions or project alternatives, or to environmental conditions and potential impacts. The project description, need, and alternatives will be discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of the EIS, respectively. Comments regarding environmental conditions and impacts will be considered by Western in developing the scope of EIS technical studies, which will be described in Chapters 3 (Affected Environment) and 4 (Environmental Consequences) of the EIS. The 15 issue categories are as follows.

**Actions and Alternatives:** Includes comments about various aspects and components of the proposed project, as well as suggestions for and concerns about alternative facilities. Comments also identified topics relative to the environmental studies and EIS preparation, including public review opportunities. Identified issues relate to the following:

- Project Description
- Project Purpose and Need
- Project Alternatives
- EIS Process

**Environmental Impacts:** Includes comments about the project’s potential impacts on natural, human, and cultural resources, and about social and economic concerns. Topic categories include the following:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources (Vegetation and Wildlife)
- Cultural Resources
- Cumulative Effects
- Geology and Minerals
- Hazardous Materials and Safety
- Land Use, Recreation, and Transportation
- Noise
- Socioeconomics
- Visual Resources
- Water Resources

### 3.4 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

A total of 21 comments were received. Within the 21 comment submissions entered into the database, 239 issues were identified and categorized into the 15 main issue categories, as shown in Table 3-1. If a comment mentioned multiple issues or the same issue multiple times, each statement was categorized into the appropriate issue category. These comments and issues are summarized in Section 3.5 along with a sample of representative quotations.

**TABLE 3-1  
SUMMARY OF TOTAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

Main Issue	Total Issues Identified in Comment Submissions	Percent Based on Total Issues Identified*
Project Description	19	7.9
Project Need	8	3.3
Project Alternatives	30	12.6
NEPA Process	7	2.9
Air Quality	14	5.9
Biological Resources	59	24.7
Cultural Resources	14	5.9
Cumulative Effects	13	5.4
Geology and Minerals	4	1.7
Hazardous Materials and Safety	13	5.4
Land Use, Recreation, and Transportation	8	3.3
Noise	0	0
Socioeconomics	4	1.7
Visual Resources	8	3.3
Water Resources	38	15.9
<b>Total Issues Identified in Comments</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>100</b>

As noted in the table above, biological resources was the most frequently mentioned main issue, appearing in 24.7 percent of total issues received. Many comments related to biological resources were received from special interest groups and agencies. Water resources (including the facility water use and supply) and project alternatives were also frequently mentioned in comments. However, all comments receive the same level of consideration; the decision-making process is not influenced by the frequency of a specific issue.

### 3.5 ISSUES IDENTIFIED DURING SCOPING

NEPA requires Federal agencies to focus their analysis and documentation on the significant issues related to a proposed action. Significant issues serve as the basis for developing and comparing alternatives. The following section provides a summary of significant issues identified during scoping. Representative quotations from written scoping comments have been provided to demonstrate the variety of comments received. These issues will be considered and analyzed in the EIS. Issues that will not be addressed in the EIS are identified under Section 3.6.

### **3.5.1 Actions and Alternatives**

#### **3.5.1.1 Project Description**

Most comments in this category were questions requesting further information on the project facilities, including access roads, security fencing, transmission lines, and aspects of construction (such as schedule).

- “What is the estimated time when construction is done?”
- “Will the project take up the entire 1,450 acres or only a portion of it?”
- “Ensure that new transmission purported to carry renewable energy must not instead turn out to be a major conduit for coal power.”
- “What size city would power generated by plant support?”
- “[What is the] type and height of fencing?”

#### **3.5.1.2 Project Purpose and Need**

Few comments were received in this category. While some comments related to the potential consumers of energy to be produced by the plant, other comments were received from agencies in the context of how the project need should be discussed in the Draft EIS.

- “Ensure that any new transmission built is truly needed.”
- “The DEIS should discuss how the project will assist the state in meeting its renewable energy portfolio standards and goals.”
- “EIS must also analyze and disclose how much of the energy generated at the proposed location will be used in Arizona.”

#### **3.5.1.3 Project Alternatives**

Comments received on project alternatives suggested the evaluation of other sites (30 percent), including previously disturbed sites or sites that would avoid the use of public land. Other comments in this category included suggesting the consideration of other project configurations or capacities, other solar technologies, and the use of dry cooling rather than wet cooling.

- “We suggest an alternative that looks at dry cooling.”
- “We request that the EIS analyze ... a private lands alternative under which the project is built on private lands only.”
- “The DEIS should expand the alternatives analysis to include consideration of residential and wholesale distributed generation as an alternative.”
- “NEPA requires evaluation of reasonable alternatives, including those that may not be within the jurisdiction of the lead agency (40 CFR Section 1502.14(c)). A robust range of alternatives will include options for avoiding significant environmental impacts. The DEIS should provide a clear discussion of the reasons for the elimination of alternatives which are not evaluated in detail. Reasonable alternatives should include, but are not necessarily limited to, alternative sites, capacities, and technologies as well as alternatives that identify environmentally sensitive areas or areas with potential use conflicts.”

- “The alternatives analysis should include a discussion of ... generating technologies including different types of solar energy technologies, and describe the benefits associated with the proposed technology.”

#### **3.5.1.4 EIS Process**

Comments in this category were received from agencies or special interest groups providing recommendations for the level of study that should be completed for the EIS, or how impacts should be identified and considered. No individuals provided comments regarding the scoping or EIS process.

- “BLM is required to consider measures to mitigate potential environmental consequences in its NEPA analysis.”
- “EPA recommends that Western consider adopting a formal adaptive management plan to evaluate and monitor impacted resources and ensure the successful implementation of mitigation measures.”
- “The DEIS should consider the direct and indirect effects of the inter-connecting transmission line for the proposed project.”

### **3.5.2 Environmental Impacts**

#### **3.5.2.1 Air Quality**

Comments in this category were received from special interest groups or agencies with permitting or review authority (i.e., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA]). Several comments related to potential impacts during construction (e.g., fugitive dust) and how climate issues should be considered and addressed in the EIS.

- “When these soils are disturbed, the desert land generates more dust.”
- “The DEIS should specify the emission sources by pollutant from mobile sources, stationary sources, and ground disturbance. This source specific information should be used to identify appropriate mitigation measures and areas in need of the greatest attention.”
- “BLM must consider the impacts of each proposed alternative with respect to global climate change in its NEPA reviews. In addition to addressing climate change in the cumulative effects analysis, the EIS should address the carbon footprint of the project and any losses to carbon storage and sequestration it will engender.”

#### **3.5.2.2 Biological Resources (Vegetation and Wildlife)**

Comments on biological resources mentioned general impacts to wildlife, habitat, and vegetation, as well as impacts to specific species (e.g., desert tortoise). Other comments were related to recommendations for surveys, monitoring, and mitigation, including reclamation of areas temporarily disturbed during construction. Comments were also received on the potential spread of invasive weeds during construction or operation.

- “What dangers are posed to wildlife from the power tower and how will these be mitigated?”
- “The DEIS should discuss the potential impacts on avian species due to collisions with the power tower and/or heliostats and whether there is potential for the concentrating solar rays to burn avian species in flight.”
- “New transmission line projects have the potential to...placing wide swaths of habitat at risk, and greatly increase degradation and fragmentation of habitats and important wild land areas.”

- “Construction may also require the use of temporary roads that will require extensive rehabilitation if they are not to become permanent intrusions on the landscape.”
- “Construction should be shifted away from key washes which are critical for both desert plants and wildlife.”
- “The EIS should carefully consider how invasive and non-native plants shall be managed and controlled at the proposed site.”
- “A thorough survey of the site should be undertaken to determine location of tortoise burrows. During construction, regular surveys should be conducted to ensure that tortoises are not crushed by heavy equipment.”
- “The draft EIS should identify the nature of the impacts to sensitive, threatened and endangered species.”
- “The project site is located within the Dunes Wildlife Habitat Management Area, which should be managed to protect wildlife and habitat. However, construction and maintenance of the solar field will greatly disturb wildlife and will degrade or destroy available habitat for most species.”

### 3.5.2.3 Cultural Resources

Comments in this category were received from agencies or tribes requesting consultation or coordination on the project and noting that impacts to archaeological and historic resources should be considered in the EIS. Archaeological resources and historic properties will be addressed through the consultation with the Arizona SHPO, under Section 106 of the NHPA and the results of the consultation will be documented in the EIS.

- “Building new transmission lines through previously undisturbed areas could expose cultural resources to looters.”
- “Class III (100 percent) cultural resources survey and report needs to be completed and reviewed by tribes.”
- “EIS should discuss and analyze impacts to cultural and paleontological resources. The areas near the Colorado River are particularly of interest for large-scale glyphs.”
- “The DEIS should describe the process and outcome of government-to-government consultation between Western and each of the tribal governments within the project area, issues that were raised (if any), and how those issues were addressed in the selection of the proposed alternative.”

### 3.5.2.4 Cumulative Effects

Many comments received regarding cumulative effects referenced other proposed solar or renewable energy projects, both in the local area and on public land. Some comments were also received on the consideration of growth inducing effects of proposed energy projects in the cumulative effects analysis.

- “EIS must consider the cumulative effects of this project in combination with all the other consumptive uses that are occurring on these public lands including livestock grazing, off road vehicle activity, mining, and other solar projects.”
- “The project will also facilitate and will act cumulatively with the many other energy developments that are planned for the area including utility-scale solar energy plants.”

- “As an indirect result of providing additional power, it can be anticipated that this project will allow for development and population growth to occur in those areas that receive the generated electricity. The DEIS should describe the reasonably foreseeable future land use and associated impacts that will result from the additional power supply.”

### **3.5.2.5 Geology, Minerals, and Soils**

Comments in this category generally requested that the potential impact to desert soils and the potential for erosion be considered in the EIS. One comment was received questioning the presence of any mining claims in the project area.

- “Desert soils are particularly fragile and development can have significant impact ... Impacts to the soils should be evaluated in the NEPA process as should the mitigation of those impacts. Where possible, this project should avoid sensitive soils.”
- “Soils may become eroded or compacted through construction, which can impact water quality as well as habitats of numerous species.”

### **3.5.2.6 Hazardous Materials and Safety**

Comments in this category included those regarding public and worker safety, fire hazard (three comments), and air safety (one comment). Some comments questioned what materials that would be stored on site or discharged from the facility into evaporation ponds.

- “The DEIS should discuss each alternative's potential to impact air traffic and safety in the vicinity of the proposed project.”
- “What are the operating safety requirements being imposed on this facility to insure environmental and resident safety?”
- “This plan [for weed control on site] should include mitigation of fire hazards on the site.”
- “This [reflection from tower] will be very dangerous for people driving nearby on highway 95.”

### **3.5.2.7 Land Use, Recreation, and Transportation**

Comments in this category included those regarding adjacent land uses, recreation, and transportation. Half of the comments focused on site access and potential impacts to traffic, including the potential for increased traffic during construction.

- “Construction traffic has potential to affect operations at the traffic interchange and along the state highway. This is especially true as current traffic on SR 95 sometimes approaches a continuous stream of recreational vehicles in the winter.”
- “Indirect impacts from increased access to lands near powerlines, such as increased illegal off-road vehicle use, can damage multiple resources.”
- “Move it to an area where people don’t recreate, ride, hunt, or hike.”

### **3.5.2.8 Socioeconomics**

Only four comments were received in this category. Three of those comments were regarding employment, including how many employees would be needed during construction and operation and if QSE would provide training in the Quartzsite-Parker area. One agency comment noted that environmental justice should be considered.

- “How many employees during construction? How many employees after completion?”
- “The DEIS should include an evaluation of environmental justice populations within the geographic scope of the project. If such populations exist, the DEIS should address the potential for disproportionate adverse impacts to minority and low-income populations, and the approaches used to foster public participation by these populations. Assessment of the project's impact on minority and low-income populations should reflect coordination with those affected populations.”

### 3.5.2.9 Visual Resources

Comments on visual resources focused on the visibility of project facilities, based on the height and reflection from the central tower. However, some comments also were received on potential visual impacts of the transmission lines.

- “This [reflection] will be very dangerous for people driving nearby on highway 95. Not to mention be very irritating to your eyes if you live in Quartzsite or are a winter visitor camped out nearby.”
- “The EIS must also consider the aesthetic and scenic impacts of such large-scale vertical development in this otherwise undeveloped part of the state.”
- “A tower that is 653 feet tall will defiantly be able to be seen from Quartzsite and possibly from Parker too.”

### 3.5.2.10 Water Resources

Most comments in this category (37 percent) were regarding the project's water use and supply. Agencies with permitting or review authority (e.g., Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, EPA, and Bureau of Reclamation) also provided comments regarding water resource studies that should be included in the EIS or other permits that might be required.

- “The NEPA analysis should include information on how much water the plant is expected to use on an annual basis, where the company will obtain the water, and the impacts of using that water.”
- “Soils may become eroded or compacted through construction, which can impact water quality.”
- “Include any information on how the plant proposes to reuse its water and manage its waste stream.”
- “The proposed project area is located within Reclamation's lower Colorado River project corridor. WAPA must ensure a water right is available for the taking of any groundwater and if any transmission lines and/or new access roads cross over Reclamation lands or facilities, Reclamation must be notified.”

## 3.6 ISSUES OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE EIS

Some suggestions may be considered outside of the scope of this EIS if the issue 1) relates to facilities not included in this project, 2) is not within the jurisdiction of Western to resolve, 3) suggests alternatives that would not meet or respond to the purpose and need, 4) cannot be reasonably addressed within the scope of this process, or 5) is being addressed through a separate NEPA process.

For example, comments that offer opinions or position statements, such as indicating that project facilities are ugly, would not be addressed as these statements are not based on anticipated environmental effects and may be too broad for analysis of specific effects.

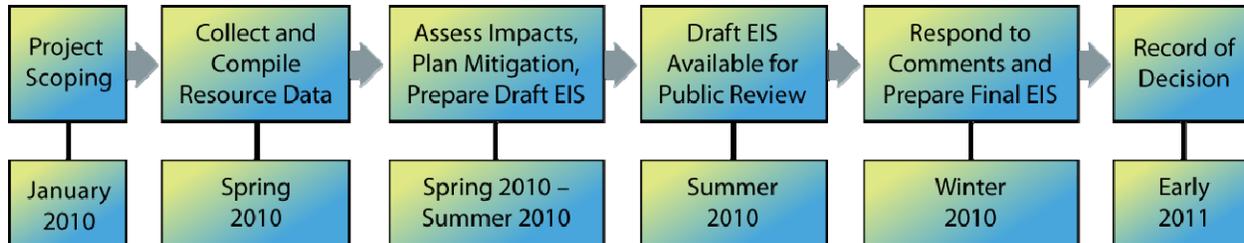
In addition, it would be beyond the scope of agency authority to dictate which market should be served by the project. Although it is possible to discuss potential markets for the power on a regional basis based on load forecasts and other industry data, discussion of specific purchase power agreements for this facility or how the facility may affect utility rates would be speculative at this time and could not be reasonably addressed in this EIS.

Some alternatives may not address the purpose and need for the project and would not be addressed in the EIS. For example, sites on private land or distributed generation (e.g., rooftop solar installations) would not meet the purpose of increasing renewable energy on public land or of responding to the application for right-of-way that has been submitted to BLM and would not be analyzed in the EIS.

## 4.0 SUMMARY OF FUTURE STEPS IN THE EIS PROCESS

Preparing an EIS requires a team of interdisciplinary resource specialists to complete each step. An important part of the NEPA process is engaging the public and relevant agencies from the earliest stages of and throughout preparation of the EIS to address issues, comments, and concerns. The steps of the EIS process and agency authority and decisions to be made are described below; Figure 4-1 provides a summary of the EIS process and schedule.

**FIGURE 4-1  
EIS PROCESS FLOW CHART**



### 4.1 IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

Issues were identified through scoping. The scoping period and the issues identified are documented in this Scoping Report, which is also available on the Western project website ([www.wapa.gov/transmission/quartzsitesolar.htm](http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/quartzsitesolar.htm)).

Western will continue to update the public about project status through the project website and informational mailings. The mailing list for distribution of future newsletters and other information will be supplemented throughout the project to include individuals who attend public meetings, submit comments, or request to be added to the mailing list. Requests to be included on the mailing list can be provided to either Western or BLM through written correspondence, email, or the project website.

During the EIS process, various agency consultation efforts will occur related to environmental and archaeological resources or historic properties potentially affected by the proposed project. Agency consultation is an ongoing effort throughout the EIS; more agencies may be consulted to help characterize the sensitivity of resources to project activities as well as to help determine mitigation measures to ensure that effects are minimized. The following sections discuss archaeological and biological resource consultation efforts.

#### 4.1.1 Arizona State Historic Preservation Office

Section 106 consultation with the SHPO is required by the NHPA (Title 16 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] Section [§] 470 *et seq.*) and will be formally initiated later in the process. Section 106 stipulates that Federal agencies responsible for planning and implementing undertakings consult with the appropriate SHPO and other interested parties to determine if the undertaking would affect historic properties, and consider measures to avoid, reduce, or mitigate any identified adverse effects. Historic properties are districts, archaeological sites, buildings, structures, and objects included in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Western will continue to consult with the Arizona SHPO throughout the EIS process. Section 106 also requires that Western involve the public when accounting for the effects of the proposed project on historic properties; this public involvement process is being coordinated with the EIS public involvement activities to satisfy the requirements of both laws.

#### **4.1.2 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is required by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*) prior to initiation of a project that may affect any federally listed species. The proposed Project is considered a major Federal action and, in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, consultation will be initiated. If required, a biological assessment will be completed in coordination with USFWS prior to issuing the Final EIS.

#### **4.1.3 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

Coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is required to complete a jurisdictional delineation to formally define whether washes in the study area are jurisdictional waters of the United States, identify permit requirements under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), and mitigate potential impacts as the design of the proposed project goes forward. Initial consultations regarding CWA requirements will occur, and will facilitate future coordination and permitting activities as the project moves forward.

### **4.2 DATA INFORMATION AND COLLECTION**

Much of the data and information, which form the baseline resource inventory, will be compiled and used from existing data on file with Western, at the BLM Yuma Field Office, BLM Arizona State Office, or through other local agencies and academic institutions. Other data and information will be obtained from current studies being conducted by Western and BLM and through relevant sources to update and/or supplement existing data. As available, data included in BLM's Programmatic EIS on Solar Energy Development on BLM-Administered Lands in the Western United States (a draft is anticipated in August 2010) and the BLM Yuma Field Office Resource Management Plan will be used during preparation of this EIS and in the analysis of resources and project facilities.

Data include published and unpublished reports, maps, and digital format files used in a geographic information system (GIS). Generally, the resources and resource uses to be addressed include the following:

- Land use (including grazing)
- Recreation and access
- Special management areas ( including Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Special Recreation Management Areas, Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, and Wilderness Study Areas)
- Ground- and surface-water resources
- Climate and air quality
- Biological resources (including vegetation, wildlife, special status species, and noxious weeds and invasive species)
- Geology, soils, and minerals
- Noise
- Archaeological resources, historic properties, and paleontological resources
- Visual resources

- Social and economic conditions
- Environmental justice
- Public health and safety, hazardous materials and waste

During the data collection step of the process, Western will initiate specific coordination with agencies, including the USFWS for Section 7 consultation and SHPO for Section 106 consultation, to ensure these processes are completed in conjunction with the EIS process. In addition, a summary of all tribal coordination and consultation will be included in Chapter 5, Consultation and Coordination, of the Draft EIS.

#### **4.3 ASSESS IMPACTS AND PLAN MITIGATION**

The impacts that could result from implementing the project or any of the alternatives will be analyzed and measures to mitigate those impacts will be identified.

#### **4.4 DRAFT EIS AND PUBLIC REVIEW**

A summary of the scoping process, data collection efforts, and the findings of the impact assessment and mitigation planning will be documented in a Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will be made available for public review, which is expected to be in summer 2010. The availability of the Draft EIS will be announced in the *Federal Register* and advertised in local media. Public comments will be accepted for a minimum of 45 days, during which time a public hearing will be held to receive comments on the adequacy of the Draft EIS.

#### **4.5 PREPARE FINAL EIS AND ISSUE RECORD OF DECISION**

Western will review comments received on the Draft EIS and prepare responses to each. All comments and responses will be incorporated into the Final EIS.

The Final EIS also will be made available for the public to review for a period of 30 days, estimated for early 2011. The availability of the Final EIS will be announced in the *Federal Register* and advertised in local media. Following the 30-day period, Western will address any protests and/or issue a Record of Decision for the interconnection request, likely in spring 2011. BLM will issue a separate Record of Decision for the right-of-way to construct the project on BLM-administered land.

#### **4.6 AGENCY AUTHORITIES AND DECISIONS TO BE MADE**

Prior to and during the scoping process, Western anticipated the actions that would need to be addressed in the EIS, and decisions related to those actions. Using the input from scoping, Western will conduct the environmental analysis to address the identified issues and concerns. The analysis will then be used by Western and BLM to make decisions on whether to grant the interconnection request and right-of-way, respectively, for the proposed solar generating project. Decisions from other agencies at the Federal, State, and local level also will be required. Table 4-1 represents a preliminary list of likely decisions and actions required for each component of the proposed project.

**TABLE 4-1  
POTENTIAL AGENCY DECISIONS AND ACTIONS**

Agency	Permit/Approval Required
<b>Federal</b>	
Bureau of Land Management	Right-of-way grant – Notice to Proceed and accompanying NEPA review
U.S. Department of Defense	DOD R-2508 Complex Sustainability Office – Review and Approval. Review project and potential impact on military overflights and operations.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Endangered Species Act, Section 7 consultation (potentially required); biological assessment/opinion (as necessary)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	CWA, Section 404/401 Permit for impacts to waters of the U.S., wetlands, and water crossings (potentially required)
Federal Aviation Administration	Notice of Construction or Alteration pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 44718; Determination of No Hazard
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), compliance with Section 110 of NHPA
<b>State</b>	
Arizona Corporation Commission	Certificate of Environmental Compatibility for generating facility and transmission line
Arizona State Historic Preservation Office	Consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Consultation related to state protected species
Arizona Department of Environmental Quality	Arizona Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit for discharge related to construction site of over one acre (CWA Section 402); General Storm Water Permit
Arizona Department of Transportation	Encroachment Permit, Oversize Load Permit

Note: The above list is representative and may not include all permits and approvals required for construction and operation of the facility.