

Remarks to the Solar Power International Nokia Theater, Los Angeles, California

Wednesday, October 13 Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar

Good morning!

Welcome to Solar Power International. And welcome to a key chapter in America's New Energy Frontier as we move forward to stand up the largest solar projects in the world, right here in the United States!

I want to thank Rhone Resch for his kind introduction. I also want to thank the Solar Electric Power Association (SEPA) and Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) for hosting this event.

It's an honor to be here. Being at the largest solar conference and expo in North America gives you a real sense of possibility and promise. Just look around the exhibit floor at the pace at which your technologies are advancing. Or listen to the jobs report following my remarks to feel the momentum of this industry.

Or better yet: look at the large-scale solar projects we at the Department of the Interior have approved for construction in the past two weeks alone. They are the firsts of their kind on public lands and some will be among the largest solar projects in the world.

In Imperial County, California, we've approved Tessera Solar's 709-megawatt Imperial Valley solar project.

Imperial Valley will create more than 900 jobs, and it will be the first to make use of SunCatcher technology on public lands.

In San Bernardino County, we've approved Chevron Energy's 45-megawatt Lucerne Valley solar project. It is the first large-scale solar project to use photovoltaic panels on public lands.

Also in California – not far from Las Vegas – we have approved the 370-megawatt Ivanpah solar project by BrightSource Energy. Ivanpah, which will create more than 1,000 jobs during peak construction and another 100 in operations and maintenance, will be the first solar project on public lands to use "power tower" technology.

And today, at the end of my remarks, I will sign off on the first large-scale solar project ever to be approved for construction on public lands in Nevada. That project is the Silver State Solar Project by First Solar. It will supply more than 15,000 homes in Clark County, Nevada, with renewable power.

Combined, the four projects add up to nearly 1200 megawatts of power. That's 1200 more megawatts than have ever been built on public lands before.

And we're not done yet. Our work has just begun. These projects are milestones in our energy future. They show what great strides we are making through innovation and technology. And they reflect President Obama's focus and commitment to standing up America's renewable energy economy!

Under the leadership of President Obama, the renewable energy world is opening a new frontier. Thanks to the relentless efforts of my Deputy Secretary David Hayes, Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Wilma Lewis, Director of the Bureau of Land Management Bob Abbey, my Counselor for Energy Steve Black, and countless others, the Department of the Interior is resolute and determined to secure a safer, more sustainable energy future for our nation.

We do so because we can't afford to remain so dependent on foreign oil. We do so because we can't afford the risks that our energy dependence creates for national security, economic security, and environmental security.

And we do so because we can't afford to fall behind China, Germany and India in the race for new energy technologies and renewable energy jobs. We will not accept second place.

CONVENTIONAL ENERGY

Today, I want to talk about the path President Obama is charting to a safe, secure, and sustainable energy future.

I want to begin by briefly addressing the role of conventional energy in this future. The fact is that even as we transition to a sustainable energy economy, we will continue to rely on oil, gas, and conventional fuels. The Energy Information Agency projects that U.S. energy demands will rise 14 percent over the next 25 years.

We need oil and gas. But – as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill made so clear - we need to produce it in a safer and smarter way with stronger protections for the environment. For thirty years, under the oversight of both Democratic and Republican administrations and congresses, industry ventured into deeper and deeper waters without adequate oversight.

Drilling technologies accelerated, but safety technologies and the government's regulatory framework were left behind. That gap is unacceptable. That is why we have launched the most aggressive and comprehensive reforms to offshore oil and gas regulation and oversight in U.S. history.

We are raising the bar on industry's safety practices and equipment. We are requiring companies that want to drill to prove they are prepared to deal with catastrophic blowouts and oil spills like the Deepwater Horizon.

We are continuing our work to put science back in its rightful place in decisions about offshore oil and gas development. And we are building a strong and independent agency with the resources, tools, and authority it needs to hold offshore operators accountable.

The former Inspector General for the Department of Justice, Michael Bromwich, is spearheading these reforms, and has already implemented a new internal investigations and review unit that will root out problems within the regulatory agency and target companies that aim to game the system.

Our offshore oil and gas reforms touch every stage of the planning, permitting, and development process. They are comprehensive, and

they will continue over the coming weeks and months.

RENEWABLE ENERGY FUTURE

But, while oil and gas remain a necessity, our nation's future depends on our ability to capture the power of renewable energy. We know that to build a safer, more secure energy future, we must continue to expand on the progress we have made in the past two years on the renewable energy front.

President Obama understands that the jobs of tomorrow are in renewable energy. Those jobs are in places like Holland, Michigan, where the Recovery Act's \$2.4 billion investment in advanced battery technology has helped get a new manufacturing plant under way. 300 people are helping build the plant, and another 300 will find jobs when it opens.

Renewable energy jobs are in places like Pueblo, Colorado, where a wind tower manufacturing plant I helped open yesterday will put over 500 people to work.

As President Obama has said: these projects are a win-win--good for the environment, great for the economy. As the department that oversees one-fifth of the nation's land and 1.7 billion acres of Outer Continental Shelf, the Department of the Interior has a major role to play in the transformation of our nation's energy future.

We oversee sunny deserts in the southwest, windy open spaces across the Rockies and the West, and the breezy expanses of the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf. As you in this room know well: the renewable energy potential on America's public lands and oceans is staggering.

But to capture that potential, the Department of the Interior – in the past two years – has had to change how we do business.

WIND

When I became the 50th Secretary of the Interior, the federal government – frankly - wasn't prepared for the growing interest from the private sector in capturing renewable energy resources on public lands and oceans.

Permit applications for wind, solar, and geothermal were languishing. The permitting processes were hazy. And there wasn't enough coordination among permitting agencies to move projects forward.

The Cape Wind project off the Atlantic Coast had become, in many ways, the example of just how slow and frustrating the process could be. Cape Wind had been tied up for more than seven years when I got into office.

Moreover, potential developers of new offshore wind projects up and down the Atlantic Coast were wary to invest because they didn't know what the rules would be. So, in the past year and a half, we have aggressively moved to establish a clear, common-sense, and fair process for offshore wind development. We finalized a framework for the permitting process that was long overdue. We've built a new partnership with the Department of Energy and other federal agencies. We've established an Atlantic Wind Consortium that now includes 11 governors. This is called good government.

And just last week, I signed our nation's first lease for commercial wind energy development on the Outer Continental Shelf. The 130 planned wind turbines in the Cape Wind project, at their average expected production, could supply enough energy to power more than 200,000 homes in Massachusetts. That's approximately 75 percent of the electricity demand for Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Island combined. We are off to a good start with offshore wind. And we'll make more progress in the months ahead.

SOLAR

Now let me turn to the historic milestones we're reaching on solar power. To be here, and to see first-hand the technologies being developed and deployed, is to be reminded of the power of innovation within the American economy.

The old saying that "there will always be a frontier where there is an open mind and a willing hand" is as true today as it was in the first half of the twentieth century. SEIA estimates that venture capitalists invested \$1.4 billion in venture capital in solar companies in 2009 – more than in any other renewable technology.

That kind of investment and optimism is fueling growth, new technologies, and outstanding innovation. We need this kind of innovation not only in labs and schools but also in the policy-making realm.

If we are to succeed on the new energy frontier, we must establish a straightforward, fair, and environmentally responsible approach to solar energy development on public lands.

When I became Secretary of the Interior, companies were eager to capture solar power on public lands, but dozens upon dozens of permit applications were stalled. There was a long backlog of pending applications and no process for transforming ideas on paper into projects on the ground.

To address these problems, we have had to build a strategy for the near-term and a strategy for the long term. At the start of my remarks, I talked about the fruits of our near-term strategy. It is called the fast-track process, and many of you are familiar with it.

That process emerged from two simple questions that BLM Director Bob Abbey and I faced at the start of 2009: 1. How do we identify the projects that are ready for prime time among the many applications that were pending? and,

2. How do we establish a collaborative, coordinated permitting process that will allow the best of these projects to move forward? Through the fast-track process we established, BLM identified and prioritized onshore renewable energy proposals that could be ready for construction by the end of 2010.

Those projects went through a vigorous assessment, extensive environmental review, and input from the public. And, in the past two

weeks, that process has resulted in four major milestones.

The Silver State project I will approve at the end of my remarks is just the latest. As I mentioned earlier, it will be the first large-scale solar project ever approved on public lands in Nevada. The Silver State project is 60 megawatts and the electricity from this plant is expected to power about 15,000 homes.

I want to assure you that the projects we've announced in the last two weeks will not be the last. The Department of Interior is in the final stages of processing several major renewable energy projects in western states. The goal is to get them reviewed by the end of 2010, so that if a decision is made to approve them, the companies can take advantage of the significant incentives in the Recovery Act.

I am proud of the progress we have made through the fast-track process. It shows we can cut red tape without cutting corners. I am also proud of the progress we are making on building a smart, long-term strategy for solar energy siting and permitting on public lands.

One of the keys to building a smart long-term strategy for solar is landscape-level planning. BLM and the Department of Energy are doing exactly that through the solar programmatic environmental impact statement.

The Solar PEIS identifies more than 20 million acres across 6 western states - including 24 solar energy study areas – that may be appropriate for solar development. We expect to have a draft of the Solar PEIS available for public review by the end of this year.

Another key to building this smart, long-term process is capturing the lessons learned from this initial set of projects. We need to make note of what worked well and to improve what didn't. My team has been listening to your suggestions throughout the fast track process, and we look forward to hearing more from you and other stakeholders about how we can continue to build a successful renewable energy program.

In other words, what we are doing now will shape our nation's energy policy for decades to come.

CONCLUSION

This brings me to you. And what you're doing. I recognize that you hold a key to the technology and the ingenuity that will help our nation compete with countries like China, Germany, and India.

You are the engine for the ideas that will help our nation transition to a renewable energy economy. Somewhere in this room is the next bright idea.

Somewhere in this room is the person who will push the boundaries of knowledge and possibilities for solar power.

President Obama reminds us that: "Today's frontiers can't be found on a map. They're being explored in our classrooms and our laboratories, in our start-ups and our factories. This is the nation that will lead the renewable energy economy of tomorrow, so long as all of us remember what we have achieved in the past and we use that to inspire us to achieve even more in the future."

So let us take stock of how much we have already accomplished. Let's celebrate the first offshore wind lease in the United States. Let's celebrate the solar energy study areas we've established, and the priority President Obama has placed upon smart, orderly permitting. Let's celebrate the progress of the technologies showcased at this conference.

And let's celebrate the first solar projects approved for construction on public lands, including the Silver State project, which I am ready to sign here today.

Thank you all – now let's get to signing the decision!