



Schwarzenegger signs energy bill at local solar plant

Governor and Secretary of Interior tour proposed project area

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HINKLEY • Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger visited a solar plant at Harper Dry Lake near Hinkley to sign into law a bill related to helping solar project developers meet environmental obligations.

Schwarzenegger toured the NextEra Harper Dry Lake Solar Electric Generating System with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and visited the site for the proposed 250 megawatt Abengoa Mojave Solar project.

The bill, Senate Bill X8 34, will establish a fund that solar energy developers can pay into through fees determined by the California Energy Commission and the Department of Fish and Game. The fees will be used to purchase private land to restore habitat and pay monitoring costs to offset these projects' potential environmental impacts.

The bill would also authorize the energy commission and Department of Fish and Game to assess fees on projects at an amount that would allow staff to work exclusively on renewable energy applications.

After signing this bill, Schwarzenegger noted that the measure only addressed 22 solar thermal and photovoltaic solar plants in the desert. Geothermal and wind energy projects were left out, he wrote in a letter to the state legislature.

"By streamlining the permit process for only a small fraction of the renewable energy projects proposed for development in California we are leaving 56,000 megawatts of renewable energy, \$200 billion in investment and 100,000 clean-tech jobs on the table," he wrote.

The Abengoa Mojave Solar project is seeking funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. To qualify for funding, projects must break ground and spend at least 5 percent of the total project cost in 2010.

According to the Governor's office, signing SB X8 34 will help the Abengoa project qualify for federal stimulus funds.

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