

# Construction to resume on parts of solar project

June 11 2011

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FILE - This Sept. 3, 2008 file photo shows an endangered desert tortoise, sitting in the middle of a road at the proposed location of three BrightSource Energy solar-energy generation complexes in the eastern Mojave Desert near Ivanpah, Calif. A federal agency said Friday June 10, 2011 that construction can resume on a massive Southern California solar energy project after wildlife officials determined it will not jeopardize the threatened desert tortoise. (AP Photo/Reed Saxon, File)

(AP) -- Construction can resume on a massive Southern California solar energy project after wildlife officials determined it will not jeopardize the threatened desert tortoise, federal officials said Friday.

The U.S. [Bureau of Land Management](#) approved the next phase of construction on the nearly \$2 billion Ivanpah project located in eastern San Bernardino County, about five miles from the Nevada border.

In April, federal officials ordered BrightSource Energy Co. to halt construction on two-thirds of the project after a federal assessment showed that more than 3,000 desert tortoises would be disturbed, and up to 700 of the young turtles would be killed during construction.

But the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced a new assessment, known as a Biological Opinion, for moving the tortoises, as well as new ways to protect them from predators and increased monitoring and fencing.

"This new Biological Opinion allows the project to move forward without jeopardizing the tortoise, taking into account the higher number of animals found," BLM-California Acting State Director Peter Ditton said.

"We worked closely with the [Fish and Wildlife service](#) throughout the development of this new BO and will continue to work together to monitor construction."

The project, to be built in stages on the 5.6-acre Ivanpah Valley site near Primm, Nev, is slated to have three generating plants including 346,000 billboard-sized mirrors that focus the desert sun on steam turbines. The 100 megawatts operation will produce enough electricity for 140,000 homes.

It's one of about a half-dozen solar projects [federal officials](#) approved last year for public lands in California and Nevada.

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