Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Announces More than $700,000 in Grants for Tribal Energy Efforts, Highlights Obama Administration Commitment to Assist Tribal Communities in Combatting Impacts of Climate Change

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PHOENIX, Arizona – As part of the Obama Administration's efforts to build strong and prosperous tribal communities and the Climate Action Plan to cut carbon pollution and create clean energy jobs, Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell today announced the approval of the 200-megawatt Moapa Solar Energy Center Project on tribal trust land in Nevada and that nine federally recognized tribes have been awarded Tribal Energy Development Capacity grants totaling over $700,000.

The competitive grants, provided by the Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs' Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development, fund projects that help build tribal capacity for energy and mineral resource development, including renewable energy projects.

"Today's announcement reflects the Obama Administration's steadfast commitment to work with Indian Country leaders to promote strong, prosperous and resilient tribal economies and communities," said Jewell. "This solar project and these grants also deliver on the President's Climate Action Plan goals to spur important investments and jobs in tribal communities that can be leveraged to address some of the impacts from climate change that threaten tribal lands, waters and ways of life. The Moapa solar project will generate enough electricity to power 60,000 homes and will create hundreds of jobs and additional income for the tribe."

Secretary Jewell, who serves as Chair of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, announced the grants and the solar project approval at the Heard Museum of Indian Art and Culture, following a renewable energy roundtable discussion with local tribal leaders. Jewell was joined at both the roundtable discussion and the announcement by Deputy Secretary Mike Connor, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Larry Roberts, a member of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin, Western Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bryan Bowker, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, and Tracey A. LeBeau, Director of the Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs.

"These grants will enable tribal nations to evaluate and promote their energy assets, negotiate the best agreements with partners or investors and develop and manage these resources for the social and economic benefit of their communities," said Deputy Secretary Mike Connor. "These grants provide a clear avenue for energy development on Indian lands, which play a critical role in creating jobs and generating income in Indian Country."

The Tribal Energy Development Capacity grant program helps eligible applicants in assessing, developing or obtaining the managerial and technical capacity needed to develop energy resources on Indian land and properly account for energy resource production and revenues. Eligible applicants are federally recognized tribes, Alaska Native regional and village corporations, and tribal energy resource development organizations.

A full list of the FY 2013 grantees announced today and additional information about Indian Energy Resource Development programs and services can be found HERE.

The Record of Decision (ROD) for the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians' project approves the construction, operation and maintenance of a photovoltaic solar power generation facility on an 850-acre site on the Moapa River Indian Reservation, which is located about 20 miles northeast of Las Vegas. The facility is expected to generate enough power to run approximately 60,000 homes and will support up to 500 jobs at peak construction and 10 permanent positions. No more than 30 acre-feet of water per year would be used during operation. Associated infrastructure would include electrical lines to interconnect the project to the regional electrical transmission grid and a water pipeline and access road between the generating facility and existing frontage road along the west side of Interstate 15.

Additional information regarding the ROD can be found HERE.

"This solar project is a tribute to the vision and determination of the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians as well as a great day for Indian Country as a whole," said Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs Kevin K. Washburn. "As our nation's diversified energy portfolio continues to grow, it is vital that tribal communities seize the opportunity to harness the ample renewable energy resources on their lands as a reliable and cost-effective way to power their homes, businesses and economies."

In her capacity as Chair of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, Secretary Jewell leads a comprehensive federal initiative to work more collaboratively and effectively with Tribes to advance their economic and social priorities. The Council's Energy Subgroup, which is co-chaired by Department of Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, is, in part, focused on supporting tribal communities as they prepare for the impacts of climate change on their native lands, which includes goals outlined in the President's Climate Action Plan to assess climate change vulnerabilities and develop regional solutions to combat its impacts.

The Moapa solar project will be the second utility-scale solar project approved for development on tribal trust lands, and is one of the many steps the administration has taken to help strengthen tribal communities. The project is also the 52nd utility-scale renewable energy project that Interior has approved since 2009 as part of a Department-wide effort to advance smart development of renewable energy on our nation's public lands. Together, the wind, solar and geothermal projects could support more than 20,000 construction and operations jobs and generate about 14,000 megawatts of power to communities across the West, or enough to power nearly 4.8 million homes. These achievements build on the historic expansion of renewable energy under President Obama, with energy from sources like wind and solar doubling since the President took office.
