Programmatic Design Features for Paleontological Resources

The following design features have been identified to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate potential impacts on paleontological resources from solar energy development that were identified and discussed in Sections 5.14.1 and 5.14.2 of the Draft and Final Solar PEIS.

General

P1-1 Project developers shall coordinate with the BLM early in the project planning process to identify and minimize impacts on paleontological resources.

(a) Identifying paleontological resources shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Determining in coordination with the BLM whether paleontological resources exist in a project area.

- Determining the potential presence of paleontological resources on the basis of the following: the sedimentary context of the area and its potential to contain paleontological resources (potential fossil yield classification [PFYC] class, if it is available); a records search of published and unpublished literature for past paleontological finds in the area; coordination with paleontological researchers working locally in potentially affected geographic areas and geologic strata; and/or depending on the extent of existing information, the completion of a paleontological survey.

(b) Methods to minimize impacts on paleontological resources may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Instituting BMPs, such as training/education programs (see WEAP bullet below), to reduce the amount of inadvertent destruction to paleontological sites (see also P2-2 below). Project-specific management practices shall be established in coordination with the BLM, incorporating BLM IM 2009-011.

- Planning for management and mitigation of paleontological resources of the project area for areas of known presence or high potential of presence.

- Identifying measures to prevent potential looting/vandalism or erosion impacts and addressing the education of workers and the public to make them aware of the consequences of unauthorized collection of fossils on public land.

- Incorporating key elements to mitigate the impacts on paleontological resources into a WEAP that is provided to all project personnel prior to entering the project worksite. The WEAP shall be provided on a regular basis, covering multiple resources, to ensure the awareness of key mitigation efforts for paleontological resources of the project worksite during all phases of the project's life. The base information the WEAP provides shall be reviewed and approved by the BLM prior to the issuance of a Notice to Proceed and shall incorporate adaptive management protocols for addressing changes over the life of the project, should they occur.

- Incorporating environmental inspection and monitoring measures into PODs and other relevant plans to monitor and respond to paleontological resource impacts during construction, operations, and decommissioning of a solar energy development, including adaptive management protocols.

Site Characterization, Siting and Design, Construction

P2-1 Project developers shall use a qualified paleontological monitor during excavation and earthmoving activities in areas with high potential for paleontological resources.

P2-2 Project developers shall notify the BLM immediately upon discovery of fossils. Work shall be halted at the fossil site and continued elsewhere until qualified personnel, such as a paleontologist, can visit the site, determine the significance of the find, and, if significant, make site-specific recommendations for collection or other resource protection. The area of the discovery shall be protected to ensure that the fossils are not removed, handled, altered, or damaged until the site is properly evaluated and further action determined.