

Energy Project of the Year: Desert Sunlight Solar Farm

Desert Sunlight Solar Farm Now the Largest Solar Facility in U.S.

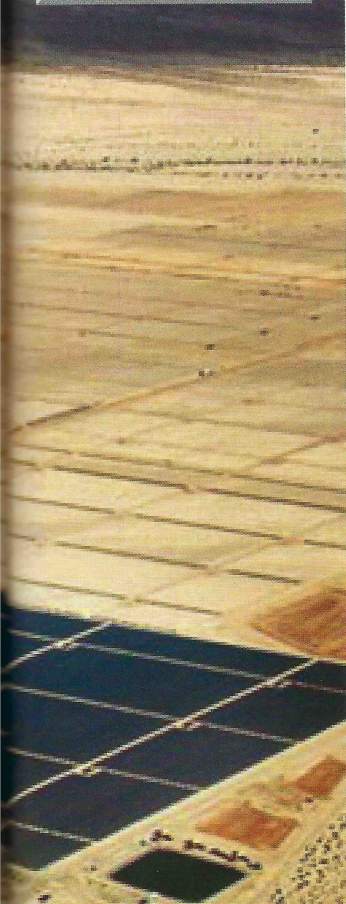
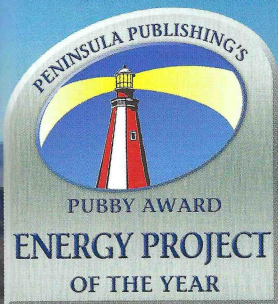
The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm just outside of Desert Center, Calif. opened for business earlier this year

By Jonathan Dean

▲ The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is to be one of many state-of-the-art sustainable energy facilities in the country that will remove the need for coal, oil, nuclear, and natural gas in the next 20 years

The United States has made great strides forward in building energy-generating facilities that produce clean, sustainable energy for both residential and commercial usage; one of the newest additions to this country's future energy infrastructure is the Desert Sunlight Solar Farm, and is the American Infrastructure's Energy Project of the Year.

Earlier this year, electric innovator Elon Musk stated that a relatively small land surface area would be needed to house enough solar power generators to provide energy to the United States without the need for any fossil fuel burning during his Power Wall presentation. The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is to be one of many state-of-the-art sustainable energy facilities in the country that will remove the need for coal, oil, nuclear, and natural gas in the next 20 years. The



▼ During the projects construction, it provided over 440 construction jobs over a two-year period and an estimated \$336 million of residual benefits to local engineering and design firms, construction subcontractors and crews, material suppliers, and service providers.

► By generating energy through renewable means, the Desert Sunlight Solar Farm displaces 300,000 tons of CO₂ every year, or the equivalent of removing 60,000 cars off of the nation's roads.



Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is also now the largest operating solar farm in the United States, and its innovation in the world of solar power has earned it the title of American Infrastructure magazine's 2015 Energy Project of the Year.

The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is a 4,000-acre, 550-megawatt facility located six miles north of Desert Center, Calif. that collects enough of the sun's energy via the hundreds of rows of photovoltaic solar panels to feed power to over 160,000 homes in Riverside County via Southern California Edison and PG&E. The project was the brainchild of owners NextEra Energy Resources, GE Energy Financial Services, and Sumitomo Corporation of America in 2008 and was developed by First Solar, Inc.; other partners for the project include the Federal Bureau of Land Management, California Energy Commission, and County of Riverside. By generating energy through renewable means the Desert Sunlight Solar Farm displaces 300,000 tons of CO₂ every year, or the equivalent of removing 60,000 cars off of the nation's roads.

Desert Sunlight Solar Farm will help California reach its goal of generating a third of its energy needs through renewable energy by 2020 (and 50 percent by 2030), and



This is the beginning of a renewable energy future.

-U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell

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setting itself up as a leader in sustainable energy sources. The PV solar farm is just one of 11 facilities on the California Energy Commission's Clean Energy Tour that supports California's effort to go totally carbon-free for producing energy. Other environmental benefits from this energy project include no use of water (especially in drought-stricken California) and the lowest environmental impact of any photovoltaic technology available today.

The solar farm also provides many other benefits other than the obvious power and environmental ones. Benefits of the facility also come in the form of the local community's economy and education. During the project's construction, it provided over 440 construction jobs over a two-year period and an estimated \$336 million of residual benefits to local engineering and design firms, construction subcontractors and crews, material suppliers, and service providers. The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is also slated to bring in an estimated \$12 million in new property tax revenues and \$15 million in new tax revenues for Riverside County. Education in solar technology and energy usage will also be provided by the solar farm facility in the form of the on-site Solar

Energy Learning Center as well as supplemental support for the local K-12 education and College of the Desert (COD) Renewable Energy training programs.

The Desert Sunlight Solar Farm is by far the largest solar farm to become operational in the United States, and is one of the largest in the world. The facility was opened and dedicated in February of this year by U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, who said, "This is the beginning of a renewable energy future," referencing the fact that there are several more renewable energy plants planned in the coming years.

For its innovation, sheer size, and power generating capacity, the Desert Sunlight Solar Farm has definitely earned its place as American infrastructure's Energy project of the year. For more information, visit www.energy.ca.gov/tour/desertsunlight.



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