

## Enviros Sue BLM to Stop Giant Wind Farm

<http://www.courthousenews.com/2011/01/27/33671.htm>



LAS VEGAS (CN) - Environmentalists sued the Bureau of Land Management in Federal Court, challenging its fast-track approval of "the industrial-scale Spring Valley Wind Energy Facility on public lands in Nevada, near one of the largest bat caves in the Great Basin and on one of the most important cultural and sacred sites for Western Shoshone Tribes."

"Despite very significant and unknown environmental and cultural impacts, and against the advice of several sister agencies and its own personnel, BLM refused to conduct the full environmental analysis required by the National Environmental Policy Act ('NEPA'). Instead, under pressure from high-level BLM officials and the industry proponent, BLM rushed through a short-cut analysis in order to meet arbitrary funding deadlines desired by the industry," the Western Watersheds Project says.

Joining as plaintiffs are the Center for Biological Diversity, the Confederated Tribes of the Goshute Reservation, the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe and the Ely Shoshone Tribe.

"The project will entail construction of a massive network of roads (over 25 miles); 75 lighted, 400+ foot wind turbines; two gravel pits; over 9 miles of new fencing; a microwave tower; overhead electrical lines; a switchyard, and other assorted facilities," the complaint states.

"The many resource values threatened with imminent harm by this industrial development include the regionally significant population of Mexican (or Brazilian) free-tail bats (up to 1 million of which are known to seasonally roost in the nearby Rose Guano Cave), which are acutely vulnerable to death when flying near wind turbines, which they are attracted to. The project area and the adjacent Swamp Cedar Area of Critical Environmental Concern is a sacred site to the Western Shoshone, as the site of several Indian massacres, prehistoric village sites, and festivals. Tribes use the site for hunting, gathering, and religious purposes. Industrialization of the site would greatly diminish its cultural value. The project's industrial sprawl would likewise impair many other on-site and migratory native wildlife species including greater sage-grouse and raptors.

"Because the Spring Valley Wind project has been approved by BLM and construction is expected to begin imminently - and will cause irreparable harm to environmental and Tribal cultural values -

injunctive relief is necessary from this Court pending adjudication of the merits of Plaintiffs' claims. ...

"Spring Valley is located in eastern central Nevada. The narrow valley runs north-south, surrounded by the towering Snake Range to the east (which includes Great Basin National Park and the Mount Moriah Wilderness) and the Schell Range to the west (which includes the High Schells Wilderness).

"Great Basin National Park lies at the southern end of the Snake Range, only about five miles east of the proposed project site. The Park is known for the 13,063-ft. Wheeler Peak, the Lehman Caves (a marble cave with many stalactites and stalagmites) at the peak's base, groves of ancient bristlecone pines, and its stunning views of Spring Valley and surrounding mountains." (Parentheses in complaint.)

Lehman Caves is one of the few caves in the world with spectacular shield formations, which grow out like mushrooms from cave walls. Many of the shields in Lehman Caves are covered with crystals.

Plaintiffs are represented by Christopher Mixson.