



### A New Race For Solar

The fate of three new power plants may set the future for U.S. solar energy By [Jeff Johnson](#)

December 16, 2013 [Article Excerpt](#)

This fall, three new solar power plants came to life on large tracts of undeveloped, remote lands in the western U.S. Although solar, these three installations are huge when compared with familiar, traditional rooftop photovoltaic (PV) systems.

Combined, these utility-scale power plants have the capacity to produce more than 800 MW of electricity, equal in output to a large coal- or gas-fired power plant. And one has the capability of storing and providing electricity to the grid for six hours—without sunshine.

The three are the [California Valley Solar Ranch](#) near San Luis Obispo in central California; the [Abengoa Solana](#) project in Gila Bend, Ariz.; and the [Ivanpah](#) Solar Electric Generating System in California's Mojave Desert.

These are just the first wave of a potential tsunami of large solar plants that are newly operating, under construction, or being planned for the southwestern U.S. They are the fastest-growing sector of a rapidly increasing solar marketplace. However, whether more of these large plants follow will depend on how well these first few fare, and specifically if electric utilities want to buy more of the electricity these plants generate.

Also backing up these incentives and the push for renewable energy is a billion-dollar [Department of Energy](#) program to provide loan guarantees for large-scale renewable energy projects and a federal investment tax credit that provides a 30% tax credit for solar construction.

It's a perfect storm for solar generation, notes Katherine Gensler, director of federal affairs for the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), a trade group. By the end of the year, about half of the U.S.'s 9,500 MW of solar power will be generated by utility-scale power plants; most of this capacity came on-line in the past year.

Each of the three newly operating units embraces slightly different technologies. The California Valley Solar Ranch uses 88,000 PV panels, a well-known technology used in rooftop solar installations that converts the sun's energy directly into electricity. But unlike usual rooftop units that

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### A New Race For Solar (continued)

vary from a couple of kilowatts of electricity on a house to a couple of megawatts on a Walmart or IKEA warehouse, the solar ranch produces 250 MW and is one of the largest PV systems in the world. Currently, PV installations, overall, make up about 80% of the utility-scale projects, SEIA notes.

The Abengoa Solana project and Ivanpah Solar Electric Generating System are concentrated solar power (CSP) systems that together will produce more than 650 MW of electricity. Solana generates 280 MW by using a system of curved mirrors to focus solar energy. Ivanpah generates 130 MW of electricity now but will grow to 390 MW next year as its system of flat concentrating mirrors, coupled with three power towers, is finally complete.

Like PV, these CSP systems use sunlight as fuel, but they focus the sun's thermal energy to heat a conducting medium, such as oil or molten salt. The medium carries heat that is used to drive water to steam, and like a conventional power plant, the steam spins a turbine to do work, in this case generate electricity.

**DOE has thrown** its weight behind utility-scale solar installations, offering \$10.5 billion in loan guarantees to help developers obtain funding for 11 projects.

"For the first time," notes Xcel spokesman Mark Stutz, "our analysis determined that utility-scale solar was competitive in price with other sources of electricity, including fossil-fuel-generated electricity, even without a carbon penalty."

To read the full article, go to <http://cen.acs.org/articles/91/i50/New-Race-Solar.html>

#### References:

Johnson, Jeff. [A new race for solar](#). Retrieved December 16, 2013 from <http://cen.acs.org/articles/91/i50/New-Race-Solar.html>

## January Community Calendar

- 01/01 – **HAPPY NEW YEAR** – Town Offices Closed
- 01/02 & 01/03 – Farmers Market: Care 1st Resource Center
- 01/06 – Holiday Lights over
- 01/07 – Adult 3-on-3 Basketball: 7:00pm
- 01/14 – Council Meeting: 6:00pm
- 01/20 – MLK, Jr. Day Observed-Town Offices Closed
- 01/28 – Council Meeting: 6:00pm



## Winter Wonderland/Santa in the Park

December 20, 2013

The Annual Winter Wonderland/Santa in the Park event took place on Friday, December 20th. The event was well attended by local residents. Attendees at the event were able to enjoy some snow play, keep warm with fire pits and hot chocolate, make a craft in Santa's Workshop, listen to live Christmas music performed by the Church of Gila Bend and visit with Santa while enjoying the beautifully lit Community Center Park.

Santa, as usual, arrived in style thanks to the Gila Bend Fire Department. Kids visiting Santa each received a bag stuffed with goodies to take home.



## Town Office Holiday Closure

January 2014

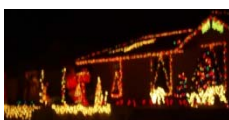


All Town Offices will also be closed on Monday, January 20th in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Town offices will reopen at their regularly scheduled times on Tuesday, January 21st.

## Christmas Lights Around Gila Bend

December 2013

Did you go looking for nicely decorated homes during the Christmas season? If so, you would have seen these homes in Gila Bend.



## Care 1st Gila Bend Resource Center

January 2014



The Care 1st Gila Bend Resource Center, located at 303 E. Pima Street, provides numerous services to residents of Gila Bend. The services are made possible by a public and private partnership between Care 1st Health Plan Arizona, First Things First and the Town of Gila Bend. Services available include:

- Assistance with renewals and applications for AHCCCS health care and food stamps
- Support services for pregnant teens and families
- Behavioral health services
- Veteran's referral services
- Support for victims of sexual abuse
- Certification classes for in-home child care providers with CPR, safety and first-aid issues
- Supportive services for developmentally disabled children and adults
- Legal services
- Employment services for job seekers
- Emergency baby boxes for needy families with children ages birth to five years
- Youth workforce development and drop-out prevention services

All programs and services are available to residents without cost. If you need or would like more information on current services available, please call the center at **928-683-6502**. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

## Happy New Year

January 1, 2014

The Town Council, Management and Town Staff hope each of you have a prosperous and Happy New Year.

**Happy New Year**  
**From Gila Bend Town Council**  
**Management**  
**& Staff**