

Fort Irwin takes next step in energy security

Oct 15, 2009

By **Charles Melton (USAG Fort Irwin)**

Story Highlights

- The Army signs the MOA for a \$1.5 billion renewable energy project at Fort Irwin, Calif.
- The project will provide energy security for the National Training Center as it trains the force.



Photo credit **Charles Melton (USAG Fort Irwin)**

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Strategic Infrastructure Jerry Hansen signs the Memorandum of Agreement between the Army and Clark and ACCIONA Solar Power for the 13-year, \$1.5 billion renewable energy project at Fort Irwin, Calif. on Sept. 15, 2009.

FORT IRWIN, Calif. - Fort Irwin and the National Training Center took a giant step forward in energy security Thursday morning without compromising its primary mission, which is training the force.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Strategic Infrastructure Jerry Hansen, NTC Commanding General Brig. Gen. Robert "Abe" Abrams; Tom Kretzschmar, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District; Francis Coen, managing director of Clark Energy Group; and Laurence Greene, director of ACCIONA Solar Power held a press conference about the 13-year, \$1.5 billion, 500-MW development at Fort Irwin, prior to the actual signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for the project Tuesday.

"We've got five sites selected within the Fort Irwin proper, one of which is in the training area. It's on a boundary of the southern portion of our training area," Brig. Gen. Abrams said. "In close cooperation with our partners here we're going to develop an ability for them to access their work site, to secure their worksite and then provide a margin of safety between the work site and where training is being conducted."

While there is some work to be done on the details of that arrangement, Brig. Gen. Abrams said he is confident the partners can work out the arrangement. "We're fully aware the mission at Fort Irwin is paramount, and we're ready to work around that mission," Greene said.

ACCIONA has people on our team who have developed these kinds of projects over 20-plus years and its staff has been to Fort Irwin during training activities, he said.

"We have not seen any circumstances that we don't believe we can work around," he said.

Because the project is going to have a combination of photovoltaic and concentrated

solar plants, ACCIONA is proposing the use of Fort Irwin's wastewater to provide the water needed for the CSPs, he said.

"We're very aware that for our concentrating solar thermal technologies that water use is something we must optimize," Greene said. "The fact that you have wastewater here on the post is one of the reasons why the Fort Irwin facility is such a prime location such a solar energy development, because we can take advantage of the wastewater that you have here."

The project is a great example of the Army's emphasis on energy security, Hansen said.

"Energy security from the standpoint of the Army centers around the five S's, he explained.

The five S's are: security, supply, survivability, sufficiency and sustainability, he said.

"This project really provides all five of the S's," Hansen said. "(It) provides it both locally as well as regionally, gives us the independence that we need and does it with renewable sources."

For Fort Irwin, the project guarantees it will be able to continue its mission even in uncertain times, Brig. Gen. Abrams said.

"Basically 10 and half months out of the year we are training both Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine forces in preparation for deployment. This is their capstone exercise," Brig. Gen. Abrams said. "It is mission essential that our function here must continue regardless of the energy conditions elsewhere in California or Southern California."

This is a key capability for Fort Irwin and the National Training Center in times of uncertainty sometime in the future when there maybe some uncertainty in terms of energy availability, he said.

"It's absolute assurance that we will be able to continue our mission to prepare and train forces for deployment," Brig. Gen. Abrams said.

The in-kind contribution element of the enhanced use lease agreement have yet to be finalized, but Kretschmar said there is likely to be a series of long-term leases for each site that is developed.

"Since we're sort of at a preliminary stage in the process, there are contingencies on the environmental assessment, interconnection with the grid and the utility off-takers, we really don't know what the exact level of revenue will be," Kretschmar said, adding that he believes it will be a substantial amount of revenue over time.

In terms of the ground lease payments to the Army, those will ultimately depend on how much energy is produced and how much property is ultimately leased, Coen said.

"Over the course of the 50-year ground lease it will be hundreds of millions of dollars," he said.

The next step in the project is the environmental and energy regulatory permitting process, which is expected to take two years with the first phase of construction beginning in 2013, Greene said, adding that once construction begins the project's plans are flexible enough to allow things to be sped up as dictated by market demands.