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## **Soaring Heights 6MW Solar Project Impacts More than the Environment**

**October 13, 2010- Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ---** Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords recently facilitated a tour of Soaring Heights at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base which, come December of this year, will be the largest solar powered community in the continental US. The 6MW solar powered community is that of Soaring Heights Communities LLC, the partnership between the Department of the Air Force and Actus Lend Lease for the development of military family housing at Davis-Monthan AFB, which introduced the solar project during a ground breaking ceremony held last October. On September 24, Soaring Heights welcomed members of Congresswoman Giffords' staff including Sara Hummel-Rajca, solar outreach coordinator and aide, along with various members of the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and other community leaders and renewable energy supporters, to tour and film the innovative solar project, which is also the largest solar powered community in the state of Arizona.

Specifically, the group was interested in capturing how the 3.3MW solar array, which was completed in December 2009, functions within the community. This film is intended to be used by NEBHE as instructional material for a project they are spearheading titled *Problem Based Learning (PBL) for Sustainable Technology: Increasing the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Pipeline*. This project began after NEBHE was awarded a \$900,000 grant from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Advanced Technological Education program. This program is dedicated to improving education at the technician level. STEM PBL Principal Investigator Fenna Hanes of NEBHE said, "This will help meet the need for STEM instructional materials by developing six problem-based multimedia "challenges" in sustainable technology areas such as solar energy, wind power, sustainable agriculture, storm water management, lighting, and "green" chemistry for use in college and high school classrooms."

Jim Switzer, Soaring Heights project director stated, "The NEBHE's visit is a great indicator that the solar initiative at Soaring Heights at Davis-Monthan AFB is not only benefitting our environment, but is also making an impact on America's education system as well. The ability to study the impact this 6MW installation will have on the environment, the military and the families living at Davis-Monthan AFB is an invaluable resource to teachers and students everywhere."

It is already determined that the energy generated from the solar array, combined with the 2.7MW of photovoltaic (PV) rooftop systems which are currently being installed on over 900 new and existing homes throughout the community, will meet roughly 75 percent of the peak power demand in the housing area and could eventually offset 100 percent. This is the equivalent to taking 50,000 cars off the road for a year or planting 300,000 trees.

Soaring Heights Communities, a project company of Actus Lend Lease, has an ongoing commitment to sustainability, one that is embedded in the Company's culture. Bruce Anderson, Lend Lease sustainability executive for Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and executive general manager of development, said, "The solar project at Soaring Heights is a great example of community leaders coming together to promote a more sustainable future for the residents of Arizona." "We believe it's simply the right thing to do, and we are proud to pave the way for other large-scale renewable energy projects throughout the Department of Defense and in the private sector," said Mr. Anderson.

Based on a comment provided by Congresswoman Giffords, it seems she would agree with Mr. Anderson's thoughts on leadership. She recently stated, "Davis-Monthan Air Force Base has a proud and distinguished record of training this nation's fighter pilots and protecting our country's air space for more than eight decades. Now, it's on its way to becoming a leader in the military's use of renewable energy. D-M already is home to the largest solar neighborhood in the nation -soon, the base will turn to the sun for one-third of all power it uses, relying on what will be one of Department of Defense's biggest solar power plants – a 14.5-megawatt photovoltaic array that will be the military's largest photovoltaic plant. Such leadership should make every American proud."

The Project Owner, Soaring Heights, is currently operating 259 rooftop systems totaling 1.8MW and is in the process of installing 127 more systems, for a total of 2.7MW of rooftop systems. This, in addition to the 3.3MW ground array, has Soaring Heights on track to meet or possibly exceed the expected first year energy production of 5,741,750 kilowatt-hours (kWh).

With the continued success of the solar project, Soaring Heights and Actus Lend Lease are leading the way forward for renewable energy. Although Soaring Heights has not made any official plans to expand the solar project capabilities beyond the Davis-Monthan AFB family housing community, the company has begun preliminary discussions as to the possibility of installing a photovoltaic roof top system on a school located on the base. There is also potential to evaluate the currently leased land to identify areas where additional solar installations would be feasible.

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### **About Actus Lend Lease**

*Actus Lend Lease is the nation's leader in public/private community development. With a focus on creating sustainable value, Actus Lend Lease communities are unrivaled in their attention to design, technology and environmental sensitivity. Known for its innovative initiatives, Actus Lend Lease has developed some of the most sustainable communities throughout the military including: one of the world's largest solar powered communities at Army Hawaii, New York State's largest energy efficient community development at Fort Drum Mountain Community Homes and the largest LEED-Silver certified community in the state of Texas at Fort Hood Family Housing. Actus is also constructing the first Zero Energy Home on a military installation and was chosen as the Department of Energy's partner to launch Operation Change Out, an initiative geared at replacing all incandescent light bulbs with the more energy efficient CFLs on all military installations. Actus has garnered many national awards for its sustainable initiatives including the 2009 Department of Energy, Excellence in Energy Star Promotions Award. For more information, visit [actuslendlease.com](http://actuslendlease.com).*

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