



News Release



Date: September 23, 2014

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U.S. Department of the Interior and State of California Release Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan for Public Review Comprehensive Blueprint to Guide Responsible Renewable Energy Development, Conserve Key Landscapes

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. – U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency John Laird today released an innovative landscape-level draft renewable energy and conservation plan covering more than 22 million acres in the California desert, marking a major milestone in federal and state efforts to cut carbon pollution, create jobs, develop clean domestic energy and conserve and protect ecological and cultural resources.

The draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a landscape-scale blueprint that is the result of an extensive public participation process, which included collaboration among the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), California Energy Commission (CEC) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and other stakeholders. The public will have until January 2015 to provide additional comments on the draft plan, which includes lands in Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties.

“The President’s Climate Action Plan calls for expanding clean, domestic energy on public lands to create jobs and cut carbon pollution,” said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “The draft plan released today will help provide effective protection and conservation of the California desert important for wildlife, recreation, cultural preservation and other uses, while encouraging streamlined renewable energy development in the right places. This is a strong and innovative blueprint that shows how federal and state agencies can collaborate to meet conservation and energy objectives on a landscape-scale while providing certainty to developers. I look forward to additional public input on the draft plan.”

“Although the release of this draft plan is a milestone reached after years of collaboration and stakeholder input, we expect the draft plan to benefit from robust public participation,” said Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency John Laird. “Public input is a critical part of the process and will help us develop the best possible final plan.”

The draft DRECP proposes to protect areas in the California desert important for wildlife, recreation and other uses while streamlining permitting in areas appropriate for siting of solar, wind and geothermal energy projects and associated transmission. The plan presents six alternative approaches for meeting renewable energy and conservation goals through 2040. Each alternative proposes a different conservation design and configuration of lands available for streamlined renewable energy permitting. The plan also includes an analysis of the potential environmental impacts of these alternatives.

The draft plan has three key components that support the goals of the DRECP:

- The BLM's Land Use Plan Amendments would designate renewable energy development areas and promote conservation of wildlife, cultural, and recreational values in other areas, including by expanding National Conservation Lands, across the 10 million acres of public lands in the planning area.
- The FWS's General Conservation Plan would allow the FWS to streamline the permitting process for renewable energy applicants on non-federal lands that agree to comply with the terms and conditions of the General Conservation Plan.
- CDFW's Natural Community Conservation Plan would identify and provide for the regional or area-wide protection of plants, animals, and their habitats, while allowing compatible and appropriate economic activity.

The public comment period will run through January 9, 2015. A recorded informational webinar to help the public navigate the DRECP documents will be available on Friday, September 26 at www.drecp.org and will be broadcast on October 9, 2014, at BLM, FWS and CDFW offices throughout the DRECP planning area. Formal public meetings will be held in late October and early November throughout the DRECP planning area and surrounding population centers. Future meetings will be announced at www.drecp.org. For instructions on how to submit written comments, view informational webinars, see meeting details and to sign up to receive email notifications, please visit www.drecp.org. Comments may also be submitted in person at the aforementioned public meetings.

The President's Climate Action Plan outlines a wide array of actions his administration is taking using existing authorities to reduce carbon pollution, increase energy efficiency, expand renewable and other low-carbon energy sources and strengthen resilience to extreme weather and other climate impacts. As part of the plan, announced in June 2013, the president directed the Interior Department to approve at least 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity on the public lands by 2020.

Interior has permitted 52 utility-scale renewable energy projects since 2009 as part of a Department-wide effort to advance smart development of renewable energy on our nation's public lands. Together, the wind, solar and geothermal projects could support more than 20,000 construction and operations jobs and generate about 14,157 megawatts of power to communities across the West, or enough to power nearly 4.8 million homes. Seventeen of

these renewable energy projects have been approved in the DRECP planning area which could generate about 4,800 megawatts, or enough to power more than 1.5 million homes.

The DRECP planning effort was also called out as an early ‘Sign of Progress’ in the Department of the Interior’s strategy for advancing landscape-scale mitigation policies and practices. That strategy, released in April 2014, describes the key principles and actions necessary to shift from project-by-project management to consistent landscape-scale, science-based management of the lands and resources for which the Interior Department is responsible.

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