



Desert Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan Transitioning to Implementation

February 24, 2017

Background

The Desert Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan (DRECP) is the culmination of an eight-year planning effort that amends the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan and the Bakersfield and Bishop Resource Management Plans (RMPs). At the most basic level, DRECP provides assurances and streamlining for permitting of renewable energy projects within development focus areas while maintaining the integrity of the desert ecosystem by conserving biological, cultural, and recreational resources.

Communication and Outreach

The BLM is conducting outreach regarding DRECP Implementation with the four key groups below. Outreach is focused on working towards a common understanding for implementation of the DRECP, answering questions about implementation, identifying information needs, and building relationships and networks for ongoing communications throughout the implementation process. Those groups are:

1. ***Internal:*** Communications with DRECP Field Offices is of paramount priority. Field staff must understand the plan, know how it applies to on-the-ground management of public land resources, and the importance of BLM's commitments in DRECP.
 - The DRECP Coordinator will continue to build BLM staff understanding of the DRECP by hosting weekly program focused programs during the coming months. The goal is that these programs will evolve into a standing BLM community of practice.
2. ***Local governments:*** Because of the collaborative nature of DRECP's development and local government permitting requirements upon public lands, it is important that the BLM and local governments have a common understanding of DRECP, its application, and how it relates to county plans and goals.
 - The DRECP Coordinator and District Manager are meeting with county Board of Supervisors and planning departments to discuss DRECP and county plans. Of particular interest to many counties is DRECP's landscape mitigation strategy. The BLM is laying the groundwork for working with the counties to develop and utilize this strategy.
3. ***Tribes:*** It is essential to continue tribal outreach through both Section 106 and government-to-government consultation. The BLM has obligations in the DRECP Programmatic Agreement (PA) that must be initiated early in the implementation process.
 - The BLM will schedule workshops to discuss DRECP implementation, Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs), the PA, and future consultation and communication. The DRECP Coordinator and cultural staff will also make



webinar training available for tribal governments and members. Tribal consultation with local line officers will be ongoing throughout the life of the DRECP.

4. *Key Stakeholders and Interested Public*: The BLM is actively identifying opportunities to do outreach with key stakeholders and interested public. Many of these groups have indicated an eagerness to engage with BLM on the implementation stage of the DRECP. The BLM will engage with the Desert Advisory Council (DAC) to assist with outreach and education for DRECP implementation. Below are four general categories of these groups and venues for conducting outreach. In addition to the four groups, the BLM will look for ways to engage others that are interested in desert lands and resources but have not traditionally engaged with the BLM.

1. Interested Public- The BLM will develop a communication strategy that includes public outreach and education on DRECP Implementation. The strategy includes coordination with the DAC as a forum for public engagement.
2. Recreation Groups - The BLM will seek out recreational forums (i.e. OHV Leadership Roundtable, etc.) to conduct outreach and education.
3. Environmental and Conservation Groups – The BLM will meet with environmental and conservation groups to discuss DRECP and opportunities for involvement in implementation.
4. Industry Groups – Renewable energy, mining and other industry groups are eager to understand how DRECP affects their activities and to provide implementation assistance.
5. Other resource management agencies- The BLM will convene an ad hoc interagency workgroup to assist BLM in implementing the DRECP. This workgroup will help identify synergies with other agencies and coordinate range-wide and cross boundary issues.

Mineral Withdrawal

The BLM published a proposed withdrawal notice for 1.3 million acres of California Desert National Conservation Lands was published in the Federal Register on December 28, 2016. This notice opened a 90-day proposed withdrawal public comment period and a scoping period for the Environmental Impact Statement that would support the withdrawal, public comments will be accepted until March 28, 2017. The 1.3 million acres proposed for withdrawal are segregated from mineral location and entry for up to two years while the agency prepares the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document. At the conclusion of NEPA review, the BLM would provide a recommendation to the Secretary regarding the approval or denial of the withdrawal. The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Land Use Plan Amendment Record of Decision (DRECP LUPA ROD), signed on September 14, 2016, described the withdrawal as an implementation action that required additional site-specific analysis and decision making. The BLM is currently reviewing next steps for this action.

Demonstration of Durability Agreement

The BLM and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) entered into a Durability Agreement to provide a long-term, durable conservation overlay on public domain lands for

mitigation. This conservation overlay could take the form of a Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) Title III or V easement or right-of-way. Prior to the Durability Agreement being used in compensatory mitigation, it is important to develop a pilot project that demonstrates the effectiveness of the agreement to provide a long-term conservation overlay. Within the initial phase of implementation, the DRECP Coordinator will work with land trusts to identify a demonstration project.

Programmatic Agreement Commitments

The BLM has established a workgroup that will aid in developing two DRECP-wide Conservation Management Actions (CMAs). The first CMA, known as Appendix G, is to develop a regional mitigation fee process to address cumulative adverse effects from proposed future projects. In response to tribal requests, BLM extended Appendix G's consultation by two months and Appendix G will now be complete May 15, 2017. The second CMA, known as Appendix F, is to develop a cultural resources sensitivity analysis to be used by project applicants during early design phases to identify and avoid areas with high cultural resources sensitivity. Appendix F is now projected to be complete November 14, 2017.

Mapping for Disturbance Cap

All California Desert National Conservation Lands (CDNCLs) and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are assigned disturbance caps that cannot be exceeded by authorized use. In order for the BLM to authorize a use, a calculation of the allowable disturbance versus the existing disturbance must be made. The BLM must map baseline disturbance from authorized and unauthorized use in order to develop the allowable disturbance calculation. Contractors are completing baseline mapping for ACEC and CDNCL units in the West Mojave and new national monuments. The BLM has secured additional funding to complete all baseline disturbance mapping. As baseline mapping is complete, the BLM will upload it to the United State Geologic Survey (USGS) Surface Disturbance Analysis and Reclamation Tracking Tool (SDARTT) database.

Development of an Implementation Strategy

Plan implementation strategies are a requirement in BLM policy (WOIM 2013-014). As prescribed in the policy, the BLM will utilize a three-step process for development of an implementation strategy for DRECP. The three steps in the process are: identify the actionable items from the plan, prioritize the actionable items, and schedule work according to the priorities. The BLM will first identify the actionable items within DRECP, and then BLM will prioritize and schedule the work. Step one, identification of the actionable plan items will be completed within the initial phase of implementation by the DRECP contractors. Additionally, development of a stakeholder process to prioritize work in step two will occur within the initial phase of implementation will be developed by the DRECP Coordinator. Step two will involve both internal and external stakeholder scoping and will likely commence within the initial phase of implementation but will not be completed within that period. Step three, scheduling work, will follow prioritization.

Renewable Energy and Transmission Permitting

The BLM will implement the streamlined permitting actions in the DRECP and will actively seek opportunities to display its ability to streamline the permitting process within Development Focus Areas under the DRECP.

DRECP Implementation - Accomplishments to Date

- A conservation and management action (CMA) checklist has been developed for categorical exclusion and environmental assessment level plan conformance.
- Field office staff trainings are complete for all California Desert District Offices (CDD) and Bishop Field Office (BIFO).
- The BLM published a notice in the Federal Register December 28, 2016 to begin the withdrawal process for 1.3 million acres within high priority CDNCLs.
- The BLM revised and distributed Appendix C of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) to harmonize it with the selected alternative in the ROD.
- The BLM has convened a cultural workgroup to develop Appendix G of the PA. This workgroup has met twice and the BLM is developing a draft of the appendix. Appendix G develops a regional mitigation fee process to addresses cumulative adverse effects from proposed future projects.
- The BLM has met with San Bernardino and Inyo Counties. The BLM is scheduling meetings with the other counties.
- Baseline disturbance mapping is ninety percent complete in the West Mojave and is underway in the two new national monuments. The BLM has secured funding for all baseline mapping.
- A DRECP DAC Subgroup has been approved.
- The DRECP Implementation Coordinator and District Manager has begun meeting with environmental and recreational groups.
- The DRECP contractor is developing a list of actionable items within all DRECP documents.

DRECP Implementation Team

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BLM California Solar Applications within the DRECP

Field Office	Project Name	Applicant Name	Project Type	Application Received	Capacity (MW)	BLM Acres	Geographic Location
Palm Springs	Palen/Maverick	Palen Solar 1, LLC (EDF)	Photovoltaic	3/13/2007	500	4,200	Desert Center area in Riverside East Solar Energy Zone - DFA
Palm Springs	Desert Quartzite	First Solar	Photovoltaic	9/27/2007	300	4,998	Blythe area in Riverside East Solar Energy Zone -DFA
Palm Springs	Crimson Solar	BrightSource	Photovoltaic	5/12/2009	450	4,000	Palo Verde Mesa, Riverside East Solar Energy Zone - DFA
Palm Springs	Jupiter	SunEdison	Photovoltaic	7/6/2015	250	1,800	Riverside East Solar Energy Zone - DFA
Ridgecrest	Camino	Aurora Solar, LLC	Photovoltaic	11/10/2015	40	670	Kern County - DFA
Ridgecrest	North of Kramer	First Solar	Photovoltaic	3/3/2016	440	3,913	San Bernardino County, north of Kramer Junction - DFA
Palm Springs	Io Solar	First Solar	Photovoltaic	5/23/2016	400	2,800	Riverside East Solar Energy Zone - DFA
Barstow	Oro Grande	Celtic Energy Corp	Photovoltaic	5/23/2016	100	1,058	Western San Bernardino County - DFA
Barstow	Lucerne Valley	Celtic Energy Corp	Photovoltaic	5/23/2016	40	516	Western San Bernardino County, near Hwy 247 - DFA



Palm Springs	SunPower	SunPower	Photovoltaic	7/16/2016	400	2,000	East of Desert Center, Riverside East Solar Energy Zone - DFA
Total:	10 applications				2,920	25,955	

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