

California Desert Biological Conservation Framework

California Desert Biological Conservation Framework – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the California Desert Biological Conservation Framework?

The California Desert Biological Conservation Framework is a synthesis of the science and conservation planning information that was used to develop the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. It is a non-regulatory document that can be utilized at the federal, state, and local level to help guide future public conservation investments and land use planning processes.

At a desert-wide regional scale, this Framework synthesizes data to establish broad biological resource goals and objectives, maps areas considered important for conservation, reports amount of important areas that occur in protected areas and Bureau of Land Management conservation designations, and describes conservation action approaches to provide a framework from which specific biological conservation strategies and actions can be developed and implemented in unprotected, important areas.

What agencies were included in the creation of this document?

The California Desert Biological Conservation Framework is a product of an interagency team of the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This is the same interagency group that collaborated and developed the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

Why is the California Desert Biological Conservation Framework needed?

The California deserts are a biologically diverse region supporting unique and rich assemblages of plant and animal species and natural communities. The landscape and ecological processes, natural communities, and species are subject to an array of threats, stressors, and changing environmental conditions. The California deserts are also home to numerous other important uses, values, and resources. Existing uses of the deserts include a wide range of activities, from residential, commercial, industrial, and infrastructure development to military training to recreation to agriculture and grazing. Additionally, the desert regions have intrinsic cultural, spiritual, and scenic values. Finally, the California deserts contain high-quality, valuable resources, such as renewable energy (i.e., solar, wind, and geothermal), minerals, groundwater, and paleontological resources. These important resources, uses, and values occur within a matrix of public and private lands that are either administered and managed by federal and state agencies or are under the land use authority of local entities like counties, cities, and districts. The California Desert Biological Conservation Framework has been developed to help guide biological conservation planning across this diverse landscape.



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How does the California Desert Biological Conservation Framework relate to the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan?

In March of 2015, the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided on a phased approach to finalize the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. The first phase was the completion of the Bureau of Land Management's Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Land Use Plan Amendment in September of 2016 which designated development focus areas and conservation areas on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The second phase includes continued engagement with the counties within the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Planning Area to better align renewable energy development and conservation at the local, state and federal level.

The California Desert Biological Conservation Framework extracts the key conservation information for the species and landscape elements analyzed in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, presents the desert-wide biological goals and objectives identified, and outlines approaches for long-term conservation actions. It presents this information in a concise framework to facilitate the use of the detailed scientific information presented in the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report, by providing a desert wide context for additional regional and local agency energy and conservation planning efforts. Use of the framework also ensures that planning activities maintains the linkage between the Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan and the energy and conservation components of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan on non-federal lands. The conservation science and data used to develop the California Desert Biological Conservation Framework is the same science and data that provided the biological conservation context for the [Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Land Use Plan Amendment](#) (Record of Decision issued in September of 2016) and was used to develop elements of the [Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report](#) (issued in December, 2014).

How may local counties, cities or regional collaboration utilize this document?

This Framework can support land use plans, regional conservation investment strategies, policies and decisions, as well as other planning activities within California deserts. As envisioned by the interagency team, conservation strategies and decisions made by federal, state, and local planners could "step-down" from the structure established in this framework. For example, this Framework document and the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan provide most of statutory elements required of a regional conservation assessment pursuant to Fish and Game Code, Division 2, Chapter 9, Section 1853 as amended by Chapter 455, Statutes of 2016. To refine this document to serve as a regional conservation assessment, supplemental information would need to be provided to address local focal species, climate change and habitat linkages issues, and conservation prioritization and species-specific actions.

The agencies recognize that science and planning work are ongoing. The inter agency team will continue to work together to ensure the framework is a "living" document, which is periodically updated with new and supplemental information.

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