

DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

PERMITTING AND MITIGATION

A key goal of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is to simplify renewable energy permitting and mitigation requirements for projects in appropriate places within the planning area. The Proposed BLM Plan establishes conservation and management actions to mitigate impacts of renewable energy development and other activities on BLM-managed public lands. Mitigation requirements include avoidance, minimization, and if necessary, compensation. These actions contain plan-wide components, which apply to all BLM-managed lands within the DRECP area, and additional actions that apply to areas with specific land use designations.

While the Proposed BLM Plan does not provide take coverage for renewable energy projects under the Endangered Species Act, these clear mitigation requirements provide certainty to project developers. Mitigation requirements in development focus areas are often lower than other projects due to the conservation benefits that would be achieved by the conservation lands within the DRECP. Projects within development focus areas would also receive priority permitting status and economic incentives originally developed through the BLM's Western Solar Plan.

Projects proposed on public lands once the Proposed BLM Plan is in place would still be subject to full environmental review, but could take advantage of the significant data and analysis compiled through the planning process.

In addition to the certainty of the mitigation requirements, the DRECP provides for innovative ways to offset project impacts with the right mitigation in the right location by taking a landscape-level approach. The Proposed BLM Plan is consistent with the November 2015 Presidential Memorandum on Mitigating Impacts on Natural Resources.



Peninsular Bighorn Sheep



Yuma Clapper Rail



Desert Tortoise

PROPOSED BLM PLAN PERMITTING AND MITIGATION

The October 2015 durability agreement between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the BLM allows for compensatory mitigation required under the California Endangered Species Act to occur on BLM-managed public lands. This agreement allows the federal, state and local agencies to achieve the greatest conservation benefits for species on private or public lands. In counties with significant portions of public lands, the agreement opens up new mitigation possibilities beyond the acquisition of limited private lands.

The BLM and California Department of Fish and Wildlife are already working to implement the durability agreement. For example, in October 2015, the agencies signed a step-down agreement defining the management of the Robbers Roost area in Kern County as mitigation for a solar energy project.



Flat-tailed Horned Lizard



Mohave Ground Squirrel

The October 2015 durability agreement describes public land conservation actions for mitigation such as:

- ▶ Fencing highways, freeways and primary county roads
- ▶ Removing, restoring or rehabilitating closed roads
- ▶ Removing illegal dumps
- ▶ Removing or controlling invasive or exotic plant infestations
- ▶ Additional law enforcement patrols
- ▶ Restoration of habitat and corridors
- ▶ Fencing between grazing lands and wildlife habitat lands
- ▶ Developing water sources for wildlife
- ▶ Increasing education outreach



Desert Pupfish