

II.1 APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES

The conservation and renewable energy planning processes used to develop the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are described in detail in Volume I, Background and Planning Process, of this document. Those planning processes, together with stakeholder and public input gained through community outreach efforts including scoping, seven Tribal–Federal Leadership Conferences, and Bureau of Land Management (BLM)–Tribal government-to-government dialogue and consultation resulted in identification of a range of alternatives for consideration in the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS. Two broad categories of alternatives have been identified—those carried forward for detailed analysis in the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS and those not carried forward for detailed analysis. Both categories are summarized in this chapter.

II.1.1 Alternatives Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis

The alternatives carried forward for detailed analysis include a Preferred Alternative and four other action alternatives—Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4. A No Action Alternative is also defined and carried forward for detailed analysis as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Each of these alternatives is described in this volume (Volume II) of the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS. Volume IV, Environmental Consequences/Effects Analysis, presents the detailed analysis of the environmental effects of each of these alternatives. The alternatives in the Proposed LUPA and Final EIS were analyzed as interagency alternatives in the Draft DRECP and Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/EIS. In the Proposed LUPA and Final EIS, they represent the portions of those alternatives over which the BLM has jurisdiction.

At the beginning of the description for each of the action alternatives (Preferred Alternative and Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4), a standard package of figures, tables, and charts is presented to orient the reader to the alternative and for equivalent representation and comparison of the alternatives.¹ The figures included for each action alternative are as follows:

1. Alternative X
2. Alternative X – Conservation and Recreation

¹ Rounding of data was applied to raw values to avoid false precision when presenting calculated values. However, in presenting rounded values there were tradeoffs. Numerical data presented and analyzed in this volume comes from a variety of different sources with varying levels of precision in the data. For presentation purposes, the following general rounding rules were applied: values greater than 1,000 were rounded to nearest 1,000; values less than 1,000 and greater than 100 were rounded to the nearest 100; values of 100 or less were rounded to the nearest 10. Each value, including the totals and sub-totals, was independently rounded directly from the underlying source data. However, because totals and sub-totals were independently rounded they may not be the sum of the other constituent lower level table values.

3. Alternative X – Conservation
4. Alternative X – Recreation
5. Alternative X – Lands with Wilderness Characteristics²
6. Alternative X – Renewable Energy Development
7. Alternative X – Visual Resource Management Classes
8. Alternative X – Unallocated Lands

Alternatives 1–4 are responsive to input received during scoping, Tribal–Federal Leadership Conferences, BLM–Tribal government-to-government dialogue, other public/stakeholder comments received during the planning process, input from local governments, and scientists and research. Alternative 1 emphasizes low biological resource conflict areas as requested by environmental non-governmental organizations and local communities. Alternative 2 emphasizes siting and design flexibility as requested by industry representatives. Alternatives 3 and 4 are variations on the themes of Alternatives 1 and 2 with additional consideration of ways to represent and consider BLM Variance Lands as identified in the Western Solar Plan. All of the action alternatives (the Preferred Alternative and Alternatives 1–4) were designed to avoid or substantially lessen one or more significant effects of the Proposed LUPA.

The No Action Alternative describes how state and federal renewable energy goals are currently being met and are projected to be met through 2040 in the absence of approval of the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS. Pursuant to NEPA, the No Action Alternative is used to compare the relative impacts of not adopting and implementing the DRECP with those of the action alternatives. The No Action Alternative assumes that renewable energy and transmission development and mitigation for such projects in the DRECP Plan Area would occur on a project-by-project basis in a pattern consistent with past and ongoing renewable energy and transmission projects on federal and non-federal lands within the DRECP Plan Area. The No Action Alternative would carry forward current planning documents, such as BLM land use plans (including existing amendments to those plans, such as the Western Solar Plan). The No Action Alternative assumes a continuation of current management of projected renewable energy development, and it serves as a baseline for comparison of the action alternatives. The No Action Alternative includes conservation designations and protections found in each of the underlying land use plan/resource management plans. Under the No Action alternative, there would be no DRECP Proposed LUPA for the California deserts.

² This figure does not appear in Chapter II.4 for Alternative 1.

II.1.2 Alternatives Not Carried Forward for Detailed Analysis

Eight alternatives considered during the EIS planning process have not been carried forward for detailed analysis in the Final EIS. These include the following:

- Distributed Generation Alternative
- Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies (CEERT) and Large-Scale Solar Association (LSA) Proposed Solar Areas Alternative
- California Wind Energy Association (CalWEA) Proposed Wind Areas Alternative
- BLM-Only Lands Alternative
- Private and Previously Disturbed Lands Alternative
- Dispersed Development Alternative
- Southeast Emphasis Alternative
- Avian Avoidance Alternative

These alternatives are described in Chapter II.8 of this volume along with the reasons why they were not carried forward for detailed analysis.

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