

Streamlined Permitting and Mitigation

A key goal of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is to simplify and streamline permitting and mitigation requirements for solar, wind and geothermal projects that are located in areas with minimal potential resource conflicts.

Projects proposed in Development Focus Areas (DFAs) will benefit from consistent and predictable mitigation requirements. In addition to the certainty of the mitigation requirements, the DRECP provides for innovative ways to offset project impacts by taking a landscape-level approach.

While all projects proposed on public lands are still subject to full environmental review requirements, projects located in DFAs can take advantage of the DRECP's data and analysis to help streamline and shorten project specific reviews. The DFAs more than double the amount of land that had previously been highlighted for streamlined development by the Western Solar Plan in the California Desert. The DRECP DFAs provide additional streamlining benefits on top of those available within the solar energy zones established by the Western Solar Plan, such as consistent and predictable survey and mitigation requirements.

In addition to permit review streamlining, the approved plan clearly defines conservation and management actions to mitigate the impacts of renewable energy development and other activities on BLM-managed lands. The actions include avoidance,

minimization, and if necessary, compensation. While the plan does not provide take coverage for renewable energy projects under the Endangered Species Act, these clear mitigation requirements provide certainty to project developers about the types of mitigation obligations that will be imposed.

In October 2015, a Durability Agreement between the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the BLM was signed that 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 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

