

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan
Path Forward - Frequently Asked Questions
June 2015

1. What is the path forward for finalizing the DRECP?

The agencies have adjusted the path forward based on public comments and the need to continue to work with local governments on the non-federal portion of the plan. A phased approach has been implemented for addressing the three components of the DRECP: 1) the Bureau of Land (BLM) Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA), 2) federal General Conservation Plan (GCP) and 3) state Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP).

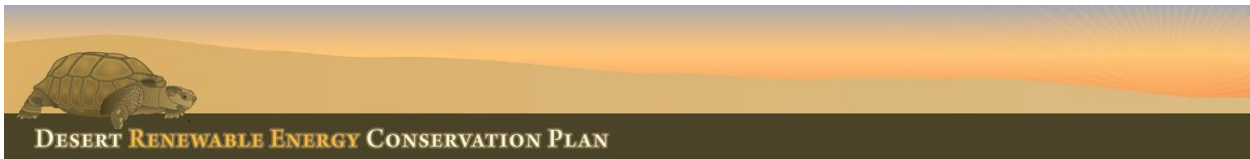
The agencies will start by completing the BLM component that designates, among other things, development focus areas, conservation areas, and recreation management areas on BLM administered lands.

The agencies are continuing to engage with local governments to inform the approach and timing for proceeding with the other DRECP components as they relate to private lands. The goal of local government engagement is to better align renewable energy development and conservation at the local, state and federal level.

2. What will be included in the BLM component of the Plan?

The draft DRECP includes a tremendous amount of scientific and analytical work. The public also provided numerous substantive comments. All of this work will inform the BLM component of the plan, as well as future phases. The BLM component of the plan will:

- Cover 9.8 million acres of BLM-managed public lands in 7 counties*
- Designate between 81,000 and 718,000 acres of Development Focus Areas (DFAs) on BLM-managed public lands for renewable energy development*
- Add between 1.6 to 5.3 million acres of BLM-managed lands to the National Landscape Conservation System, implementing the [Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009](#) ([link to statement](#) by President Barack Obama)*
- Implement Secretarial Order 3285 by encouraging timely and responsible development of renewable energy while protecting and enhancing the nation's water, wildlife, and other natural resources*
- Address species, ecosystem and climate adaptation for over 37 species and 31 natural communities as they relate to the federal lands element of the plan.*
- Protect recreation areas, uses and values, and recreation designations on between 2.4 to 3.6 million acres of BLM-managed lands*
- Protect cultural areas and values, scenic values and other desert resources through specific management actions, and conservation and recreation designations*



- *Refine previous work done through the [Western Solar Plan](#) and other planning processes by using the best available science and considering the full spectrum of land uses in the California desert*

3. Will the NCCP component of the DRECP move forward?

The agencies are currently considering the best approach to private lands conservation and renewable energy development in response to public comments and in concert with the Plan Area local governments. At this time, the agencies have developed options for moving Phase II forward, which include the possibility of a plan-wide NCCP, individual county NCCPs, or developing a coordinated, but less-formal, approach to siting and mitigating the impacts of renewable energy projects.

4. Will the GCP component of the DRECP move forward?

Similar to the NCCP, the agencies are currently exploring options with local governments for private lands conservation and renewable energy development in response to public comment.

5. What will the environmental analysis include for the first phase?

The first phase will focus on the BLM component of the DRECP, which will include an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The first phase will not include a final environmental impact report, the state equivalent of an environmental impact statement under CEQA. The first phase will also not include a Final EIS for the GCP.

6. What is the review and approval process for the BLM component of the plan?

The BLM will continue to work very closely with its federal, state, and local partners as it advances the federal land portion of the DRECP. The agencies will review the comments submitted during the public comment period on the Draft Plan and will work to finalize its land use plan and environmental document in consultation with agency partners. Depending on the scope of public comments, a final EIS is expected late fall 2015, with a record of decision in early 2016.

7. Will the State agencies be taking any action on the Plan this year?

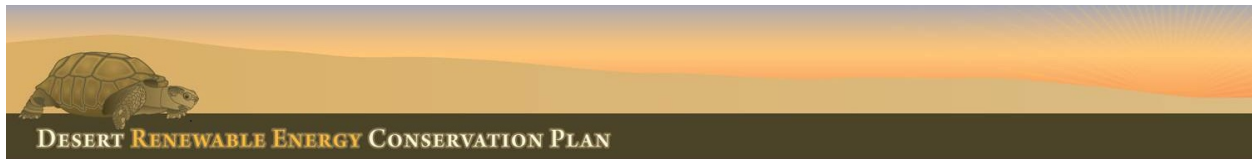
Yes. We are developing an approach and timeline based on a thorough analysis of public comments and dialogue with the local governments and other stakeholders. The State agencies will continue to work closely with the BLM to complete the BLM component of the plan. In addition, we will be working with the local governments on an individual basis to address their areas of concern and provide better coordination with existing county actions.

8. What action will the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) be taking this year?

The USFWS is working closely with the BLM and the other agencies as BLM finalizes the LUPA portion of the Plan. The BLM will be consulting with the USFWS on the LUPA in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

9. How will you engage with the tribes in the next phase of the DRECP?

The agencies will continue to engage the tribes in the DRECP process. The BLM has worked closely with desert tribes over the past several years, through hosting tribal leadership forums, conducting one-on-one government-to-government consultation, and providing technical information. The BLM will continue to consult with tribes in the coming months, with an emphasis on the public land elements of



the plan. The BLM remains committed to developing and executing a programmatic agreement to comply with Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Agreement; the phased approach should not affect the work being done on the programmatic agreement.

11. Will the BLM LUPA plan for 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy on public land?

No. The Draft DRECP included a planning assumption that there would be demand for about 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy in the DRECP plan area over the next 25 years. Only a portion of that development was expected to occur on public land. Although the BLM component of the DRECP is advancing first, the assumption that only a portion of renewable energy development in the desert will occur on public lands still holds true. The development focus areas located on BLM-managed land that will be presented in the final BLM LUPA will be within the range of alternatives presented in the Draft DRECP.

12. Will the BLM component of the DRECP still include Conservation and Management Actions?

Yes. Just like in the Draft DRECP, the BLM component will include Conservation and Management Actions that apply to BLM land designations (DFAs, National Conservation Lands, ACECs, SRMAs, and wildlife allocations). Conservation and Management Actions are avoidance, minimization, compensation, and additional conservation actions for biological and other resources that would meet the resource objectives of the plan.

13. Does the new phasing approach affect the draft Durability Agreement?

We are evaluating this as part of our review of comments. We believe that moving forward with the BLM component will have a neutral effect on implementation of the [durability agreement](#) between California and the BLM. This agreement will provide mechanisms to achieve project mitigation on public land.

14. How many comment letters did you receive?

We received about 12,000 [comment letters](#) from a diverse range of stakeholders including counties, cities, state and federal agencies, tribes, renewable energy industry, environmental organizations, recreation groups, local residents, and the general public, of which approximately 440 were unique letters, with the remaining being form letters. Public input on the draft has been valuable and is shaping the path forward for the final DRECP.