

DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN

AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Why is the BLM publishing this *Federal Register* notice?

A. This notice complies with a regulatory requirement for the BLM to publish proposed Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and their potential resource use restrictions in the *Federal Register*.

Q. How many ACECs is the BLM proposing in the DRECP?

A. The Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzed 134 ACECs in the range of alternatives, and included 130 ACECs in the preferred alternative, covering 5,976,000 acres (including 1,101,000 acres within WSAs and Wilderness Areas). These ACECs are being proposed for the conservation of important ecological and cultural resource values. No changes have been made to the proposed ACECs since the release of the DRECP Proposed LUPA/Final EIS.

Q. What use restrictions are the BLM proposing in the ACECs?

A. The DRECP proposes disturbance caps for each ACEC, as well as limitations on rights-of-way, specific design features and mitigation measures to protect cultural and biological resources. Renewable energy projects would not be allowed in ACECs.

Q. Is the BLM looking for public comment on the full DRECP?

A. No. The BLM and its partner agencies have accepted and considered extensive public comment on the DRECP as a whole during scoping; on the December 2012 draft alternatives; during a five month public comment period on the Draft DRECP; and during the

30-day protest period on the Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment. This 60-day public comment period is focused solely on the proposed ACECs included in the notice.

Q. Will there be another protest period?

A. No. A 30-day protest period was noticed in the *Federal Register* following publication of the Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment.

Q. How are the proposed ACEC designations affected by the new national monuments?

A. The proposed ACECs would conserve the same resource values that have been recognized through the designation of the Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, and Castle Mountain National Monuments. The BLM will ensure that the management of the ACECs is consistent with the proclamations for these monuments.

Q. What are the DRECP next steps?

A. After the 60-day public ACEC comment period, the BLM will consider comments related to the ACECs and make any necessary modifications to the plan. The BLM will also consider the remaining protest issues and will issue a protest resolution report concurrently with the Record of Decision approving the Land Use Plan Amendment.