

Summary of the Supplement to Draft PEIS: Revised Solar Plan Headed in the Right Direction

The Interior Department's revised solar plan for solar energy development on public lands proposes a **three-part approach to balancing the need for clean energy with protection of sensitive resources**. And it does so without changing the rules of the game for companies with pending applications. This revised plan was developed in response to extensive public comment, including joint recommendations offered by developers, major utilities, and conservation groups. While many details will need to be worked out in the months ahead, the revised plan is the right framework to advance responsible solar development on our public lands.

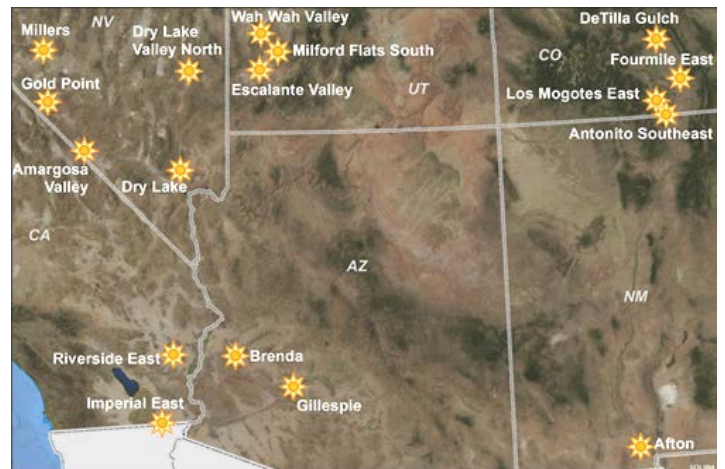
PEIS Fast Facts

- **What it covers:** a framework for solar energy development on BLM lands.
- **Lead Agencies:** Department of the Interior and Department of Energy
- **Affected Lands:** BLM lands in AZ, CA, CO, NM, NV, and UT
- **Potentially developable lands:** 20.8 million acres
- **First-generation zones:** 285,000 acres
- **Timeline:** Supplemental released October 2011; Comments due January 2012; Final decision due fall 2012

Solar Energy Development Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Solar PEIS)

The Solar PEIS is being prepared in order to assess agency actions and policies that would facilitate environmentally responsible utility-scale solar energy development in six western states—Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah. Through the Solar PEIS, the Department of the Interior can provide industry with greater certainty on where and how to develop projects, while also protecting diverse, rich and vulnerable wildlife and plants, outstanding recreational areas, and specially designated lands. **The Supplement improves upon the Draft Solar PEIS released in December 2010 in response to more than 80,000 comments.**

Ideally, the Solar PEIS will result in a **roadmap to the best solar resources** in the six states and set out a method for identifying additional development areas.



First-generation solar energy zones identified in the BLM's revised plan. Courtesy: Argonne National Lab.

A Balanced Approach That Avoids Conflicts through Early Engagement

The revised plan identifies specific areas where development should—and should not—occur based on solar potential and environmental impacts, including lands and wildlife. This early identification guides developers to places with fewer impacts through three avenues: **first generation solar energy zones**, prescreened for serious environmental impact and protected from competing uses; a clear process to receive developer-nominations to **propose new zones**; and a **variance process** to allow development of well-sited projects outside of zones. Taken as a package, these avenues present solar

companies with more than 20 million acres of potential options on public lands alone (see **Table 1**), not to mention the tremendous opportunities available on private lands, especially promising in appropriate areas. Efforts are already underway through the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan in California to identify public and private lands with fewer conflicts and high solar potential.

Table 1. Potentially Developable Acreage for Solar Energy on Public Lands under BLM's Three Alternatives

State	Total State	No Action Alternative	Revised Solar Plan (Preferred Alternative)	Zone-only Alternative
Arizona	72,700,000	9,181,178	3,397,007	6,465
California	100,200,000	10,815,285	1,354,559	153,627
Colorado	66,500,000	7,282,258	111,059	16,308
Nevada	70,300,000	40,760,443	9,207,288	60,395
New Mexico	77,800,000	11,783,665	4,292,279	29,964
Utah	52,700,000	18,098,240	1,962,671	18,658
Total	440,200,000	97,921,069	20,324,863	285,417

By investing in technical, environmental, and cultural clearances early in the process, DOI has outlined a system that will also provide greater certainty taxpayer money is not being wasted permitting projects with little chance of actually being built. It is in taxpayers' interest that DOI develop a comprehensive and environmentally responsible system for solar development on public lands, and this is another productive step in that direction.

– Ryan Alexander, President, Taxpayers for Common Sense

An Orderly Transition: Consistent Rules for Pending Applicants

The revised solar plan also takes care to address the primary concern expressed by developers during the comment period on the earlier draft, according to the BLM. Under the revised plan, most applications pending will be processed under the current policies (see **Table 2**). Only pending applications filed after June 30, 2009, within the first generation of designated zones will be subject to the new plan.

Table 2. The Proposed Plan Will Not Affect Most Active Applications

Application Location	Filing Date	Active Applications	Approx. Acres	Processing Approach
Inside Modified Zones	Pending applications	11	46,829	Processed under existing policies
	Authorized projects	2	8,975	Already permitted
	Available in zones	—	239,613	Subject to PEIS ROD
Outside Modified Zones	Before publication of Supplement	68	638,208	Processed under existing policies
	After publication of Supplement	0	0	New projects will be processed as a variance application
Total Grandfathered		79	685,037	

Note: Adaptation of BLM data, subject to policy prescriptions in Supplement Table 1.7-1

