

Restoration Design Energy Project (RDEP) Environmental Impact Statement

April 2011



BLM

Project Concept and Overview

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Arizona State Office is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify lands across Arizona that may be suitable for the development of renewable energy and to establish a baseline set of environmental protection measures for such projects.

Implementation of the RDEP will not only result in the identification of areas suitable for renewable energy development, but also provide for:

- Reuse of disturbed public lands;
- Production and community development of renewable energy;
- Good value for the taxpayer;
- Job creation and increased tax revenue; and
- Long-term business opportunities.

The BLM intends to use the results of the RDEP EIS to amend its land use plans across Arizona so that the plans identify those BLM-managed lands that are considered most suitable for renewable energy projects. While these amendments will only apply to BLM-managed lands, the EIS will examine all lands in Arizona and serve as an informational resource to the public, policy makers, and energy planners.

Collaborators and Public Involvement

The BLM has been working with a number of agencies and organizations to develop the RDEP and preliminary alternatives. They include the Arizona Department of Water Resources, Arizona Game & Fish Department, Arizona State Land Department, Arizona Corporation Commission, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Central Arizona Water Conservation District, US Bureau of Reclamation, US Environmental Protection Agency, and Western Area Power Administration. In addition, the public was invited to nominate previously disturbed parcels potentially suitable for renewable energy for the BLM's consideration.

Public involvement was also solicited during the scoping period and will occur several more times throughout the planning process. The BLM welcomes comments at any time during the process and encourages interested parties to share information that may help improve the preliminary alternatives. The next formal comment period will occur after the publication of the Draft EIS, scheduled for late 2011.

Preliminary Alternatives

The BLM is considering five conceptual alternatives and is interested in informal, early feedback on these ideas. The alternatives identify all lands within Arizona that could be suitable for renewable energy, but the BLM will only make decisions on those lands under its management. While a brief overview is provided here, you are encouraged to visit the project website for information about these preliminary alternatives, including detailed maps: http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/arra_solar.html

• **No Action Alternative**

Applications would continue to be processed in accordance with the BLM's existing plans and policies. Land use plan amendments may be required and would be dealt with on a project basis.

• **Alternative 1: Maximum REDAs**

Would designate Renewable Energy Development Areas (REDAs) on lands with no known sensitive resources. This alternative has the fewest constraints and serves as the baseline for other action alternatives.

• **Alternative 2: Transmission Line and Utility Corridor**

Would designate REDAs on lands with no known sensitive resources within 5 miles of utility corridors and transmission lines.

• **Alternative 3: Water Conservation and Protection**

Would focus on avoiding impacts to water resources by restricting development in water sensitive areas and applying additional protective measures.

• **Alternative 4: Load Offset**

Would designate REDAs on lands near the point of demand, such as towns and industrial facilities. Would promote the creation of renewable energy centers near the Palo Verde nuclear generating plant and the town of Gila Bend.

• **Alternative 5: Land Tenure REDA**

Would exchange public lands with renewable energy potential for State lands that have high conservation value. Land exchanges with the State of Arizona would be emphasized to enhance revenue generation for the Arizona State School Trust. Implementation of this alternative would require a change to the Arizona constitution.



Project Schedule

Draft EIS – Late 2011

Public Review of Draft EIS – Early 2012

Final EIS – Middle 2012

Record of Decision – Fall 2012

The Restoration Design Energy Project (RDEP), funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, will support the Secretary of the Interior's goals to build America's new energy future and to protect and restore treasured landscapes.

For Further Information Contact:

Kathy Pedrick
AZ_ARRA_RDEP@blm.gov
Arizona State Office
One N. Central Ave., Suite 800
Phoenix, AZ 85004

If you would like to be added to our electronic mailing list, please submit your e-mail address to:
andrew.gentile@empai.com

The BLM is eager to educate the interested public about this exciting project.

Stay up to date!

http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/arra_solar.html