



BLM FACT SHEET

U.S. Department of the Interior • Bureau of Land Management • Washington, D.C., Office • 1849 C Street N.W. • Washington, D.C.

Renewable Energy and the BLM: WIND

The Bureau of Land Management manages 20.6 million acres of public lands with wind potential. The BLM has authorized some 200 rights-of-way for the use of public lands for wind energy site testing or development. Of these, 31 development authorizations have a total installed capacity of some 440 megawatts.

A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) relating to the development of wind energy on the public lands was completed in June 2005. This EIS provides an analysis of the development of wind energy projects in the West. In conjunction with the publication of this EIS, the BLM amended 52 land use plans to allow for the use of applicable lands for wind energy development. BLM offices are able to use this EIS as an aid in analyzing impacts for specific applications for the use of public lands for wind energy use. The BLM issued a wind energy policy in December 2008 to provide guidance on best management practices (BMPs); measures to mitigate potential impacts on birds, wildlife habitat, and other resource values; and guidance on administering wind energy authorizations.

Wind power uses the naturally occurring energy of the wind for practical purposes like generating electricity, charging batteries, or pumping water. Wind turbines capture the kinetic energy in the wind, converting it into electrical energy. Utility-scale turbines are mounted on tall towers, usually 300 feet or more above the earth's surface, where the wind is faster and less turbulent. In utility-scale power applications, multiple turbines are connected to the utility grid, providing electricity when the wind blows.

For over a decade, wind energy has been the fastest growing energy technology worldwide, achieving an annual growth rate of over 30 percent. In the United States, the current total installed capacity is over 46,900 MW of wind projects.

Laws enacted in most of the Western states require energy companies to provide a portion their energy from renewable energy sources (Renewable Portfolio Standard). As a result, the BLM anticipates a continued interest in the use of public lands for renewable energy development.

The BLM continues to conduct studies necessary to evaluate and process applications for rights-of-way for the siting of wind energy projects and applications for rights-of-way for electric transmission lines from these projects. The BLM recently approved the first wind energy project on public lands in Nevada, with a potential capacity of 150 MW. The BLM currently has some 40 pending wind energy development applications on the public lands with a potential capacity of over 7,000 MW.

The BLM's wind energy program is part of ongoing efforts to improve the management of energy resources found on federal lands in a balanced way to ensure the Nation's economic and energy security and quality of life.

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