



# BLM Fact Sheet

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## **Guidelines Encourage Smarter Development of Renewable Energy on U.S. Public Lands**

On February 8, 2011, Secretary Salazar announced a number of initiatives designed to encourage rapid and responsible development of renewable energy on public lands. The policy guidance from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) provides clarity and guidance to stakeholders, including developers and employees, about smart siting and effective mitigation for renewable energy projects.

The BLM's final policy memoranda sets forth guidance to field managers in evaluating, screening, and processing applications for utility-scale wind and solar energy projects on BLM-managed lands. This field guidance clarifies and improves National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation; streamlines the project application review and approval process; and strengthens Plans of Development (POD) and due diligence requirements.

### **National Environmental Policy Act Compliance for Utility-Scale Renewable Energy Right-of-Way Authorizations** (Instruction Memorandum 2011-59)

- Utility-scale renewable energy projects are distinct from many other types of land and realty actions due to their size and potential for significant resource conflicts.
- Guidance includes examples and guidance applicable to renewable energy right-of-way applications that supplement information in the BLM's NEPA Handbook
- Will assist offices that are analyzing externally-generated, utility-scale renewable energy right-of-way applications.

### **Solar and Wind Energy Applications – Due Diligence** (Instruction Memorandum 2011-60)

- This guidance updates the due-diligence requirements of right-of-way applicants for solar and wind energy development projects on BLM-administered public lands.
- Applications for solar or wind energy rights-of-way filed by land speculators precludes other applicants with serious interests in the potential development of solar or wind energy resources on the public lands.
- Effects of speculation can be mitigated by applying the applicant qualification requirements of the right-of-way regulations and requiring the timely submittal of a Plan of Development (POD) consistent with the requirements of the regulations.

- The guidance emphasizes the review of pending applications and the rejection of any applications where the applicant cannot demonstrate the technical or financial capability required by the regulations.
- Requiring a proof of due diligence by the applicant in the timely submittal of an acceptable POD ensures that applicants are not holding lands for extended periods and precluding other applicants with serious interests in potential development of the public lands.
- The BLM will deny applications where the applicant has not demonstrated due diligence in the completion and submittal of an acceptable POD to the BLM for review.

**Solar and Wind Energy Applications – Pre-Application and Screening** (Instruction Memorandum 2011-61)

- This guidance underlines the right-of-way regulations that encourage prospective applicants to schedule pre-application meetings with the BLM before filing an application for a proposed solar or wind energy development project on the public lands because of the importance of early coordination with Federal land managers and stakeholders before committing significant resources to processing solar and wind energy development right-of-way applications.
- Under this guidance, the BLM will not accept a solar or wind energy development right-of-way application without holding pre-application meetings.
- Early coordination and review helps screen out projects with the most serious potential environmental conflicts and helps give priority to applications with the highest likelihood of success in the permitting process.
- The BLM will follow a screening and prioritization process that will help direct development to low-conflict areas such as previously disturbed sites, areas adjacent to disturbed sites, and locations that minimize construction of new roads and/or transmission lines.