



BLM NEWS RELEASE

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BLM Announces 2011 Priority Renewable Energy Projects

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The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced a list of 19 projects for developing renewable energy within the National System of Public Lands to which the agency is giving priority in 2011. In making the announcement, BLM Director Bob Abbey emphasized that these projects fit with the Administration's onshore renewable energy efforts.

"The BLM is committed to giving priority to renewable energy projects that are smart from the start and will help diversify this country's energy portfolio in an environmentally responsible manner," Abbey said. "The process of screening for priority projects is about focusing our staff and resources on the most promising renewable energy projects."

The priority list (<http://blm.gov/9p5c>) includes nine solar projects, five wind projects, and five geothermal projects throughout the western U.S. The solar projects' potential output is about 2,673 megawatts. The five wind projects total about 1,024 megawatts of potential output, and the five geothermal projects total about 489 megawatts of potential output. Potential output may change depending on the analysis and review of each project.

The priority list was developed in collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service, with an emphasis on early consultation. The screening criteria for priority solar and wind projects, developed through BLM policy [memoranda issued in February 2011](#), assisted in evaluating and screening these utility-scale projects on BLM-managed lands.

To be a priority project, a company must demonstrate to the BLM that the project has progressed far enough to formally start the environmental review and public participation process, as well as have the potential to be cleared for approval by the end of 2011. In addition, the projects must be sited in an area that minimizes impacts to the environment. The projects are largely low-to-medium conflict, in accordance with the BLM's recent policy guidance on pre-application screening.

Projects that did not meet the screening requirements of the instruction memorandum were not included on the 2011 priority projects list, and were designated lower priority. Such projects require a greater level of consultation, analysis, and mitigation to resolve issues, or may not be feasible to authorize.

All renewable energy projects proposed for BLM-managed lands will receive the full environmental review required by the National Environmental Protection Act, and will include the same opportunities for public involvement required for all other land-use decision-making by the BLM.

“We will not be cutting corners in processing the applications for these projects, especially when it comes to environmental analyses or opportunities for public participation,” Abbey said.

Eight of the 19 priority projects fall into a category called “connected action” projects, which are projects located on private land. These are projects that require BLM authorization for offsite facilities and provide the opportunity to develop renewable energy without significantly impacting federal lands.

The BLM has recently developed several policies to assist in the processing of solar and wind energy applications on the public lands. These policies were developed from recommendations offered by federal and state agencies, industry and environmental groups based on lessons learned from last year’s “fast-track” renewable energy initiatives. The policy guidance is available online as follows:

- [National Environmental Policy Act Compliance for Utility-Scale Renewable Energy Right-of-Way Authorizations \(http://blm.gov/y15c\)](http://blm.gov/y15c)
- [Solar and Wind Energy Applications: Due Diligence \(http://blm.gov/z15c\)](http://blm.gov/z15c)
- [Solar and Wind Energy Applications: Pre-Application Screening \(http://blm.gov/x15c\)](http://blm.gov/x15c)

Today’s announcement follows a previous round of projects in 2010, in which the BLM made significant progress with solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects on the public lands. The largest project was the 1,000-megawatt Blythe Solar Power Project in Riverside County, Calif. The approval of the Crescent Dunes Solar Project in Nye County, Nevada, in December 2010 brought the potential output of nine approved solar projects to more than 3,600 megawatts. The BLM also approved one wind project (150 megawatts), and two geothermal projects (nearly 80 megawatts).

The BLM manages more land - over 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM’s multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.