



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Renewable Energy Project Application Evaluation Process for Variance Areas

Fact Sheet—Southern Nevada District Office, Nevada

The Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement allows for responsible utility-scale solar energy development in variance areas outside of Solar Energy Zones in accordance with the established variance process. The variance process is part of the overall application evaluation determination.

The BLM considers right-of-way applications for utility-scale solar energy development in variance areas on a case-by-case basis based on environmental considerations; coordination with appropriate federal, state and local agencies and tribes; and public outreach. The focus of the variance process is to collect data and evaluate it to assess the appropriateness of the proposal.

As part of the variance process, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed project would avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the impacts to sensitive resources, according to standards set out by the Solar PEIS (<https://blmsolar.anl.gov/program/design-features/>.) The applicant must also demonstrate that the project is compatible with state and local plans, that it can acquire all required permits and approvals to implement the project, and that any potential conflicts with sensitive resources have been assessed. The Variance Factors Analysis provides this information to the BLM Field Office for the project right-of-way application review.

As part of application evaluation, the BLM will host a public information forum and provide a public input period for the renewable energy project. Information gathered during the public input period will inform the BLM's determination on whether to continue to process or to deny the right-of-way application (application evaluation/variance process determination).

The application evaluation/variance process determination, is separate and comes before the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

For more information about the application evaluation process, please see the graphic on the next page.

Solar Project Application Received

Solar Project Prioritization Process

•Interdisciplinary Team Review

•Priority Recommendation

•Priority Determination

Solar Application Evaluation

•Public Information Forums

•Agency Coordination

This step includes the Solar PEIS variance process if application is within designated variance area and subject to the variance process.

BLM to Determine Whether to Process or Deny Application After Application Evaluation

If BLM determines to continue processing the application

National Environmental Policy (NEPA) Process

•NEPA Analysis

•Public Involvement