

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan Overview

The California desert is home to unique species and habitats, a rich cultural and historical heritage and recreational opportunities that attract visitors from around the world. The California desert also has an abundance of solar, wind and geothermal energy resources that have played and will continue to play a critical role in diversifying the nation's energy supply, addressing climate change and promoting energy independence in the coming decades.

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a landscape-scale planning effort undertaken to achieve two sets of overarching goals:

- **Facilitating Renewable Energy Development:** The plan identifies specific development focus areas that possess high-quality renewable energy potential, have access to transmission, are in areas where environmental impacts can be managed and mitigated.
- **Conserving Sensitive Desert Resources:** The plan specifies species, ecosystem and climate adaptation requirements for desert wildlife, and includes measures that protect important recreational, cultural and other desert resources.

The DRECP covers 22.5 million acres and is a collaborative effort between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Energy Commission (CEC) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

The Draft DRECP, released in September 2014 for public review and comment, included five alternatives designed to achieve the planning effort's overall renewable energy and conservation goals. In March of 2015, the DRECP agencies announced that completion of the DRECP planning effort would follow a phased approach.



PHASE I—PUBLIC LANDS

The first phase covers the 10.8 million acres of lands managed by the BLM. The Final EIS for Phase I was released in November 2015 after incorporating feedback received from other agencies, local government, stakeholder groups and public comments. The Record of Decision (ROD) signed in September 2016, finalizes the public lands component of the plan and serves as the foundation for achieving the broader energy and conservation goals of the DRECP.

The land use plan approved by the BLM includes land use designations that support the DRECP's overall renewable energy and conservation goals, as well as measure designed to protect other values and uses of the public lands. Key designations include:

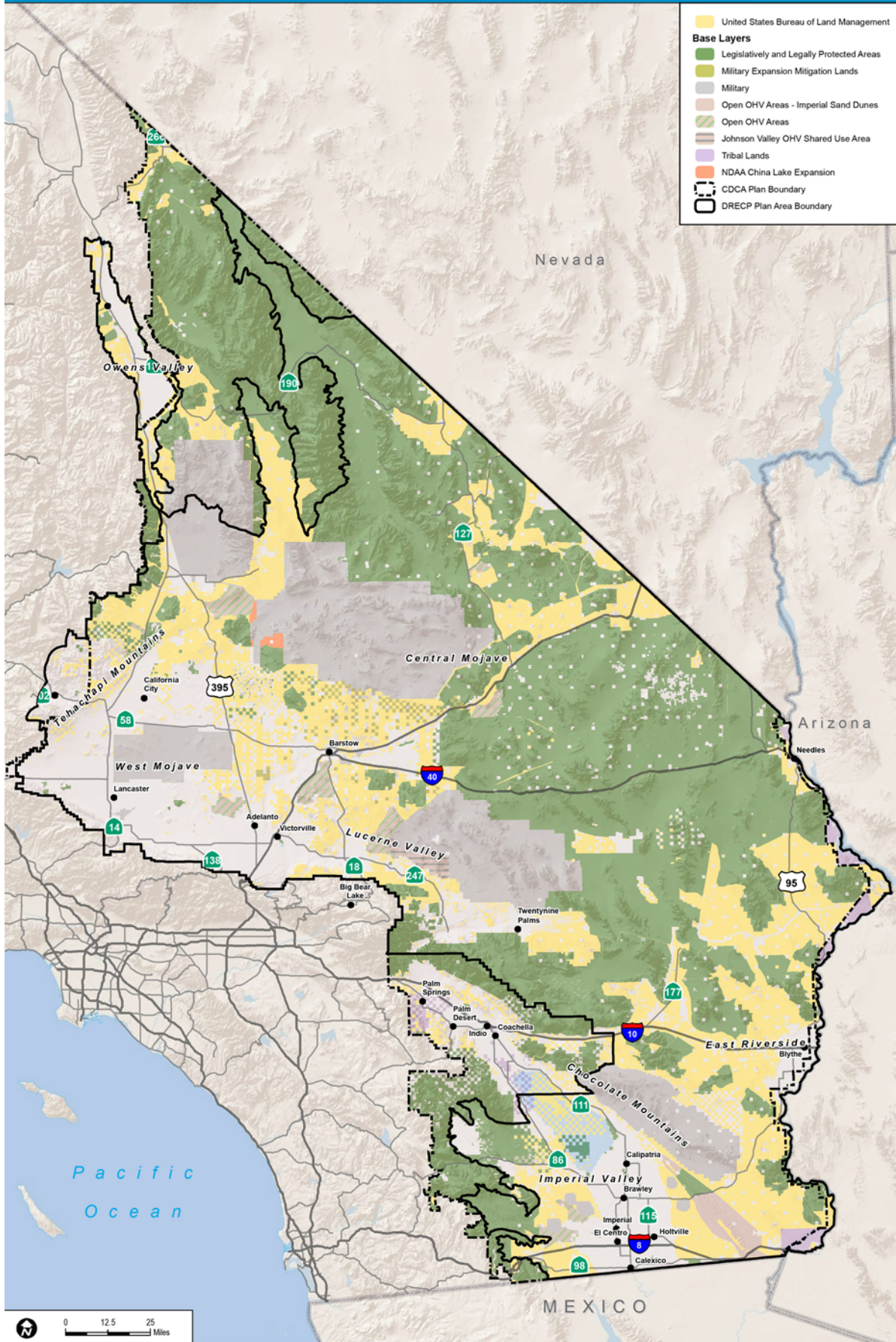
- **Development Focus Areas** – 388,000 acres of public lands managed by the BLM are available for solar, wind, and geothermal development. Applications benefit from a streamlined permitting process with predictable survey requirements and simplified mitigation measures.
- **Conservation Designations** – 4.2 million acres of public lands managed by the BLM are designated as California Desert National Conservation Lands, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, wildlife allocations, and National Scenic and Historic Trail management corridors to conserve biological, cultural and other values. Lands within these designations are closed to renewable energy, and the BLM will not accept applications in these areas.
- **Recreation Designations** – 3.5 million acres of public lands managed by the BLM are designated as Special Recreation Management Areas and Extensive Recreation Management Areas to recognize a range of recreational values in the desert. Lands within these designations are generally closed to renewable energy.

- **Variance Lands** – 40,000 acres of public lands managed by the BLM are potentially available for renewable energy development but require an extensive pre-application process to collect additional information before BLM makes a determination on an application.
- **General Public Lands** – 400,000 acres of public lands managed by the BLM are not covered by any of the above designations, although the DRECP creates new management prescriptions for these lands. These lands are potentially available for renewable energy development. Examples of General Public Lands include scattered parcels surrounded by private land, lands underneath the Salton Sea, and lands with existing development such as mines, highways, etc. that haven't seen development demand. These areas were formerly called Unallocated Lands.

PHASE II – STATE AND PRIVATE LANDS

Phase II focuses of the DRECP is focused on aligning local, state and federal renewable energy development and conservation plans, policies and goals. This work includes building off of the Renewable Energy Conservation Planning Grants that were awarded by the California Energy Commission to counties in the planning area. These county planning efforts are critical because counties have the primary land-use and permitting authority on private lands in their counties.





Sources: ESRI (2016); CEC (2013); BLM (2016); CDFW (2013); USFWS (2013)

FIGURE 2
DRECP LUPA Decision Area