

Colorado Solar Regional Mitigation Strategy & San Luis Valley-Taos Plateau Landscape Assessment



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Visual Resources

Potential Impacts of Solar Energy Development:

Direct:

- Decrease in scenic quality of SEZ lands
- Adverse impacts on night sky viewing due to facility lighting
- Annoyance from facility glint and glare

Indirect:

- None identified

Cumulative (resulting from solar development in the SEZs and changes occurring outside the SEZs):

- From solar development of more than one SEZ
- From other development near the SEZs (for example, new solar on private lands, new roads or towns)
- From other changes, such as climate change, invasive species spread, or wildfires

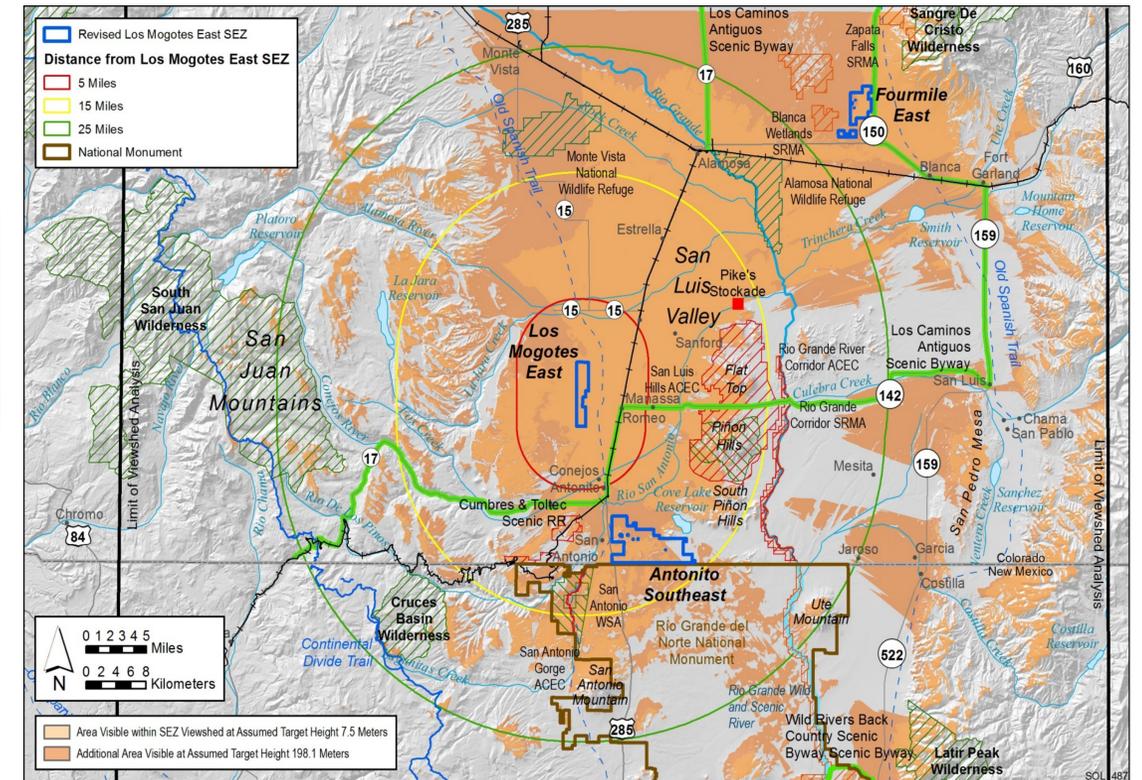
SEZs AND SPECIALLY-DESIGNATED AREAS THAT COULD BE IMPACTED:

Antonito SE SEZ: 40% of SEZ is currently classified as having moderate scenic quality and would have decreased quality. Strong Visual Contrasts - San Antonio WSA, Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway, West Fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail, the community of Antonito, some viewpoints within the newly designated Rio Grande del Norte National Monument. Moderate Visual Contrasts - high-elevation viewpoints in the San Luis Hills WSA, San Luis Hills ACEC, and portions of the Cumbres Toltec Scenic Railroad (CTSR) Corridor and ACEC.

Los Mogotes E SEZ: The entire SEZ is currently classified as having moderate scenic quality and would have decreased quality. Strong Visual Contrasts - Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway, West Fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail, and for the communities of Manassa, Romeo, and Sanford. Moderate Visual Contrasts - San Luis Hills WSA and ACEC, the community of La Jara, possibly some viewpoints within the newly designated Rio Grande del Norte National Monument.

De Tilla Gulch SEZ: The entire SEZ is currently classified as having moderate scenic quality and would have decreased quality. Strong Visual Contrasts - Old Spanish National Historic Trail, U.S. 285 (proposed Cochetopa Scenic Byway).

NOTE: Field verification of PEIS findings is now ongoing. Expect some contrast ratings will decrease because power tower applications will not be accepted (see below). Also visibility from some locations will be reduced due to screening by vegetation.



Example viewshed analysis for the Los Mogotes SEZ, showing overlay with sensitive visual resources. Modified from Solar PEIS.



Glare from Alamosa PV Solar Facility, San Luis Valley. Source: Sullivan 2014



Sun Edison PV Facility, San Luis Valley. Source: Sullivan 2014



Solar One 75 MW Parabolic Trough Facility on 400 acres near Las Vegas NV. Source: Sullivan 2014

Examples of Required Onsite Avoidance Measures:

- No development of power tower facilities.
- Assess degree of impact at key observation points (KOPs; for example scenic overlooks, trails, campgrounds) within 25 miles of the SEZs; avoid siting within the viewshed of the KOPs.

Examples of Required Onsite Minimization Measures:

- Site and design facilities to minimize glint and glare and unnecessary lighting.
- Where facilities cannot be sited outside the viewshed of KOPs, minimize visual dominance of projects by maximizing distance from the KOPs.
- Color treat structures to reduce contrasts with existing landscape.
- Where possible, use non-reflective materials, coatings, and/or paint.
- Use full cutoff luminaires.
- Direct lights properly to eliminate light spill and trespass.
- Minimize use of signs and make signs visually unobtrusive.
- For Antonito Southeast SEZ, special visual impact mitigation will be considered for development on lands in the SEZ visible from and within 3 miles of the centerline of the West Fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail.
- For Antonito Southeast SEZ, special visual impact mitigation will be considered for solar development on lands in the SEZ visible from and within 3 miles of the CTSR ACEC and San Antonio WSA. Coordination with the CTSR Commission is recommended.