

# Elements of BLM's Proposed Solar Energy Program (as modified in the Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS\*)

- Identifies lands to be excluded from solar energy development, such as:
  - Lands with low solar resource potential and high slope
  - Critical habitat for listed species under the Endangered Species Act
  - *Additional sensitive habitat for Greater Sage-Grouse and Gunnison's Sage-Grouse*
  - Wilderness, and other high-conservation-value lands
  - Important historic location
  - *Lands previously proposed for inclusion in SEZs now determined to be inappropriate for development*
  - *Lands within the proposed Mojave Trails National Monument in California*
  - *BLM-administered lands in California proposed for transfer to the National Park Service*
  - *Individual additional areas identified by BLM State or field offices as requiring exclusion due to ecological or cultural concerns*
  - Considering the above exclusions, there would be approximately 20 million acres of BLM-administered lands where a variance application for solar energy development could be considered (*approximately 22 million acres were proposed to be available in the Draft Solar PEIS*).
- Identifies priority areas that are well suited for utility-scale production of solar energy (solar energy zones or SEZs), based on criteria including:
  - proximity to roads and transmission lines or designated corridors
  - generally, size of 2,500 acres (8.1 km<sup>2</sup>) or greater
  - existing land use plans, local conditions, and institutional knowledge
  - A total of approximately 285,000 acres of BLM-administered lands are included in 17 *proposed SEZs*; only these lands would be available under the solar energy zone program *alternative* (*approximately 677,400 acres in 24 SEZs were proposed to be available in the Draft Solar PEIS*).
- *Identifies variance areas outside of priority areas where applications would be considered:*
  - Approximately 20 million acres open for variance applications
  - Developers must adhere to the variance process
  - The BLM will determine whether it is appropriate to continue to process a variance application or to deny the application
- Establishes policies for utility-scale solar energy development on public lands
- Establishes mitigation requirements (called “design features”) for utility-scale solar energy development on public lands to ensure the most environmentally responsible development and delivery of solar energy. The design features include:
  - Requirements for mitigation of impacts across a broad range of resources of concern, including specially designated areas, recreation, water, ecological, visual, cultural, socioeconomic, health and safety (*the Supplement did not change the programmatic design features presented in the Draft Solar PEIS, but proposed some additional SEZ-specific design features*)
  - Requirements for many project-specific plans (for example, dust abatement, ecological resource mitigation, habitat restoration and management)
- Amendment of land use plans to incorporate the new Solar Energy Program
  - Identifying lands excluded from development and lands where development will be prioritized
  - Adopting policies and design features for solar energy development on BLM-administered lands

\*Changes from the Draft Solar PEIS are shown in italics

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# Solar PEIS Alternatives and Reasonably Foreseeable Development Scenario (RFDS)

## BLM Alternatives and RFDS

- ▶ BLM's two **Action Alternatives** would establish a new Solar Energy Program of policies and required design features.
  - the **Solar Energy Development Program Alternative** makes about 20 million acres of land available for application, prioritizes development in Solar Energy Zones (SEZs, total of about 285,000 acres)
  - The **Solar Energy Zone Program Alternative** makes only lands within the SEZs available for application
- ▶ The **No Action Alternative** continues use of existing solar energy policies in conformance with applicable land use plans. Solar energy ROW applications could be considered on about 99 million acres of BLM-administered land (where such use is not specifically prohibited).
- ▶ The **RFDS** is the amount of power projected to be generated through solar energy development in the 6-state study area through the year 2030. It is estimated to be about 24,000 MW on 214,000 acres of public (BLM-administered) lands. The RFDS applies to all three BLM alternatives.

## DOE Alternatives and RFDS

- ▶ DOE's **Action Alternative** presents programmatic guidance that would be used to further integrate environmental considerations into its analysis and selection of solar projects.
- ▶ Under the **No Action Alternative**, DOE would continue to conduct environmental reviews of DOE-supported solar projects on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ DOE can support solar projects on any lands, therefore the **RFDS** is higher under the DOE alternatives; it is estimated to be about 32,000 MW on about 285,000 acres of public and non-public lands through the year 2030. The RFS applies to both DOE alternatives.

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# Solar PEIS Timeline

## Public Scoping

- Initial scoping period: May - July 2008
- Second scoping period: June - September 2009

## Draft PEIS

- Notice of Availability for Draft PEIS: December 17, 2010
- Public Comment Period: December 17, 2010 – May 2, 2011

## Supplement to the Draft PEIS

- Secretary of the Interior announces plan to supplement the Draft PEIS: July 14, 2011
- Notice of Availability for Supplement: October 28, 2011
- Public Comment Period: October 28, 2011 – January 27, 2012

## Final PEIS

- Schedule to be determined based on numbers and types of comments received on the Supplement
- Planned for Summer 2012

## Record of Decision (ROD)

- Planned for Fall 2012

### Public Scoping

5/2008 – 9/2009

### Draft PEIS

12/2010 – 5/2011

### Supplement

10/2011-1/2012

### Final PEIS

Planned Summer 2012

### ROD

Planned Fall 2012



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# How to Comment on the Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS

There are 3 ways to provide comments:

## 1. Oral Comments at this public meeting

- Sign up to speak at the registration desk
  - Speakers will be called in the order of sign-up; those who registered on the project Web site will be called first
- Making an oral comment:
  - State your name and affiliation
  - Limit comments to content of the Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS
- Comments will be recorded in transcripts that will be posted on the project Web site

## 2. Online Written Comments via the project Web site:

- Use the online comment form at: <http://solareis.anl.gov/involve/comments>
- Attachments of up to 15 MB can be included

## 3. Mailed Written Comments and/or Supplemental Material

- Mail to: Solar Energy Draft PEIS  
Argonne National Laboratory  
9700 S. Cass Avenue – EVS/240  
Argonne, IL 60439

**Comments will be accepted through January 27, 2012.**  
(The agencies have no plans to extend the comment period,  
and it is unlikely that any late comments can receive consideration).

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