

Appendix N. Analysis for Renewable Energy Sensitivity

Utility-scale renewable energy facilities are those in which the proponent has signed a purchase power agreement with a utility company to sell power. These facilities typically produce more than 100MW of power. The analysis conducted for Alternatives B through E is based on GIS data depicting a number of data sets that imply varying degrees of sensitivity of the natural and human environment to proposed utility-scale renewable energy development as described below. Those data layers were used to characterize BLM-managed public lands in one of four sensitivity categories, as identified below:

- Prohibited: Utility-scale renewable energy projects would be excluded from these areas and applications would be rejected.
- High sensitivity: Utility-scale renewable energy applications could be in non-conformance with land-use plans, no mitigation options exist for potential resource damage, and proposals would be avoided.
- Moderate sensitivity: Utility-scale renewable energy development would be entertained, but it is likely a planning objective or a resource would be adversely affected. Proposals would be avoided.
- Low known sensitivity: The known plan or resource conflicts are low, so application processing will likely proceed with little to no expected conflicts. However, upon site-specific inspections, resource conflicts may still be found that represent significant conflicts.

Applications filed within the Decision Areas would require site-specific NEPA analysis. The polygons depicted on Maps 2-7b, 2-7c, 2-7d, and 2-7e do not imply a preauthorization, but simply depict areas with the least known conflicts on public lands. Other conflicts may be revealed as site-specific analyses are conducted. Action alternatives (B, C, D, and E) management actions state that utility-scale renewable energy project applications will be rejected if the project area lies within a “prohibited” area and avoided if they lie in a “high or moderate” sensitivity area.

The GIS data analyzed to derive the four categories are described below:

- Prohibited: where public lands are legally excluded from consideration by presidential decree, congressional designation, secretarial designation, BLM policy, other forms of withdrawal, or public lands where proposals would be incompatible with RMP decisions. These areas include:
 - Sonoran Desert National Monument (all alternatives),
 - Designated wilderness areas (all alternatives),
 - Juan Batista de Anza National Historic Trail (all alternatives),
 - Fred J. Weiler (PL 1015 lands) (all alternatives),
 - Sentinel Plain (military land relinquished back to the BLM with restrictions related to public safety) (all action alternatives),

- VRM Class I (all action alternatives),
- ACECs (all action alternatives),
- Lands Managed to Maintain Wilderness Characteristics (all action alternatives),
- Cultural sites allocated to a use category (such as public and conservation use sites) (all action alternatives) and,
- Developed or other intensive use recreation areas (all action alternatives for Painted Rock Campground, Gunsight Wash camping area and trailheads; San Tan Mountains RMZ in alternative B only).
- **High Sensitivity:** includes public lands where proposals would be incompatible with RMP decisions or where mitigation would prove particularly difficult, costly, impractical, or impossible. These areas include:
 - Desert Tortoise Category I and II habitats (all action alternatives),
 - Desert Tortoise Category III habitats (only in alternative D),
 - VRM Class II (all action alternatives),
 - Wildlife movement corridors (only in alternative D),
 - Wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) (only in alternative D),
 - Back country recreation settings (all action alternatives),
 - Byways (1 mile wide, ½ mile from either side of the byway's centerline) (all action alternatives),
 - BLM threatened and endangered species habitats (excluding candidate species) (all action alternatives), and
 - The Fred J. Weiler Green Belt (non-PL 1015 lands) (all action alternatives).
- **Moderate Sensitivity:** includes public lands where resource conditions or RMP decisions would not necessarily preclude the project, but mitigation would likely be required. Some of these areas include those areas that may have considerable public opposition to a proposal (e.g., areas inventoried as having wilderness characteristics but not managed for such characteristics). These areas include:
 - SRMAs (all action alternatives),
 - Desert tortoise Category III habitats, (alternatives B, C and E),
 - VRM Class III (all action alternatives),
 - Wildlife movement corridors (alternatives B, C and E),
 - Wildlife habitat areas (WHAs) (alternatives C and E),
 - Arizona State threatened, endangered, and sensitive species' habitats (all action alternatives),

- BLM threatened and endangered candidate species habitats (all action alternatives),
- Areas with high locatable mineral potential (all alternatives), and
- SCRMAAs (excluding public use sites mentioned above) (all action alternatives).
- Low Known Sensitivity: includes public lands that remain after the above categories have been removed (i.e., public lands with the lowest known conflict). Projects would still require site-specific NEPA analysis.

No judgment has been made as to the suitability of these lands for any kind of renewable energy production. In its raw form, it has not been rearranged to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory solar production zones, wind production zones, geothermal production areas, Western Governors Association “Western Renewable Energy Zones,” or any other dataset that would bias the outcome.