



Meeting Information

Welcome

- Yates Auditorium Safety Video
- Housekeeping

Agenda


- Opening Remarks from BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning
- BLM Presentation
- Public Comments



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

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Utility-Scale Solar Energy

An aerial photograph of a vast solar farm in a desert landscape. The solar panels are arranged in long, parallel rows, reflecting the bright sunlight. The surrounding terrain is arid and flat, with some distant mountains visible on the horizon under a clear sky.

**Public Scoping Meeting
Yates Auditorium, Washington, D.C.
January 12, 2023
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. EST)**



Why is the BLM Preparing the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic EIS?

Purpose

- Focus the BLM's utility-scale solar energy planning on **resource management** on public lands managed by the BLM
- Expand solar energy planning to additional states
- Increase opportunities for **responsible renewable energy development**
- Develop appropriate criteria to **exclude high-value resource areas** from renewable energy development

Need

- Advance the **goals** of Executive Order 14008 and the Energy Act of 2020
- Advance current and future renewable energy goals and support **conservation and climate priorities**





Why is the BLM Preparing the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic EIS? (cont'd)

- The BLM's initial utility scale solar energy planning was completed in 2012
- Solar energy technology has advanced
- Demand has increased beyond the original 6 states



Oberon Solar Project, Desert Center, CA



Your Engagement Matters

- A lot has changed since 2012
- We need your help in designing the road map for Solar Energy development for the next decade and beyond
- Thank you for being here.
- This presentation:
 - Quick overview of 2012 plan
 - Overview of the questions we're considering now



Background: 2012 Western Solar Plan

- Implemented a comprehensive Solar Energy Program through land use plan amendments to administer the development of utility-scale solar energy resources on BLM-administered public lands in six southwestern states:
 - Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah
- Designated lands as:
 - **Priority areas** called solar energy zones or SEZ (285,000 acres)
 - Areas **excluded** based on 32 exclusion criteria (78.6 million acres)
 - **Variance** areas open to development (19.3 million acres)



Background: 2012 Western Solar Plan (cont'd)

State	Total State Acreage (Public + Other Lands)	BLM-Administered Lands Potentially Available for Development (acres)	Exclusion Areas (acres) ^a	Variance Areas (acres)	SEZ Areas (acres)
Arizona	72,700,000	9,181,179	5,794,336	3,380,877	5,966
California	100,200,000	10,815,285	9,895,580	766,078	153,627
Colorado	66,500,000	7,282,258	7,170,822	95,128	16,308
Nevada	70,300,000	40,760,443	31,623,903	9,076,145	60,395
New Mexico	77,800,000	11,783,665	7,569,181	4,184,520	29,964
Utah	52,700,000	18,098,240	16,269,823	1,809,759	18,658
Total	440,200,000	97,921,069	78,323,645	19,312,506	284,918

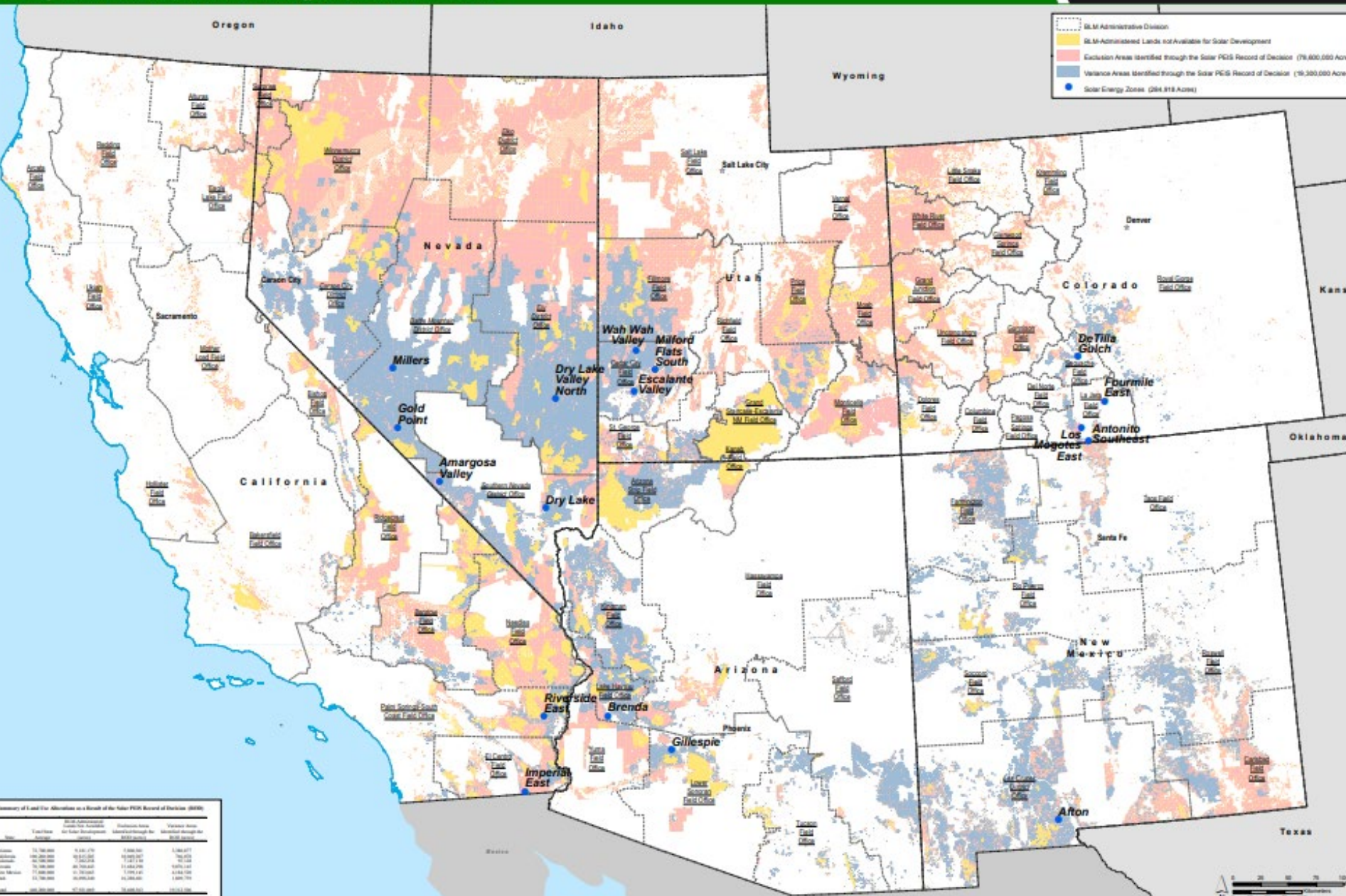
^a The acreage estimates were calculated on the basis of the best available geographic information system (GIS) data. GIS data were not available for the entire set of exclusions. Exclusions that could not be mapped would be identified during the ROW application process. To convert acres to km², multiply by 0.004047.

Land Use Allocations in the Six-State Study Area as a Result of the Solar PEIS Record of Decision

Data from Solar PEIS, July 2012



Property of the U.S. Departments of Energy and the Interior for use in preparation of their Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Solar Energy Development in Six Southwestern States



Summary of Land Use Allocations as a Result of the Solar PEIS Record of Decision (2012)

State	Total Area (Acres)	BLM-Administered Lands not Available for Solar Development (Acres)	Exclusion Areas Identified through the Solar PEIS Record of Decision (Acres)	Variance Areas Identified through the Solar PEIS Record of Decision (Acres)
Arizona	15,700,000	5,200,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
California	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Colorado	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Nevada	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Utah	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
New Mexico	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Texas	100,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000
Total	500,000,000	50,000,000	50,000,000	50,000,000





Summary of Solar Energy Projects

As of December 2022, BLM has permitted **41 projects** totaling **9,272 MW** across **75,000 acres**:*

- Arizona: 4 operational (0.66 MW) & 3 pending construction (725 MW)
- California: 11 operational (2,987 MW) & 8 pending construction (2,817 MW)
- Nevada: 6 operational (659 MW) & 5 pending construction (1,401 MW)
- New Mexico: 1 operational (2 MW) & 1 pending construction (1 MW)
- Utah: 1 pending construction (600 MW)
- Wyoming: 1 operational (80 MW)

* This summary is limited to projects on BLM-administered public land.

For more information, please refer to BLM's Solar Energy Permitting Resources (<https://blmsolar.anl.gov/>).



NEPA and the EIS Process

What is an EIS?

- An EIS provides a comprehensive **analysis of environmental and socioeconomic impacts**
- Describes the **purpose and need** for the proposed program
- Identifies environmental **impacts and mitigation**
- Analyzes **alternatives** to a proposed action
- Analyzes the **short- and long-term impacts, cumulative impacts**, and the **commitment of resources** that could result
- Describes how **public concerns** were treated in the analysis



NEPA and the EIS Process

What is a Programmatic EIS?

- A programmatic EIS evaluates **impacts** or **effects** of broad agency actions, such as development of programs or setting of national policies
- It **does not** evaluate specific projects
- It considers **generic impacts** of actions
 - In this case, of utility scale solar development
- Decisions, such as new land use allocations, will be incorporated through **plan amendments**
- Specific solar development proposals will go through separate NEPA process.

The Council of Environmental Quality's guidance on the [Effective Use of Programmatic NEPA Reviews](#) provides additional information.

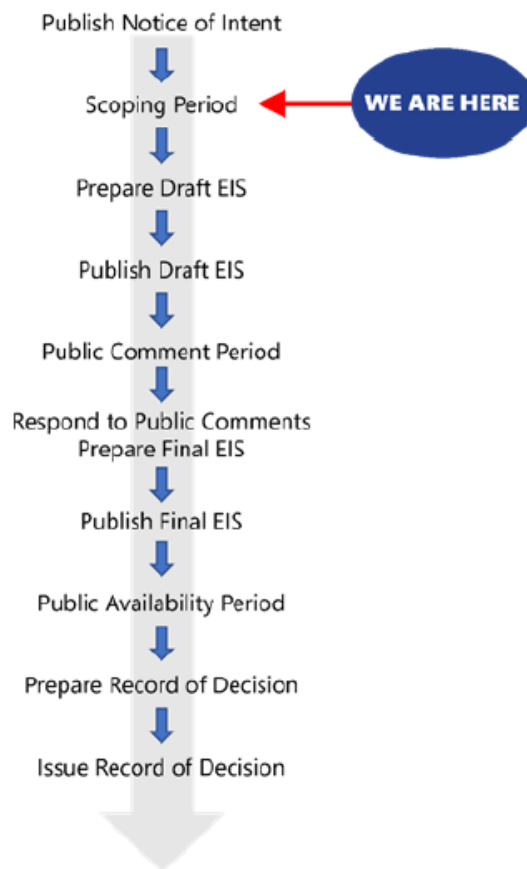


NEPA and the EIS Process

What is Scoping?

- Scoping is an opportunity for the public to help agencies identify relevant issues and potential alternatives
 - Significant issues to be analyzed
 - Possible mitigation measures
 - Availability of data
 - Interested individuals and organizations and specific concerns
- Scoping occurs early in the NEPA process

National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement Process





Renewable Energy Coordination Offices (RECO)

- National RECO
- Individual state RECOs within the Arizona, California, and Nevada State Offices
- Regional RECO to support program work across Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming
- State and Regional RECOs review and process renewable energy project applications for the development of solar, wind, and geothermal energy resources and associated electrical transmission systems on public lands.



Scope of Notice of Intent

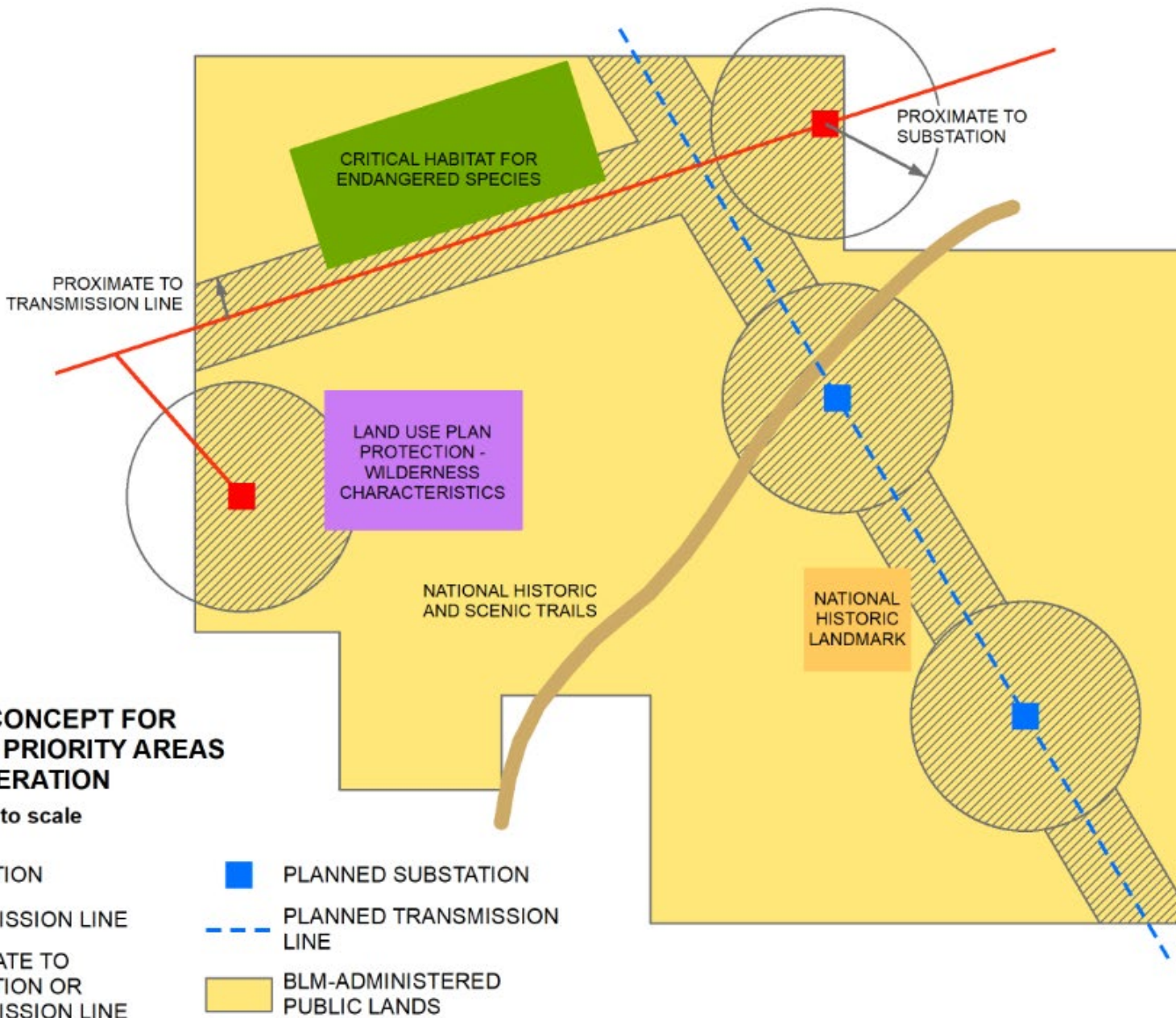
1. Expand the study area
2. Land use allocations
3. Exclusion criteria
4. Variance process
5. Utility-scale definition
6. Incentivize development in priority areas





2. Land Use Allocations – Priority Areas

- Consider establishing priority areas on covered land for solar energy projects, consistent with the principles of **multiple use** (as defined in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*)) and the renewable energy permitting goals enacted by the Energy Act of 2020 and Executive Order 14008
- Thoughtfully identify areas that are acceptable for solar development with the **least resource conflicts** with high value natural, cultural, and historic resources.





3. Exclusion Criteria & Exclusion Areas

- Western Solar Plan identified [32 exclusion criteria](#)
- Exclusion criteria applied in 6 states and land use plans were amended to prohibit solar energy development in those areas
- Criteria 1 and 2
 - Exclude lands with:
 - Slope - greater than 5%
 - Insolation - less than 6.5 kWh/m²/day
 - Based on prevalent technology at the time
- Criteria 3-32 relate to resource conservation
 - Most applicable to all states
 - Some apply to one or more states



4. Variance Process

- The Western Solar Plan allowed for responsible utility-scale solar energy development in variance areas outside of SEZs in accordance with the proposed variance process ([Section B.5.3 of Appendix B](#))
- Process adjusted in [Instruction Memorandum 2023-015](#) (December 2, 2022)
 - Screening and prioritization of applications is required to reduce BLM workloads on projects that are less likely to be developed and to facilitate accelerated processing and decision-making for projects with the greatest technical and financial feasibility and the least anticipated natural and cultural resource conflicts.



5. Utility-Scale Definition

- Western Solar Plan defined utility-scale as any project capable of generating **20 megawatts (MW) or more** and transmitted to the electric power grid
- The requirements of the Western Solar Plan only apply to projects meeting that definition
- The BLM seeks public comment on whether that **definition** should be modified for the current planning effort
- Modifications could include:
 - Setting a **different** MW limit
 - Setting an **acreage disturbance** limit
 - Other formulations



6. Incentives to Develop in Priority Areas

- The BLM seeks public comment on ways in which it might further incentivize development in priority areas
 - Within statutory authority
 - Recognizing that some ideas might not be appropriately included in the Programmatic EIS



What are we missing?

- The BLM seeks public comment on what other issues we should be addressing in this Programmatic EIS besides the list we just walked through.
- We welcome your ideas.



Cooperating Agencies

What is a Cooperating Agency? The BLM is committed to engaging and involving our agency partners as cooperating agencies. Any tribal, federal, state, or local agency with jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to an environmental issue may, by agreement, be a cooperating agency.

A Cooperating Agency Will:

- Participate in the EIS process, including scoping and development and analysis of alternatives.
- Provide leadership, expertise, guidance, and review for the EIS analysis.
- Provide information related to the agency's role.
- Identify issues of concern regarding project impacts on the natural and human-made environment.
- Provide timely input on unresolved issues.



Cooperating Agencies

Become a Cooperating Agency: Respond in writing, describing your jurisdiction and special expertise, as well as the potential physical, natural, and socioeconomic issues or concerns that are of interest to your agency.

- An agreement (MOU) will be signed prior to your participation.
- Your participation may include those activities outlined in 40 CFR 1501.6(b).

For more information on how to become a cooperating agency for the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic EIS:

Jayme Lopez, Interagency Liaison
Mail: Solar Energy PEIS Scoping, 1849 C
Street N.W., Washington, DC 20006
Email: solar@blm.gov



National Historic Preservation Act Consultation

- **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)** requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties that are included or may be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Tribes invited to participate in Section 106 consultation.
- The Section 106 process will run **concurrently** with the NEPA Programmatic EIS analysis.



Tribal Consultation

- The BLM has invited Federally recognized Tribes to participate in Government-to-Government consultation on the Programmatic EIS
- Tribes are also invited to be a consulting party under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act



Environmental Justice

- [Executive Order 12898 \(1994\)](#) requires every federal agency to “make achieving Environmental Justice part of its mission.” That means:
 - “identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”
- [BLM Instruction Memo \(IM\) 2022-059](#) requires that the BLM:
 - determine whether a proposed action or alternatives would adversely and disproportionately impact minority populations, low-income populations, and Tribes, and consider cumulative effects, including from reasonably foreseeable actions taken by other parties within the timeframe of the direct and indirect effects.



Proposed PEIS/RMP Amendment Schedule

- | | |
|--|--|
| • BLM Initiates Public Scoping | December 8, 2022 |
| • Public Scoping Ends | 15 days after last
scoping meeting
(expected to be
February 28, 2023) |
| • Draft Programmatic EIS Released | Summer 2023 |
| • Final Programmatic EIS Released | Spring 2024 |
| • ROD/Notice of Availability of Final PEIS | Summer 2024 |



Areas for Providing Effective Comments

Effective comments address one or more of the following:

- Areas **suitable** for utility-scale solar energy development
- Areas that should be **excluded** from solar or wind energy development or **criteria that the BLM should use** to determine excluded areas
- **Resources likely to be affected by** solar energy development
- Potential **resource issues** that should be analyzed
- **Data sources** that the agency may not be aware of
- **Reasonable alternatives** to be considered in the analysis



Online Mapping Tools

- The [Solar Energy Environmental Mapper](#), developed by the BLM's partner, Argonne National Laboratory, is an online mapping tool that allows users to overlay solar energy potential on public lands managed by the BLM with other natural, social, and cultural resource data
 - Created to support the Western Solar Plan
 - Stakeholders can use the tool to identify areas with high solar energy potential and low resource conflict that may be appropriate for solar energy development.
- Argonne National Laboratory recently released a new online tool, the [Geospatial Energy Mapper \(GEM\)](#)





Public Comments

Ways to Provide a Comment:

Online: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>. Click on the “**Participate Now**” button on the left. Enter your comment and information, then click “Submit”.

Email: solar@blm.gov

Mail: Solar Energy PEIS Scoping, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20006

For Project Updates: <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>

Comments should be postmarked by 15 days after the last scoping meeting (expected to be February 28, 2023)

<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
**BUREAU OF LAND
MANAGEMENT**

BLM National NEPA Register



Western Solar PEIS/RMP

DOI-BLM-HQ-3000-2023-0001-RMP-EIS

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How to Get Involved

Related Projects & Links

Participate Now

Last Updated: 12/30/2022, 09:36:18 MST

Project Information

NEPA Number: DOI-BLM-HQ-3000-2023-0001-RMP-EIS
Project Name: Western Solar PEIS/RMP
Project Type: RMP Revision - Environmental Impact Statement
Project Status: In Progress - Public Scoping Period
Lead Office: HQ-300
Last Updated: 12/30/2022 10:36:18 MDT

Project Description

This PEIS will analyze 11 western states, 6 of which were previously included in a PEIS in 2012 - Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Utah, and Wyoming. Purpose and Need - The Energy Act of 2020 set the initial goal to authorize production of not less than 25 GW of electricity from solar/wind/geothermal by 2025- This effort will enhance the agency's ability to promote responsible renewable energy development on public lands to meet this goal and beyond. E.O. 14008 instructs the Department to increase renewable energy production



Project Location

City:

32

Moss Landing Mill Valley Klamath



Public Presentations

- Comments are limited to **3 minutes** – speakers will be signaled at 2 minutes and asked to stop at 3 minutes.
- Please state your **name and organization (if applicable)** when you start speaking.
- Court reporter will **record and transcribe all comments**; transcripts will be posted on project website.
- **Up to 3 hours** have been allocated for commenting, today's comment period will end when all comments have been received.
- Comments may also be submitted **in writing** as mentioned.



Public Presentations

- Remember to state your **name and organization (if applicable)** when you start speaking.
 - Written comments due February 28, 2023 (assuming last public meeting is the virtual meeting on February 13, 2023)
 - Project website:
<https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022371/510>