

Finalization of BLM's Wind and Solar Leasing Rulemaking

Expected: August 2015

Background

With the Western Solar Plan as a model, a number of efforts have advanced wind and solar energy on public lands during President Obama's time in office, while also protecting valued land and water for future generations. But there is no guarantee these reforms will survive over the long-term without the [Wind and Solar Leasing Rule](#).

The goal of the Wind and Solar Leasing Rule is to facilitate responsible solar and wind energy development and to charge a fair market value for such development. It will promote the use of preferred areas for solar and wind energy and set up a competitive leasing system similar to the one used for oil, gas, and coal.

The rule will provide guidelines to establish stability and consistency across the BLM field offices that are tasked with reviewing and approving renewable energy projects on public lands. It will also help ensure a smart renewable energy program at the BLM survives and thrives through future administrations.

After several years of development, public input, and review, a final rule is expected to be released in August 2016. Specifically, the final rule is expected to:

- **Incentivize development** in low-conflict places (designated leasing areas), such as lands that are already degraded and are near roads and transmissions lines.
- **Provide a framework** for minimizing and offsetting project impacts. Even appropriately sited projects leave a large footprint.
- **Ensure the American people get a fair return** on the use of their lands for development and developers have more certainty about what the costs to develop on public lands will be.

The industry, specifically the trade groups of SEIA and AWEA, have voiced some opposition to the rule, saying that it could change management of renewables right when they are gaining momentum, potentially setting the industry back. While we don't have a sense of how public they will project that message.

Goals and major strategies around the release

Overall we want finalization of the rulemaking to be seen as a win for the Department of the Interior and the White House's efforts to ensure responsible, balanced renewable energy development on public lands. We can achieve this by:

- **Applauding the efforts of this Administration** to set up a renewable energy program on public lands (and ensure future administrations continue moving in a positive direction). We are less concerned with getting widespread media coverage of this rule (unlikely) and more interested in getting our message in any media that *is* generated and utilizing other selective paid and earned media tactics.

- **Dispelling any perceived “enviro-on-enviro” conflicts** by demonstrating strong support among clean energy allies and the environmental community to help inoculate against any potential discomfort caused by the renewables industry’s opposition to the rule.

Key Themes to Highlight

DOP’s new Wind and Solar Leasing Rule will facilitate responsible solar and wind energy development on public lands by:

- **Institutionalizing new best practices.**
 - The rule helps codify a series of policies issued by the Obama Administration to ensure they endure.
 - It will diversify our public lands energy portfolio and establish wind and solar as a key energy source for the next century.
 - The Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone provides a great snapshot of how these new policies will work.
- **Ensuring that wind and solar projects are built in areas that do not harm landscapes, water, wildlife and other natural resources.**
 - The rule promotes the use of low-conflict preferred areas for development.
 - The new balanced approach will help safeguard wild places.
 - We have already seen how successful these new policies can be with the Dry Lake Solar Energy Zone projects.
- **Modernizing how wind and solar energy is developed on public lands.**
 - The rule will put a competitive leasing system in place, like those used for fossil fuels.
 - It will update the current out-of-date right-of-way system for leasing for renewables, which is better suited for roads and telephone lines.
 - The process will be faster and the energy will be cheaper for consumers/FAIR MARKET VALUE.
- **Providing certainty and predictability for energy companies.**
 - The rule will help establish stability and consistency across BLM field offices in permit review.
 - It will help provide information about costs for companies, benefitting both businesses and investors.
 - It establishes a leasing process for more efficiently issuing permits, which can speed up permitting time and protect natural resources.