



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Washington, D.C. 20240



In Reply Refer To:
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JUL 20 2012

Memorandum

To: Michael D. Nedd,
Assistant Director, Minerals and Realty Management
Bureau of Land Management

From: Gary Frazer, Assistant Director for Endangered Species

Subject: Endangered Species Act Consultation for Solar Energy Program

On February 2, 2012, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) requested initiation of formal programmatic consultation on its proposed Solar Energy Program in six western States. A biological opinion and conservation review examining the program is attached. To summarize our biological opinion, we conclude that the program is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of 17 listed species. For 12 of these species whose critical habitat may be affected, we also conclude that the program is not likely to destroy or adversely modify their designated critical habitat. We concur with determinations by BLM that the program is not likely to adversely affect 5 listed species or the critical habitat of 2 of these.

Our conservation review considered BLM's exercise of its authorities to contribute to conservation of listed species and avoid potential adverse effects to these species. We find that the selection of Solar Energy Zones (SEZs), exclusion of certain areas from eligibility for solar development, application of design features to all solar developments that will occur, and the review process applicable to development in variance areas outside SEZs are likely to contribute to the conservation of listed species. The elements of the program dealing with endangered and threatened species can be considered to constitute a program for their conservation, as described by section 7(a)(1) of the Act.

We also provide several conservation recommendations related to the biological opinion and conservation review intended to foster cooperation between BLM and the Service and improve the overall effectiveness of the Program with respect to species conservation.

Please contact Rick Sayers, Chief of the Division of Consultation, Habitat Conservation Planning, Recovery and State Grants, at (703)358-2442 if you have any questions regarding this Biological Opinion and Conservation Review.

REC'D JUN 30 2012
WD-300/66

