



Renewable Energy and Conservation
Protecting America's Natural Heritage



"In siting renewable energy projects and transmission lines, we encourage areas be developed which will have the least impact on wildlife and other important land uses."

– Western Governors' Association *

"The Nature Conservancy is committed to supporting the development of clean, homegrown, renewable energy and preserving the natural resources and majesty of public lands."

– The Nature Conservancy

"Hunters and anglers realize how important energy is, and we support renewable energy development on Western public lands. We want it done thoughtfully, however, to conserve fish and wildlife habitat and water quality."

– Sportsmen for Responsible Energy Development (SFRED)

"We have an unparalleled opportunity to be proactive; to ensure that even as we expand energy resources from public lands that we put in place safeguards to protect fish, wildlife, and water resources."

– Trout Unlimited

"[A] straightforward process that treats the development of renewable energy on public lands similar to traditional sources of energy development like oil and gas [is] critical to ensure that renewable energy development moves forward in an economic and ecologically responsible way."

– National Association of Counties

"By making vital investments in local communities, future permitting and natural resource conservation, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act makes a bold commitment to the regions that are seeing the added increase in development of renewable energy."

– The Wilderness Society

"Outdoor recreation and renewable energy development are highly valuable to local communities and economies. By requiring representation from the outdoor community in project siting and development we can ensure a bright future on public lands for both."

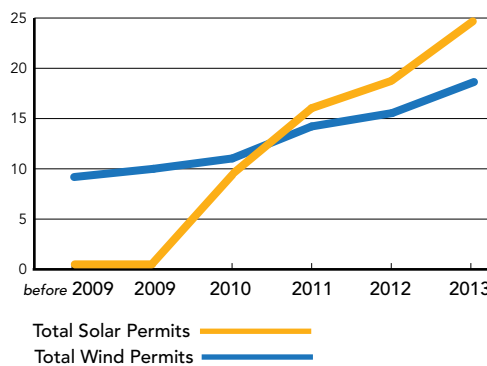
– Outdoor Alliance

Renewable Energy and America's Natural Heritage

The way Americans power their homes and businesses is changing. More and more, they are tapping the power of the sun and wind. America's public lands, with their tremendous wind and solar energy potential, are playing an increasingly important role.

Since 2009, 25 solar projects totaling more than 8,000 megawatts, and 9 wind projects totaling more than 4,000 megawatts, have been approved on public lands in the U.S. That's enough electricity to power nearly 4 million American homes.

Number of Approved Renewable Energy Projects



Source: Bureau of Land Management Data

Public lands are a key part of America's natural heritage. In addition to their value as a source of wind and solar power, public lands also provide fresh water for local communities, habitat for wildlife and unparalleled opportunities for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation. These activities contribute billions of dollars every year to the local, state and national economy.



“
We must be thoughtful... in how we develop this new energy frontier, and take care not to damage our landscapes, wildlife, or traditional ways of life.
 ”

KEN SALAZAR

*Former Secretary of the Interior
 May 5, 2009*

Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation

- The outdoor recreation industry employs 6.1 million Americans and generates \$646 billion in annual spending

Source: Outdoor Industry Association

- Recreational fishing has a \$115 billion impact on the nation's economy and supports more than 828,000 jobs

Source: American Sportfishing Association

- Hunting has an overall economic impact of \$86.9 billion and supports 680,300 jobs

Source: National Shooting Sports Foundation



Siemens



Organizations seeking improvements to the current permitting process have identified a number of areas where changes could enhance the process, including:

- **Reducing costs and risk to investors.** Pursuing applications that are located in suitable areas is less expensive and time-consuming throughout the permitting process than pursuing applications in high conflict areas or areas with irresolvable conflicts.
- **Limiting speculative applications.** Speculative applications are obstacles to development by legitimate companies and take available and necessarily limited agency resources away from non-speculative applications. Such applications remain on the books even in California, the only state which has made a major effort to date to weed them out.
- **Reducing duplicative applications.** Currently, numerous areas are subject to multiple applications, including speculative applications. While the “booking” of applications—regardless of the likelihood of their development—may provide certain advantages to solar companies, maintaining these applications can be expensive and perpetuates uncertainty.
- **Focusing limited agency resources.** According to criteria adopted by the Interior Department in February 2011, numerous pending applications appear to be located in areas with high resource conflicts. Processing such applications takes time and resources away from lower conflict projects, which should be the agencies’ focus instead.

Developing Renewable Energy Efficiently and Responsibly

When Congress passed the 2005 Energy Policy Act, it set ambitious goals for wind and solar development on America’s public lands — 10,000 megawatts of new renewable energy by 2015. The Department of the Interior seized this opportunity to diversify the power grid and to bring in added revenue through rental fees from development on public lands.



The 10,000 megawatt goal has already been reached, and additional applications for wind and solar projects will take that number higher if they are approved. As the program continues to grow, additional improvements are needed to ensure that new wind and solar projects are built efficiently, responsibly and equitably, while protecting local communities that see the biggest impacts from development.

“Supporting local communities and regional fish and wildlife resources with a dedicated federal revenue stream promotes renewable energy acceptance with key constituencies, which in turn will encourage more companies to develop projects on our public lands.”

Exergy Development Group
Personal Communication



Establishing additional guidance for wind and solar energy development would enhance both the project application and management processes. It would make them more efficient and predictable, while also ensuring that agencies are looking after the health and vitality of America’s public lands and nearby communities.

Renewable Energy Management: Improvements Benefit Everyone

Improving the process for managing wind and solar energy projects on public lands, and taking care of the nearby communities and resources after development occurs, would benefit state and local governments, wind and solar power companies, local communities, hunters, anglers and those who recreate on America's public lands. That's why so many of these constituencies are supporting sensible renewable energy reforms that:

1. Explore an efficient leasing system for wind and solar energy projects
2. Ensure that the government receives a fair financial return for allowing renewable energy companies to build wind and solar farms on public lands
3. Establish a fair distribution formula for sharing those revenues from wind and solar projects

A leasing system designed to be more efficient could make the permitting process simpler and less expensive for land management agencies to administer. It would also ensure that wind and solar developers are more accurately charged for using public lands.

Only Congress has the ability to set up a fair distribution formula to ensure that royalties generated from wind and solar projects help states and communities affected by the projects, facilitate timely permit processing, and provide funds that can be reinvested in fish and wildlife restoration, water protection and recreation activities.

One renewable energy reform option under consideration in Congress, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act, would distribute those revenues according to the following formula:

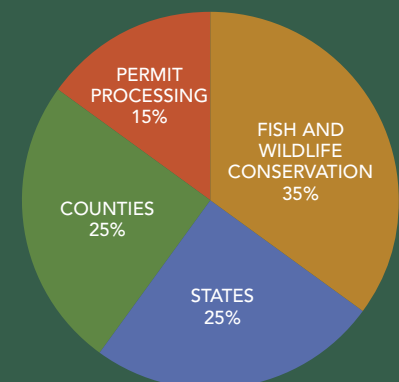
- 25% to the states where projects are sited;
- 25% to the counties where projects are sited;
- 15% to the agencies to help process permits;
- 35% to a Renewable Energy Conservation Fund for fish, wildlife and land conservation.



"Arizona has some of the best wind and solar resources in the country, and we want to develop them. But the process of developing these resources can adversely impact local communities. Returning a portion of the revenues generated through wind and solar energy generation is a smart concept. These revenues would help offset the burden on county resources and fund critical community services."

Liz Archuleta
Supervisor – District 2, Coconino County, AZ
Source: Private Communication

Proposed Revenue Distribution Formula

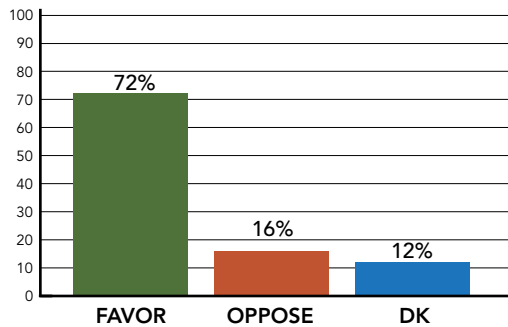




“I spend my free time exploring and fishing on public land in Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, and my home state of Idaho. Many of these places remain unspoiled and offer a chance to encounter wildlife in its natural state. This is made possible by the foresight and efforts of prior generations to set them aside, and now we have a duty to future generations to preserve public lands for their enjoyment. If our nation’s energy predicament requires developing renewable and sustainable energy resources on public land, I believe low-impact strategies like wind and solar are the best options for native wildlife so long as they are carefully selected and diligently monitored. It also makes sense that revenues generated from these projects be funneled back into fish and wildlife habitat to conserve species, preserve native ecosystems, and offset habitat loss.”

Bucky Ryan
Sportsman, Boise, ID
 Source: Private Communication

Percentage of voters who favor/oppose distributing funds from wind and solar projects on public lands to state and local governments and to a conservation fund that offsets impacts of development.



Source: Peak Campaigns and Bellwether Research & Consulting

A recent survey found strong public support for distributing royalties from wind and solar development to states and local communities, land management agencies, and the Renewable Energy Conservation Fund that would invest in fish and wildlife habitat.

There is good reason for doing so.

STATES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Royalty revenue shared with local governments in areas where wind and solar projects are being built would help support county operations impacted by energy development. In addition to helping stabilize local operating budgets, royalty revenues could also fund:

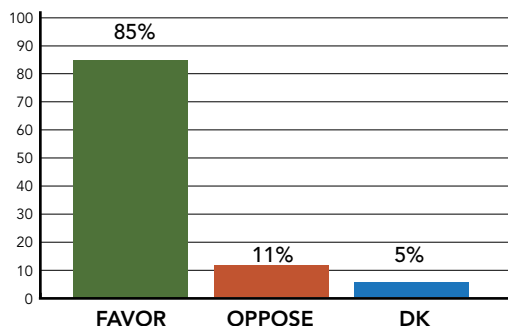
- capital improvement projects (e.g. road maintenance)
- public safety and law enforcement
- local conservation efforts

State governments would also benefit. State agencies play a significant role in the permitting process for wind and solar projects on public lands within their states. A share of royalty revenue would help offset the time and resources state governments put in to ensuring that wind and solar projects are developed responsibly.

LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCIES

Returning a portion of collected royalties to the agencies managing wind and solar projects on public lands would help them work through the backlog of existing applications and process new applications more efficiently.

Percentage of voters who favor/oppose dedicating a portion of funds from wind and solar projects on public lands to restoring fish and wildlife habitat that has been impacted by development.



Source: Peak Campaigns and Bellwether Research & Consulting

CONSERVATION FUND

Using a portion of the royalties from wind and solar projects to offset their impacts on water, wildlife and recreation also has broad public support.

Renewable Energy on Public Lands: Support for Management Improvements is Broad and Deep

More renewable energy has been permitted on public lands in the last five years than ever before. Despite all the progress, business leaders, state and local officials from both parties, hunters, anglers, outdoor recreationists, and the environmental community recognize that there is room for improvement, and that there are additional decisions to be made about how the royalty revenues collected from wind and solar developments are reinvested in our public lands. They agree that planning and building wind and solar projects on public lands must be balanced with conservation and land protection efforts, and they want to see efforts from Congress that will create that equal footing.



"The Nature Conservancy is committed to supporting the development of clean, homegrown, renewable energy and preserving the natural resources and majesty of public lands. Sensible regulations that ensure wind and solar development avoids sensitive areas, minimizes environmental impacts, and offsets ecological disturbances can achieve both goals at once. Every science-based policy that facilitates responsible energy development is a victory for our public lands, the renewables sector, and the millions of Americans who enjoy their benefits."

– The Nature Conservancy

Public lands are economic drivers in local communities, and responsible land use planning will have long term benefits. Promoting smart wind and solar power development, while also taking steps to protect America's natural heritage, can help sustain those benefits.

"Future revenue sharing dollars will contribute to the delivery of critical governmental services and the development of much needed capital improvement projects such as road maintenance, public safety and law enforcement, conservation easements, capital for leveraging federal and state resources, and the critical stabilization of operations budgets in tough economic times."

– National Association of Counties

Source: February 2013 Statement

"Western Governors support continued and accelerated deployment of renewable energy projects, and associated clean energy job growth, in our states. In siting renewable energy projects and transmission lines, we encourage areas be developed which will have the least impact on wildlife and other important land uses. Shared royalties from renewable energy development can be used by state agencies to support land, wildlife, and water conservation in affected areas."

– Western Governors' Association

Source: March 2013 letter to Senator Tester and Representative Gosar

"Many of our members live near and recreate on public lands with potential for renewable energy development, and we are hopeful to see these resources developed in a manner respectful of existing outdoor recreation resources and the opportunities they provide for local communities and economies. We are pleased to see a public consultation requirement, including a requirement for specific representation from the outdoor community, to help ensure that project siting and development occurs in a way that takes into account valuable existing uses of public lands."

– Outdoor Alliance

Source: Letter to Senators Tester, Heller, Udall, Udall, Risch, Heinrich, Baucus, and Bennet regarding S.279

For more information about
Renewable Energy on Public Lands:
RenewablesForConservation.org



Resource Media is a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting broad communities around the stories, voices and information that foster more sustainable policies and practices.