

## **Summary of Inyo County Renewable Solar and Wind Energy General Plan Land Use Diagram Overlay Development**

The General Plan Overlay was developed and adjusted through an iterative process, based on input from interested parties (public officials, members of the public, alternative energy developers, public agencies, the US Military, local tribes, and others) and a series of public outreach meetings, as encouraged in policy development. Criteria utilized at the beginning of the process included (1) areas with known interest in renewable wind and solar energy development; (2) proximity to transmission and electrical conveyance facilities, and (3) appropriate terrain. Through an extensive public engagement effort, the maps were refined and updated iteratively. The General Plan Land Use Diagram Overlay maps now show areas where it may be appropriate to develop renewable wind and solar energy projects based on a more comprehensive set of criteria.

A variety of planning efforts, led by State and federal agencies, directed at alternative energy development, were already underway prior to the development of the Overlay. These include, but are not limited to: the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI), Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Environmental Impact Statements for Wind, Geothermal, Energy Corridors, and Solar, and the State of Nevada's Renewable Energy Transmission Access Advisory Committee. Staff considered the extensive data from these planning efforts in early mapping efforts. The first areas considered in the mapping effort included electrical conveyance facilities. Additional electrical conveyance line information was provided during later stages of the mapping exercise, including general knowledge of specific facilities and Geographic Information System (GIS) data for regional transmission.

The primary focus at the beginning of the County's planning effort was on solar. Areas were chosen by their 'flatness,' which under current technologies is particularly important for photovoltaic development. Flatness was determined by examining maps that included aerial photography and Digital Terrain Model (DTM) lines. Interest by alternative energy developers [City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP), TerraGen, and others] was taken into consideration during this stage. These early planning efforts resulted in maps in 2009 that identified draft Competitive Renewable Energy Zones (CREZ) in Laws, Deep Springs, Fish Lake Valley, Owens Valley, Owens Lake, Rose Valley, Pearsonville, Trona, Death Valley Junction, and Charleston View. Based on public review, CREZ were added to Panamint Valley and Centennial Flat, and the Owens Valley CREZ was eliminated.

Early mapping efforts were distributed widely as described in more detail in the Resolution. Preliminary draft Overlay maps were then developed in 2010 based on the early mapping efforts and more detailed review of the Overlay areas. The draft CREZ developed earlier in the planning process provided a baseline for the Overlay, and a different configuration for the Owens Valley was reincluded. Other information sources consulted in developing the draft Overlay maps included GIS data regarding parcelization, political boundaries, and aerial photography; sensitive biological and scenic resources; proposed renewable energy projects;

and relative flatness. These preliminary Overlay maps were shared widely during the County's public outreach in the fall of 2010.

The maps were then further refined based on public input during this outreach and published in late 2010. The additional input directed staff to avoid areas that were inside Wilderness and BLM Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Public lands within Wilderness and ACECs were completely removed from the Overlay. Interest was expressed by several private property owners to add lands in Tecopa, Chicago Valley, and Sandy Valley to the Overlay. The Centennial Flat Overlay was also expanded to address comments that additional lands for potential wind energy development should be identified, and to include disturbed lands in and around Darwin.

Concern was highlighted during the public outreach for specific habitats; scenic resources; water availability; vegetation communities identified in the Long Term Water Agreement between Inyo County and DWP; and cultural elements. Also, an ACEC is identified on private lands in Tecopa. Staff believes that since some development may be acceptable within or near these resources, completely eliminating them from the Overlay would not be appropriate. To address the existence of the sensitive resources, language was included on the draft maps pointing out particularly sensitive issues within each Overlay area.

The draft Overlay maps have been further refined based on the input received since the beginning of the environmental review period. The Overlay in the Panamint Valley was expanded slightly to include mining areas, which are disturbed and could utilize renewable energy. A property owner requested that additional land be added in the Panamint Valley as well. The Laws Overlay has been expanded to encompass additional disturbed lands in the vicinity. The Overlays for Laws, Owens Lake, Death Valley Junction, and Charleston View have been modified to include lands identified in the Solar PEIS. The notation on the Death Valley Junction Overlay has been modified to require low water using technologies. A minor error has also been corrected on the Owens Lake map. Additional modifications may be made through the continuing public outreach process.