

Inyo County Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment (REGPA) Frequently Asked Questions

What is the General Plan?

The General Plan is Inyo County's constitution for land use, and provides goals, policies, and implementation measures to achieve the County's land use objectives. The General Plan was comprehensively updated in 2001, and due to the slow pace of change in the County is still current, with the exception of renewable energy.

Why is the County updating its General Plan to address renewable energy?

Renewable energy potential is very high in the County, and in particular, the solar energy resource is among the best in the world. The State and federal governments have instituted numerous renewable energy goals, which they continue to strengthen. The State is radically reworking the energy system, including electrifying the vehicle fleet and decommissioning hydro and nuclear power plants. These and other factors are increasing demand for renewable energy, including the significant need for large-scale projects. Renewable energy can provide relatively high-paying jobs to diversify the County's economy and provide for other community benefits. On the other hand, renewable energy can potentially impact environmental, social, cultural, and economic resources. The County's General Plan does not comprehensively address solar or wind renewable energy, and the County is working to provide assurances to the community and guidance to other agencies and developers about where it might be and not be appropriate to consider such projects.

How did we get to where we are?

In 2010, the County adopted a Renewable Energy Ordinance to protect the County's resources and provide for appropriate solar and wind energy development, and in 2011, an REGPA. However, several environmental organizations sued the County demanding that a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) be prepared. Rather than spending precious County resources fighting these well-financed organizations, the County rescinded the REGPA. Earlier last year, the County applied for and obtained grant funding to prepare a PEIR.

What are we doing now?

The County has developed a new REGPA and is currently gathering input to revisit the criteria from the 2011 REGPA, incorporate new information and changing conditions, consider alternatives early in the process, and streamline the PEIR. Currently, the proposed REGPA restricts renewable energy development over the next 30 to 50 years to less than 0.5 percent of the County, and to a little more than one percent of the Owens Valley.

Where do we go next?

The County has undertaken an extensive outreach program to iteratively update the REGPA throughout the process, as illustrated on the other side of this page. Numerous public and stakeholder meetings have been held already. Following this early phase, the next step is the Notice of Preparation for the PEIR – this will include public meetings throughout the County. The Draft PEIR will be developed next – this also will include public meetings throughout the County. The Final PEIR will then be prepared for consideration by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for possible action.

Could the County prohibit renewable energy development?

The County could continue to not address renewable energy in its General Plan or prohibit it. However, this would mean that there would be no roadmap for renewable energy development or any identification of where it might be considered or where it shouldn't be considered, the potential benefits would be minimized, and the current situation where projects are proposed without the County's input could continue. Since most of the County is managed by other public entities, the County has limited land use jurisdiction and a blanket prohibition might not be effective.

Inyo County Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment (REGPA) Timeline

Preliminary Outreach - Initiate Tribal consultation, - develop stakeholder group/mail list	Sept/Oct 2013
Stakeholder Meetings (7) - Individual meetings with DRECP/BLM staff	November 2013
Public Meetings (4) - Independence , Bishop, Lone Pine, Tecopa	Nov/Dec 2013
Planning Commission/Public Meeting - Provide input regarding project description	February 2014
	
Board of Supervisors/Public Meeting - Provide input regarding project description	Spring 2014
Notice of Preparation	Late Spring 2014
Public Meetings (3)	Late Spring 2014
Draft Program Environmental Impact Report	Summer 2014
Public Meetings (3)	Summer 2014
Final Program Environmental Impact Report	Fall 2014
Planning Commission Recommendation/Public Hearing	Fall 2014
Board of Supervisors Consideration/Public Hearing	Fall/Winter 2014-15

For more information, please visit <http://www.inyoplanning.org/projects/REGPA.htm> or contact the Inyo County Planning Department at (760) 878-0263.