

Exclusion Criteria under the Proposed Plan

Under the Proposed Plan, lands would be excluded from solar energy application using the resource-based exclusion criteria presented in Table ES-2, which generally carries forward the criteria identified for the Action Alternatives with limited changes. More information about these exclusion criteria can be found in Table 6-2 of the Final Programmatic EIS.

Table ES-2. Resource-Based Exclusion Criteria in the Proposed Plan

| Exclusion No. | Exclusion Type | Description |
|---------------|---|---|
| 1 | Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) | All ACECs identified in applicable land use plans. |
| 2 | Threatened and Endangered Species | All designated and proposed critical habitat areas for species protected under the ESA (USFWS 2023a; NOAA undated). In addition, specified areas for 40 specific ESA-listed species. |
| 3 | Lands with Wilderness Characteristics | All areas for which an applicable land use plan establishes protection for lands with wilderness characteristics. |
| 4 | Recreation | Developed recreational facilities. In Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico, all Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) identified in applicable land use plans. In Utah, all SRMAs except those in the Box Elder, Pony Express, House Range, and Warm Springs planning areas |
| 5 | Species Conservation Agreements/Strategies | All areas where the BLM has agreements with USFWS and/or state agency partners and other entities to manage sensitive species habitat in a manner that would preclude large-scale impacts/disturbance, such as solar energy development, including habitat protection and other recommendations in conservation agreements/strategies. |
| 6 | Greater Sage-Grouse and Gunnison Sage-Grouse | Greater sage-grouse and Gunnison sage-grouse habitat as identified for exclusion in applicable land use plans. |
| 7 | Land Use Designations | All areas designated as no surface occupancy (NSO) in applicable land use plans. All ROW exclusion areas identified in applicable land use plans. All ROW avoidance areas identified in applicable land use plans to the extent the purpose of the ROW avoidance is incompatible with solar energy development. |
| 8 | Desert Tortoise | All desert tortoise translocation sites identified in applicable resource management plans, project-level mitigation plans, or Biological Opinions. (Note: this exclusion is now mapped as part of exclusion 2, additional habitat areas for ESA-listed species mapped in coordination with the USFWS). |
| 9 | Big Game | All big game areas identified in applicable land use plans to the extent the land use plan decision prohibits large-scale impacts/disturbance, such as utility-scale solar energy development (NOTE: This exclusion is not mapped. This information is maintained by BLM state offices). The portions of big game migratory corridors mapped as “high use” in Figure 6-3 (CDFW 2023b; IDFG 2023b; Kauffman et al. 2024; MFWP 2024; UDWR 2023c; and WGFD 2023b). Migration pinch points/bottle necks, parturition areas, stopover areas, and crucial and severe winter range. |
| 10 | Natural Areas and Other Conservation Areas | Research Natural Areas and Outstanding Natural Areas identified in applicable land use plans. All Backcountry Conservation Areas identified in applicable land use plans. |

| Exclusion No. | Exclusion Type | Description |
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| 11 | Visual Resources | Lands classified as visual resource management (VRM) Class I or II throughout the 11-state planning area and, in Utah and small parts of Arizona and Colorado, some lands classified as Class III in applicable land use plans. |
| 12 | National Scenic Byways | All National Scenic Byways, including all BLM Back Country Byways (BLM state director approved) identified in applicable BLM land use plans, including any associated corridor or lands identified for protection through an applicable land use plan. |
| 13 | National Recreation, Water, or Side and Connecting Trails | All Secretariaily-designated National Recreation Trails (including National Water Trails) and Connecting and Side Trails identified in applicable BLM and local land use plans, including any associated corridor or lands identified for protection through an applicable land use plan. |
| 14 | National Conservation Lands | All units of BLM National Conservation Lands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Monuments • National Conservation Areas and other areas similarly designated for conservation, including Cooperative Management and Protection Areas, Outstanding Natural Areas, Forest Reserves, and National Scenic Areas. • National Trails System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All National Scenic and Historic Trails designated by Congress, trails recommended as suitable for designation through a congressionally authorized National Trail Feasibility Study, or such qualifying trails identified as additional routes in law, including any trail management corridors identified for protection through an applicable land use plan, ○ Trails undergoing a Congressionally authorized National Trail Feasibility Study will also be excluded pending the outcome of the study. • National Wild and Scenic Rivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, including any associated corridor and lands identified for protection through an applicable river corridor plan (or comprehensive river management plan). Absent a river plan, protection corridors are 0.25 mi to either side of the river from the ordinary high-water mark, unless otherwise provided by law. ○ Areas outside a designated wild and scenic river corridor when the project would “invade the area or unreasonably diminish” the wild and scenic river’s river values. ○ All segments of rivers determined to be eligible or suitable for Wild or Scenic River status as identified in applicable land use plans, including any associated corridor and lands identified for protection through an applicable land use plan. • Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas |
| 15 | National Natural Landmarks | National Natural Landmarks identified in applicable land use plans, including any associated lands identified for protection through an applicable land use plan. |
| 16 | <i>National Register of Historic Places</i> (NRHP) | Lands within the boundaries of properties listed in the NRHP, including National Historic Landmarks (NHLs), and any additional lands outside the designated boundaries identified for protection through an applicable land use plan. |
| 17 | Tribal Interest Areas | Traditional cultural properties (TCPs) and Native American sacred sites that are identified through consultation with Tribes and recognized by the BLM or that are the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding between the BLM and a Tribe or Tribes. |
| 18 | Old Growth Forests | Old Growth Forests identified in applicable land use plans. |

| Exclusion No. | Exclusion Type | Description |
|---------------|---|---|
| 19 | Lands Previously Found to Be Inappropriate for Solar Energy Development | Lands found to be inappropriate for solar energy development through a prior environmental review process. |
| 20 | Acquired Lands | All lands acquired by the BLM using funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund or the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act, as amended (Public Law 105-263). |
| 21 | State- or Area-Specific | In Nevada, lands in the Ivanpah Valley, Coal Valley, and Garden Valley. Area surrounding Chaco Culture National Historical Park consistent with Public Land Order No. 7923. Rio Grande Natural Area (as established by Public Law 109-337). |

Design Features under the Proposed Plan

The BLM received substantial input on both the structure of the design features and on the specifics of individual design features identified in Appendix B of the Draft Programmatic EIS. For this Final Programmatic EIS, the BLM further refined and organized the design features to make them clearer and easier to use. The proposed design features are presented in Appendix B in three categories: Category 1: Mandatory, Plan-Wide; Category 2: Mandatory, Resource-Specific; and Category 3: Project Guidelines. Category 3 project guidelines may be required by the BLM authorized officer for a particular project based on the project-specific evaluation.

Design features and project guidelines are measures or procedures incorporated into the proposed plan or alternatives that could avoid, minimize, and/or compensate for adverse impacts from solar energy development.

ES.2.4.3 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative continues the management of utility-scale solar energy development in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah under the 2012 Western Solar Plan, as amended. That plan excludes lands from utility-scale solar energy development, and designates priority areas, which are specific locations well suited for utility-scale solar energy where the BLM prioritizes development.⁹ The 2012 Western Solar Plan also allows for consideration of utility-scale solar energy development proposals on lands outside of priority areas in accordance with procedures in a variance process established in the plan decision. The 2012 Western Solar Plan amended the land use plans in the six-state planning area to reflect the identification of excluded lands, SEZs, and variance lands to facilitate permitting utility-scale (there defined as solar energy facilities with nameplate capacity of 20 MW or greater that transmit electricity to the transmission grid) solar energy generation projects and to require programmatic design features. The Arizona Restoration Design

⁹ Priority areas designated through the 2012 Western Solar Plan included 17 SEZs. Amendments to the 2012 Western Solar Plan include addition of the Agua Caliente SEZ in Arizona, the West Chocolate Mountain SEZ in California, the Dry Lake East DLA in Nevada, REDAs in Arizona, and solar emphasis areas in Colorado and deletion of the Fourmile East SEZ in Colorado (see Section 1.3).