



Fact Sheet

The Public Lands and Renewable Energy Development Act of 2013 H.R. 596/S. 279

Led by Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Dean Heller (R-NV), and Representatives Paul Gosar (R-AZ), Joe Heck (R-NV), Jared Polis (D-CO) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) the Public Lands and Renewable Energy Development Act of 2013 (PLRED) would **modernize the development of renewable energy resources while protecting critical fish and wildlife habitat on federal lands.**

Wind and solar energy expansion can be compatible with the protection of cherished public lands and wildlife, provided development is coupled with thorough planning and conservation investment. This bill would create a new template for clean energy development on federal lands by...

1. Establishing a pilot, competitive leasing program for wind and solar projects on public lands.
2. Reinvesting royalties from development revenues back into states and counties.
3. Reinvesting royalties in a new conservation fund for landscape-scale development impacts on wildlife and habitat.

CURRENT APPROACH

The existing process for wind and solar project development on public lands is outdated and inefficient. Permits for Rights-of-Way and Special-Use are not well-suited for efficiently and consistently locating projects. The current systems aren't adequate to address impacts large-scale energy development could have on fish and wildlife. The status quo, project-by-project approach to renewable energy on public lands provides little guidance on where to find lands with high solar resources and low environmental conflicts, and thus increases costs and risk to investors, unnecessarily diverts limited agency resources to review projects, and rewards and encourages duplicative and speculative applications.

NEW APPROACH

The bill calls for a transition to a competitive, royalty-based leasing system that treats wind and solar generation much the same as oil and gas development, sharing royalties with counties and states. The bill includes a thoughtful transition for developers with pending applications under the current framework. PLRED directs a portion of the royalty revenue back for permitting projects, and also to the state and county where the project is developed. But in a notable improvement over traditional energy leasing, PLRED dedicates significant royalties to the protection of fish and wildlife – and public enjoyment of them.



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ROYALTY DISTRIBUTION

The proposed legislation would also establish a small royalty to be paid by developers receiving the competitive leases. The funds would be split as such:

- 25%.....to state where project is located
- 25%.....to county where project is located
- 15%.....funds BLM offices processing lease applications
- 35%.....to a new fund for wildlife and land conservation

The renewable energy resource conservation fund set up through the leasing program would assist in protecting and restoring wildlife habitat and securing recreational access to BLM lands.

EXISTING PROJECTS

While improving the wind and solar energy development process for the future is important, it is also crucial to ensure some flexibility for the many developers that have already completed critical planning phases of their projects. As such, the legislation would “grandfather” existing project applications that meet specified development criteria and have progressed beyond initial investigation steps to bypass the competitive leasing process.



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NWF strongly supports H.R. 596 / S. 279, the Public Lands Renewable Energy Development Act, as it will provide an equitable return to taxpayers for the commercial use of public lands, remove barriers for energy developers, and provide improved protection of wildlife and habitat.

NWF is committed to promoting a clean energy future, but we recognize that the development of renewable energy needs to be balanced with other values on federal lands. This legislation strikes the right balance between the dual needs of combating climate change and maintaining the health of our public lands.



Zubulake

“With some of the best renewable energy development sites located on public lands, it is vital to expand this industry while protecting the natural resources that make our region famous” (Senator Tester)