

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **NEWS**

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## **Conservationists Applaud BLM for Wind Power Plan**

"Doing it right" cited as key to success

(BOULDER) A wide range of conservation organizations applauded the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in comments filed Friday responding to the agency's draft plan to develop wind power on public land in 11 western states.

"We're glad to see the administration take some real steps to move towards tomorrow's energy economy," said Mike Chiropolos, Lands Program Director at Western Resource Advocates. "Public support for renewable energy will remain strong if these projects are properly located and designed. That means listening closely to stakeholders about where and how to construct wind farms on federal lands."

In their comments, conservationists note that wind power surveys have identified 6% of the land in the West as having enough wind power potential to generate more than five times the region's current electricity consumption. The benefits of wind development will include stronger rural economies, cleaner air, and cheaper, more reliable power in the long run.

The groups also cited the leadership of the Western Governors Association, which earlier this year called for 30,000 megawatts of clean energy (the equivalent of 40 coal plants) to be built in the West by 2015. The letter to BLM noted that, in addition to supporting renewables, several Governors from the Rocky Mountain region "are raising questions about the impacts of gas drilling on wilderness-quality landscapes, wildlife, and water."

"Tomorrow's economy will be fueled by clean energy," said Chiropolos. "We look forward to working with BLM to "do it right" when it considers wind projects on federal lands. The baseline protections proposed by BLM are a good start. The agency should have applied the same balanced approach to the natural gas boom in the Rockies that followed the National Energy Plan released in 2000."

The coalition also called upon the agency to move wisely in developing wind on public lands. According to the coalition's letter to BLM: "A poorly sited or designed project with highly-publicized negative impacts could unnecessarily set back the cause of renewable energy generation from public lands. Therefore, we encourage BLM to err on the side of caution with regard to siting, design, and public involvement."

Under the proposed plan, BLM will identify lands where wind development would not be appropriate, so that sensitive places with wilderness values are protected. BLM committed to environmentally sound development by requiring the adoption of "best

management practices”.

"From the looks of it, BLM is genuinely looking for ways to develop wind energy without sacrificing and polluting sensitive wild lands. They should be doing the same for oil and gas development, but unfortunately that hasn't happened," stated Nada Culver of The Wilderness Society. Culver noted that since 2004, BLM has approved several new plans across the Rockies that authorize drilling tens of thousands of new oil and gas wells, without the type of region-wide analysis contained in the Wind EIS. "We applaud the BLM's efforts to look at wind regionally and its commitment to minimizing impacts. We expect them to do the same for other energy development on western public lands," Culver said.

Western Resource Advocates has been a long-time advocate for renewable energy sources to replace fossil fuels in the Interior West. WRA promotes utility programs to bring wind energy to consumers, published a Renewable Energy Atlas and a Balanced Energy Plan for the region, and was one of many Colorado conservation groups that helped pass Amendment 37, a Colorado statewide ballot initiative on renewables, in the November 2004 election.

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