



February 3, 2023

To: State Land Use Planning Advisory Council

From: Scott Carey, AICP, State Lands Planner

RE: Consideration of Scoping Comment Letter for Western Solar PEIS/RMP

Background

In 2012, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) updates for the Western Solar Plan which covered 6 states. The focus of the was to determine locations and appropriate site for utility-scale solar energy projects on public lands managed by the BLM. Other goals of the plan included; expanding solar energy planning to additional states, increase opportunities for responsible renewable energy development, and to develop appropriate criteria to exclude high-value resource areas from renewable energy development.

As of December 2022, the BLM has permitted 41 solar energy projects totaling more than 9 gigawatts (GW) of approved capacity (with almost 4 GW in operation). But more renewable energy is needed. The Energy Act of 2020 directs the Secretary of the Interior to seek to authorize 25 GW of renewable energy on public lands by 2025. On December 8, 2022 the BLM published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to update the PEIS and prepare RMP amendments for the Western Solar Plan. The BLM has released a public comment to solicit scoping comments for the update the plan that runs until February 28, 2023. More information about this project is available on the [BLM's project website](#).

On January 19th, the BLM held a public workshop in Reno to provide information about the Western Solar Plan update and solicit public comments. A copy of the presentation from the meeting is available [HERE](#), a copy of the public handouts provided at this meeting is available [HERE](#).

Analysis

Given the potential land use planning implications across the state associated with the update to the Western Solar Plan PEIS and associated RMP amendments, staff has prepared a proposed scoping comment letter for the Council's consideration. The proposed letter reinforces the Council's endorsement of Smart from the Start energy

planning concept from 2021 and stress close coordination with local Government's & Tribal Nations on this planning effort. The proposed letter also stresses that areas designated for renewable energy development should be consistent with local land use master plans and calls for better statewide land use planning & tracking of solar development on public lands.

A copy of the Council's proposed scoping comment letter is attached to this memo. Per NRS 321.750 (4), the Council is authorized to advise any federal or state agency or local government on land use planning and policy. If approved, the Chair would be authorized to sign the letter on behalf of the Council and a copy of the letter would be posted on the Council's website. Additionally, a copy of the letter would be sent to Governor Lombard, Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, Senator Jackie Rosen, Congresswoman Dina Titus, Congressman Mark Amodei, Congresswoman Susie Lee, Congressman Steven Horsford, and to lead staff at the BLM's National Renewable Energy Coordination Office. Additional copies of the letter may be sent to any other officials or agencies as directed by the Council.

Recommendation: *Staff recommends that the Council review and discuss the proposed scoping comment letter and recommend and changes to the letter. If approved, staff recommends that the Chair be authorized to sign the scoping letter and transmit a copy to the individuals and agencies included in the letter and to others as directed by the Council.*