

# Integrate Industry, State, and Federal Wildlife Goals Early in Energy Planning

In 2018, the U.S. had the largest annual increases in energy development ever recorded by any country, mostly powered by the shale gas revolution. Combined with wind and solar farms and liquid natural gas (LNG) export terminals, production of domestic energy resources can have significant effects on wildlife and habitats. At the same time, developing a new energy economy could cause energy costs to rise and threaten the affordability of working lands and forests, forcing landowners to sell land for development resulting in habitat fragmentation and conversion to less wildlife-friendly environments.

The developed energy resources and our natural resources provide economic benefits for the country, and both are needed for future generations. Achieving both, however, will require early consideration of effects on goals for habitat, wildlife, and water in order to balance energy development and wildlife management.

## Ensure Renewable Energy Development Does Not Negatively Impact Wildlife

- Ensure that energy projects minimize wildlife and habitat impacts. Give preference to and encourage siting in areas proactively identified that avoid key habitat, wildlife migration corridors, and migratory bird flyways. Interior/BLM; Agriculture/FS
- Revise pre-planning and planning processes to include consultation with state fish and wildlife agencies early and often before public notices are published. Interior/all bureaus; Agriculture/all bureaus; Defense/all bureaus
- Approve native grasses and wood from sustainably managed forests as feedstocks for renewable fuels. EPA; Agriculture/all bureaus; Interior/BLM
- Support research on the effects to wildlife and habitat of producing nonnative biofuels. EPA; Agriculture/all bureaus

Placement of climate-beneficial technologies, such as some wind projects and their associated transmission lines, should be planned with the same care as carbon-based developments to avoid fragmenting wildlife corridors or impeding migratory bird flyways. Siting these projects in areas with minimal wildlife impacts, such as former industrial sites, rooftops, parking lots, landfills, abandoned mines, and brownfields should be chosen wherever possible. In addition, government mandates to include corn ethanol and soy biodiesel in fuel supplies have driven the conversion of millions of acres of grasslands

and wetlands to agriculture. This has eliminated habitats for pheasants, ducks, and other gamebirds and also reduced important carbon sinks.

We encourage prudent development of renewable energy as part of our nation's overall goals toward energy security along with responsible development of oil and gas resources. However, renewable energy siting and production also must engage state wildlife managers early and often in the process to reduce potential impacts to wildlife populations and their habitat.



## Integrate Wildlife Population and Habitat Objectives Early in Energy Project Planning

- Revise energy development planning rules to give equal consideration to wildlife and habitat resources both site-by-site and also cumulatively across developed energy areas. Interior/BLM, BOEM, FWS; Agriculture/FS
- Update the *Energy Policy Act* and *Mineral Leasing Act* to provide for the needs of wildlife and habitat during energy development planning and implementation. Congress
- Update the Secretarial Memo of September 10, 2018, to ensure that federal agencies include state fish and wildlife agencies as cooperating agencies in planning energy and transmission projects and incorporate state recommendations for achieving wildlife population and habitat goals. Interior/BLM
- Develop a process for resolving conflicts between objectives for energy and fish and wildlife management to ensure equal treatment of fish and wildlife and to preclude unnecessary litigation. Interior/BLM; Agriculture/FS
- Fund research to develop specific guidelines for the location and operation of energy projects that avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential negative impacts on wildlife. Energy; Interior/BLM; Agriculture/FS
- Direct a portion of federal revenue from energy development on federal lands and waters to federal and state agencies to mitigate losses of fish, wildlife, or their habitat from energy development. Congress

Energy development sites as well as pipelines and electrical transmission lines can fragment habitats, disrupt wildlife movements, and impair water quality and quantity, significantly degrading habitat. The current scale of development exacerbates this problem for many local species populations and, in at least one case, for an entire species – the greater sage-grouse. Infrastructure and transmission lines often conflict with wildlife, including imperiled species like the lesser prairie-chicken. In addition, hydraulic fracturing for shale gas requires tremendous amounts of water, and disposal into surface water bodies is problematic for drinking water and wildlife habitats.

These problems can be addressed by state and federal wildlife, land management, and utility regulatory agencies working together with the energy industries. For example, when the sage grouse was petitioned to be listed under the *Endangered Species Act*, agencies and stakeholders responded with a plan for conserving the bird in and around energy and infrastructure projects. This is the largest



coordinated conservation plan between state and federal governments in our nation's history – 11 western states are involved. However, such efforts would be easier and more effective if undertaken from the beginning of planned developments. A general policy to begin coordination in the earliest stages of the projects, when most options are open, will lead to more success incorporating energy planning with landscape-scale mitigation policies, resource management plans, and conservation actions on private working lands.

