

**Item 5 LATE ADDITION**

**CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD  
LAHONTAN REGION**

**MEETING OF FEBRUARY 10 AND 11, 2016  
APPLE VALLEY**

**UPDATE ON THE DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN IN THE  
SOUTHERN LAHONTAN**

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**Please insert the Power Point presentation behind Bates Page 5-4.**

# DRECP and Water: Implications for the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

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## The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

- Designed to allow streamlined environmental review and permitting of renewable energy and transmission projects in appropriate areas while also conserving sensitive species, functioning ecosystems, and other desert resources and values.
- This cooperative effort is led by the CEC, CDFW, BLM, and U.S. FWS (which comprise the Renewable Energy Action Team or REAT).
- The REAT agencies continually seek, consider, and incorporate scientific input and best available info for the DRECP.

## The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

Also includes a Stakeholder Committee created to provide a forum for public participation and input. Includes:

- County and City Governments
- CA Public Utilities Commission
- CA State Lands Commission
- Gov. Brown's Office
- A coalition of Native American Tribes
- Non-governmental organizations
- Renewable energy project developers



## The DRECP BLM LUPA

- The **Draft DRECP & EIR/EIS** was published in Sept. 2014, followed by a public review period ending Feb. 2015.
- In March 2015, the REAT announced a phased approach to completing the DRECP. In Phase I, the component applying to BLM-managed land is being finalized first.
- In Nov. 2015, BLM published a Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) and **Final EIS**. This document amends the CA Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan.
- Renewable energy and transmission projects in the LUPA area will still require environmental review of site-specific impacts on resources.

## The Proposed LUPA

Includes Development Focus Areas (DFAs), Variance Process Lands, and BLM Conservation Areas.

Throughout the LUPA area, **Conservation & Management Actions (CMAs)** have been developed for a number of resources, including:

- **Biological Resources**
- **Climate Change and Adaption**
- **Cultural Resources**
- **Recreation and Visitor Services**
- **Soil, Water, and Water-Dependent Resources**
- **Visual Resources Management**

## Surface Water: Objectives

- Alteration of perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral surface water resources will be minimized or eliminated where this could increase flow velocity, reduce riparian habitat, eliminate buffer systems for filtering runoff, or decrease water storage capacity.
- Surface flows that depend on groundwater, and their source aquifers, will remain intact by maintaining adequate surface flow and water table elevations.

## Surface Water: CMAs

- Avoid alteration of 100-year floodplains, playas, Wild & Scenic River corridors, and site-specific buffers.
- Exceptions made for minor incursions, but only if (a) all required permits from other agencies are obtained, and (b) surface water objectives are maintained.
- Surface water diversion for beneficial use will not occur absent a state water right.
- SWPPPs are required, and shall include any measures needed to protect erodible soils.
- Any unavoidable impacts on surface waters shall be mitigated to ensure no net loss of function and value.

## Groundwater: Objectives

- Do not authorize consumptive groundwater production (or beneficial use) from an identified groundwater basin that would exceed that basin's **perennial (safe) yield** and result in overdraft conditions.
- Avoid groundwater withdrawals that have direct or indirect effects on groundwater-dependent habitats including playa, microphyll woodland, riparian, and wetland habitats.

## Groundwater: CMAs

- A project's groundwater extraction shall not contribute to exceeding that basin's safe yield.
- Water shall be solely for the beneficial use of the project or its mitigation measures.
- If possible, alterations will be avoided that may reduce water quality or quantity for that basin's beneficial uses.
- Designs are promoted that maintain existing hydrology or direct excess surface flow to where it can dissipate or percolate.
- Water conservation measures are required in basins where groundwater demand is high.

## Groundwater: CMAs

- A **Water Supply Assessment** shall be prepared prior to project authorization. Must be approved by BLM in coordination with USFWS, CDFW, etc.
- Determines whether the project would create or exacerbate overdraft conditions in the basin, and whether it can maintain existing land uses and water-dependent resources.
- Must analyze project's potential impacts on water quality and quantity needed for beneficial uses, water rights, or habitat management.
- Must be in the form of a numerical groundwater model.

## Groundwater: CMAs

- A **Groundwater Monitoring, Reporting, and Mitigation Plan** shall be prepared to verify the Water Supply Assessment and adaptively manage water use.
- Shall be approved by BLM, in coordination with USFWS, CDFW, etc., prior to extraction or injection of any water resource.
- The quality and quantity of all surface water and groundwater used for the project shall be monitored and reported using this plan. Includes measuring groundwater levels and flow paths, water quality, changes to groundwater-dependent vegetation, and aquifer recovery after project decommissioning.

## Groundwater: CMAs

- Where cumulative pumping may exceed perennial yield or impact water resources, one or more **trigger points** shall be set. If water elevation at designated wells or water bodies falls below the trigger point, additional measures will be imposed, up to cessation of pumping.
- Mitigation is imposed if impacts exceed those analyzed in the EIS, even if the basin's safe yield is not exceeded. May include acquiring water from outside the basin, replenishing groundwater, and funding a basin-wide monitoring network.
- Groundwater extractions from adjudicated basins, e.g., Mojave River Basin, may have additional restrictions.

