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## House Natural Resources panel considers renewable energy on public lands

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The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held a hearing to discuss the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act (H.R.2663), a bipartisan bill with 67 cosponsors that was introduced by Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) in 2015.

If enacted, H.R.2663 would streamline the permitting process for wind, solar, and geothermal energy development on federal lands by limiting the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. Instead of conducting new programmatic environmental impact statements (PEIS) for each proposed project, the bill would allow renewable energy projects to use preexisting, preapproved final PEISs for wind, solar, and geothermal projects on federal lands.

The bill also establishes a royalty and revenue structure for states and counties with renewable energy development. The Secretary of the Interior would determine royalty rates, with 25 percent of generated royalties going to the state, 25 percent to the counties, 15 percent to the Treasury, and 35 percent to a Renewable Energy Resource Conservation Fund aimed at supporting wildlife and recreation.

Ranking Member Alan Lowenthal (D-CA) called the bill “a win for taxpayers, win for the environment.”

Chairman Doug Lamborn (R-CO) also praised the bill, highlighting its ability to streamline the often arduous NEPA process that can take many years to complete.

The Bureau of Land Management has identified 20.6 million acres of public land with wind potential and 19 million acres of public land with solar potential; however only 1.4 percent of wind capacity was sourced from public lands in 2012.

Sources: E&E Daily, Environmental Protection Agency, House.gov

*Updated 8/1/16*

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