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Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell approved Phase I of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) this September. DRECP is a coordinated effort between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the California Energy Commission, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to responsibly develop renewable energy on 10.8 million acres of public land. The agreement is part of larger effort by California to simultaneously conserve land and increase renewable energy production on 22 million acres of land across the state.

Phase I of the plan amends former BLM land-use regulations to provide a more streamlined approval process for renewable energy development on designated lands known as Development Focus Areas (DFAs).

Selected energy development regions will avoid wildlife habitat and culturally significant locations. In addition, the plan designates 4.2 million acres as conservation areas, which were selected to facilitate the migration of wildlife through protected national parks such as Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park, and the Mojave National Preserve.

Phase II will complete the plan, expanding the same land use regulations to the remaining 11.2 million acres of public and private land. Because Phase II depends on individual county laws, its implementation remains contingent on local arrangements that have not yet been settled.

Sources: Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior
