

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010
House Report 111-316, pages 75-76

RENEWABLE ENERGY AND PUBLIC LANDS

The conferees understand that renewable energy will become a more significant source of power for the Nation and that the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service will play a prominent role in its development. However, the conferees are concerned about the impacts these projects may have on the landscape and water resources, particularly those for wind and solar power. Proposed solar projects can each cover several square miles and the newest wind turbines are over 500 feet tall. Appropriate siting of these projects and cost-appropriate size limitations are critical to ensuring that the pristine landscapes, limited water resources, and magnificent views of the country's public lands and coastlines are protected.

Accordingly, within 180 days of enactment, the conferees direct the Department of the Interior to submit a report in consultation with the Forest Service on the criteria used for siting renewable energy projects, including the extent to which protection of scenic landscapes, ridgetops, water resources, habitat including that for endangered species, and shorelines will be considered. The report should also provide a detailed strategic plan on how the Department and the Forest Service will coordinate the development of such projects, particularly in areas where there is mixed ownership or management by the Department of the Interior, Forest Service, Department of Defense, and non-Federal landowners. Additionally, the report should identify specifically what areas of the public lands and the Outer Continental Shelf will be considered for projects based on: (1) their potential for renewable energy generation; (2) what additional transmission lines will be necessary to connect these new sources of power to the energy grid; (3) where these transmission lines will be placed; (4) the methodology to be used to limit the size of solar troughs and photovoltaic facilities, and (5) the impact on water resources.