

2021 BIENNIAL REPORT

Energy Planning and Conservation Program

Report Period: 2019-2020

NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE
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Background

In 2011, the 76th Nevada Legislature passed Assembly Bill 307, creating a cost-recovery program for the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) to provide increased capacity to review and provide feedback on wildlife impacts to proponents of energy development projects. This program, the Energy Planning and Conservation Program (“Program”), was also intended to encourage project proponents to work with NDOW in identifying and seeking methods to avoid and minimize potential wildlife impacts as early in the planning process as possible. The legislation was in response to a renewable energy land rush that occurred following shifting national energy policies and strategies, including a federal incentive program to develop renewable energy on public lands.

After the inception of the Program, the pace of energy projects varied between 2012 and 2016, with an average of approximately 13 energy projects per year from 2012–2014, and an average of five (5) energy projects per year was recorded between 2015–2016. During the two years between 2017-2018, NDOW experienced an increase in the number of project applications received, with a total of 19 applications submitted to the Program during that period, for an average of 9.5 projects per year.

2019-2020 Program Activity

During the last two years (2019-2020), a drastic increase was recorded, with a total of 51 applications being received for energy projects across the state. In addition to new applications received, three (3) amendments to existing applications were submitted, and one (1) project application was withdrawn due to the project being cancelled. The number of new applications to the Program during the last two years accounts for approximately 43% of all applications received since the inception of the Program. This sharp increase is likely due to renewed interest and support for domestic energy development and relaxed environmental regulations at a national level. Technical guidance on energy developments continues to be a significant and expanding role for the Habitat Division Technical Review Program at NDOW.

Summary of Program Activities

Several types of energy projects covered under the program have submitted review applications to NDOW since 2012 (Table 1).

Table 1. Projects under NDOW’s Energy Planning and Conservation Program.

Calendar Year	Solar	Geothermal	Wind	Transmission	Other*	Grand Total
2012	3	2	0	3	1	9
2013	11	0	1	4	1	17
2014	4	1	0	7	0	12
2015	3	0	0	1	1	5
2016	5	0	0	0	0	5
2017	2	1	1	3	0	7
2018	10	0	0	1	1	12
2019	7	0	0	5	2	14
2020	13	9	1	10	4	37
Grand Total	58	13	3	34	10	118

*Includes fuel pipelines including natural gas, gas power and biomass, hydroelectricity, and power storage facilities.

A total of 118 projects have submitted applications to the cost-recovery review program between 2012 and 2020. The majority of projects submitted under the Program have been utility-scale solar projects (58 projects), with the majority of those occurring in the Mojave Desert of southern Nevada. Transmission projects have been the second busiest energy sector reviewed under the program (34 projects).

The Department has issued refunds on seven (7) projects since the inception of the Program, either due to the project being cancelled, or refunds requested due to project completion. Table 2 depicts the fees accepted under the program. These fees have provided non-federal match to NDOW’s U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program grant supporting NDOW’s Technical Review Program.

Table 2. Recovered costs for NDOW’s Energy Planning and Conservation Program.

Calendar Year	Solar	Geothermal	Wind	Transmission	Other*	Grand Total
2012	\$30,000	\$2,240	\$0	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$52,240
2013	\$95,109	\$0	\$10,000	\$30,000	\$5,000	\$140,109
2014	\$40,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$40,000	\$0	\$85,000
2015	\$30,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$40,000
2016	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$50,000
2017	\$16,865	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$0	\$46,865
2018	\$90,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$105,000
2019	\$65,000	\$0	\$0	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$110,000
2020	\$120,000	\$45,000	\$10,000	\$80,000	\$30,000	\$285,000
Grand Total	\$536,975	\$57,240	\$30,000	\$220,000	\$70,000	\$914,215

Program Direction

The Energy Planning and Conservation Program at NDOW has increased opportunities for engagement on energy development projects by formally requiring coordination between project proponents and the NDOW Habitat Division. Funds collected under this Program have provided expanded opportunities for NDOW to enhance knowledge of wildlife in areas of potential energy development. This knowledge is fundamental for providing quality input on measures to avoid and minimize project impacts on wildlife resources. This input provides greater certainty for project proponents when planning development activities and enhanced input to land management agencies responsible for completing environmental analyses.