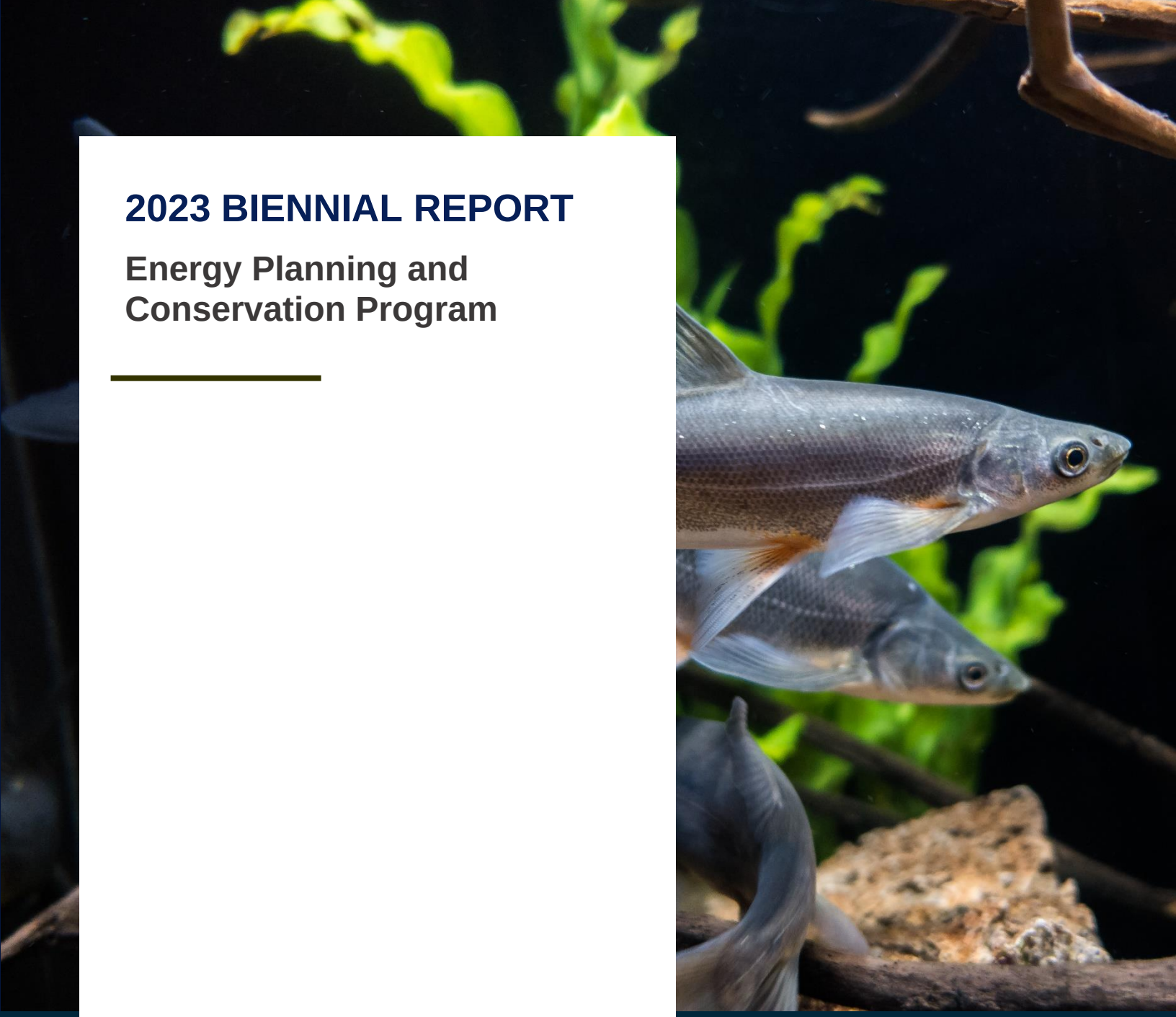

2023 BIENNIAL REPORT

Energy Planning and Conservation Program

Report Period: 2021-2022

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 early in the planning process. 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 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. Between 2019-2020, NDOW saw a drastic increase in applications received, with a total of 51 applications being received for energy projects across the state. This increase was attributed to renewed interest and support for domestic energy development and relaxed environmental regulations at a national level.

2021-2022 Program Activity

During the last two years, NDOW received a total of 82 project applications, an increase of 30 new applications, or an approximately 58% increase, compared the period between 2019-2020, and accounts for approximately 41% of all applications received since the inception of the Program. The sharp increase is likely due to multiple factors, including the support for domestic energy development and independence, and interest in reducing carbon-related impacts contributing to climate change. Technical guidance on energy developments continues to be a significant and expanding role for the Technical Review Program at the 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
2021	30	0	1	4	2	37
2022	26	1	0	8	10	45
Grand Total	*115*	*14*	*4*	*46*	*22*	*201*

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

A total of 201 projects have submitted applications to the cost-recovery review program between 2012 and 2022. The majority of projects submitted under the Program have been utility-scale solar projects (115 projects), with the majority of those occurring in the Mojave Desert of southern Nevada; however, during the last two years NDOW began receiving a much larger number of solar applications in the northern parts of the state.

Transmission projects have been the second busiest energy sector reviewed under the program (46 projects).

The Department collects fees for each project submitted to 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 the NDOW's Technical Review Program. The Program has issued refunds on 13 projects since the inception of the Program, either due to the project being cancelled or withdrawn, or refunds requested due to project completion.

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 developers and the NDOW Habitat Division. Funds collected under this Program have provided match for the Statewide Technical Guidance program at the NDOW, which allows the NDOW to expand knowledge of species and habitats across the state. 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.

The NDOW has formed collaborative relationships with various energy developers across the state through the Energy Planning and Conservation Program, contributing to earlier coordination and more meaningful discussions on project siting, facilities placement, and other elements (e.g. project design features) of project planning.

Over the last 10 years, the Program has significantly contributed to a greater understanding of energy development and impacts on wildlife and other natural resources across the Great Basin and Mojave regions. The NDOW has become a key partner with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, The Nature Conservancy, The Wildlife Society, and Smart from the Start energy planning and coordination groups.