



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Ecoregional Assessments

Category: Habitat Restoration

BLM

Washington D.C.

Landscape-Level Studies Will Help Protect High-Value Lands



The BLM recognizes that public lands are influenced by complex environmental challenges that transcend public land boundaries. These include increasing wildfires and invasive species; expanding demand for renewable energy development and urban growth; and extended droughts, melting permafrost, and other climate change-related impacts. The BLM is preparing a series of ecoregional assessments to help land managers better understand and respond to these challenges.

In support of this goal, four ARRA contracts are providing funds for ecoregional assessments to be conducted from 2010 - 2011 in the Central Great Basin, Mojave Desert, Sonoran Desert, and Colorado Plateau. These landscape-level projects are in states with high renewable energy potential (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah and Colorado).

These assessments will document areas of high ecological value, including regionally significant habitats and species of concern. They also will map areas with high renewable energy development potential. Those areas that have both high energy potential and fall outside of areas with high ecological values



could be best-suited for future renewable energy development. Ecoregional assessments



describe ongoing and projected environmental disturbances from wildfire, invasive species, and climatic conditions. They also identify opportunities for resource conservation and development.

Each project is expected to cost from \$700,000 to \$800,000. Partners include federal and state agencies, nongovernmental organizations and contractors. Products will include detailed geographical information system (GIS) maps and a report concerning current ecoregional conservation status and potential for change in a 20-50 year planning horizon. The assessments are being developed within the framework of the Department of the Interior's climate change science initiative, which includes establishment of Climate Science Centers and Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs).

The BLM will use the results to inform its land use planning and decision-making for an ecoregion's public lands. The assessments will also help the BLM, working with its partners and stakeholders, to prioritize, coordinate, and implement conservation actions to achieve the greatest long-term benefit.



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