

July 22, 2024

The Honorable Pete Stauber  
Chair  
Energy and Minerals Subcommittee  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1333 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Alexandria Ocasio Cortez  
Ranking Member  
Energy and Minerals Subcommittee  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1333 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Stauber, Ranking Member Ocasio-Cortez, and members of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write today in support of two bills, both entitled the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act (PLREDA) of 2024 — H.R. 8954, which is slated to be heard by the subcommittee on July 23, 2024, and H.R. 9012, which was introduced on July 11, 2024. While both bills facilitate the responsible buildout of renewable energy on public lands, we urge the subcommittee to consider amending H.R. 8954 to include essential provisions from H.R. 9012 before moving it forward.

Our federal public lands boast some of the nation's greatest solar, wind and geothermal potential — and investments in harnessing this potential continue to grow: in April, the Department of the Interior surpassed the congressionally-enacted goal of permitting 25 gigawatts of renewable energy onshore by 2025. Solar, wind, and geothermal development on public lands powers millions of homes across the West, sustains thousands of jobs, and returns tens of millions of dollars to the federal treasury each year. Together, H.R. 8954 and H.R. 9012 can sustain this growth, create jobs across the West, and bring new revenue streams to states where these wind, solar, and geothermal projects are built while ensuring responsible siting for these projects.

This growth has been made possible thanks, in part, to the tireless efforts of Republicans and Democrats in both chambers: provisions of a prior iteration of PLREDA became law in the year-end omnibus in FY 2021 (Energy Act of 2020, Title III, Subtitle B), which set the onshore permitting goal, established Renewable Energy Coordination Offices to help make the permitting process more efficient, and empowered the Department to further lower costs.

But this rapid solar, wind, and geothermal growth must be accompanied by additional policy changes to ensure communities stand to benefit and to address any impacts development will have on our public lands and the wildlife, habitats, ecosystems, and cultural resources they hold.

First, we support sharing wind and solar revenues, as stipulated by H.R. 8954 and H.R. 9012. Under current law, 100% of rents, fees, and other revenues generated from wind and solar energy projects are invested in the federal treasury. By comparison, federal statutes dictate that oil and gas revenues must be shared with states, and that geothermal revenues must be shared with states and counties. Critically, both bills would address this inequity by reinvesting revenues from renewable energy projects back into states,

counties, into permit processing at the Bureau of Land Management, and into conservation. Both bills establish a conservation fund to help restore and protect fish and wildlife habitat, help connect Americans to the outdoors, and support local stewardship projects on our public lands.

Second, we support increasing the statutory renewable energy onshore permitting goal for public land, considering the 25 gigawatt by 2025 goal has been reached. H.R. 9012 proposes a goal of permitting 60 gigawatts by 2030. We support this goal because it will enable further administrative action, if needed, to ensure responsible utility-scale deployment of renewable energy continues apace.

Third, we support elements in H.R. 9012 that guide renewable energy development toward low-conflict areas. Specifically, the bill will provide for efficient permitting for projects sited in places that have high-energy potential that may also be proximate to transmission or that have been previously disturbed or degraded — and where wildlife, habitat, and cultural resource impacts are minimal. The upfront planning and careful siting of renewable energy projects that H.R. 9012 envisions will improve projects' permitting timelines, limit adverse impacts, ensure their durability and longevity going forward, and help increase revenues to states envisioned by H.R. 8954.

Finally, we would be remiss not to mention the longstanding bipartisan work over many years to advance provisions addressing programmatic planning, permitting efficiency, statutory permitting goals, and industry incentives — including H.R. 3794 from the 116th Congress, which was unanimously approved by the House Natural Resources Committee. H.R. 9012 carries these important concepts forward in language endorsed by organizations representing conservationists, sportsmen, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, and renewable energy industry actors alike, with key updates to meet the challenges and opportunities of today. We strongly urge you to include these provisions in H.R. 8954.

In sum, we urge you to support both versions of PLREDA — H.R. 8954 and H.R. 9012 alike — and encourage the subcommittee to include elements of H.R. 9012 within H.R. 8954 as the latter bill navigates the legislative process. We look forward to working with you on this legislation and appreciate your continued support.

Sincerely,

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers  
Friends of Basin and Range  
National Audubon Society  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Nevada Wildlife Federation  
The Wilderness Society  
Trout Unlimited