

Clean Energy Voluntary Donations

Playa Lakes Joint Venture's collaborative approach to renewable energy and habitat conservation in the Great Plains

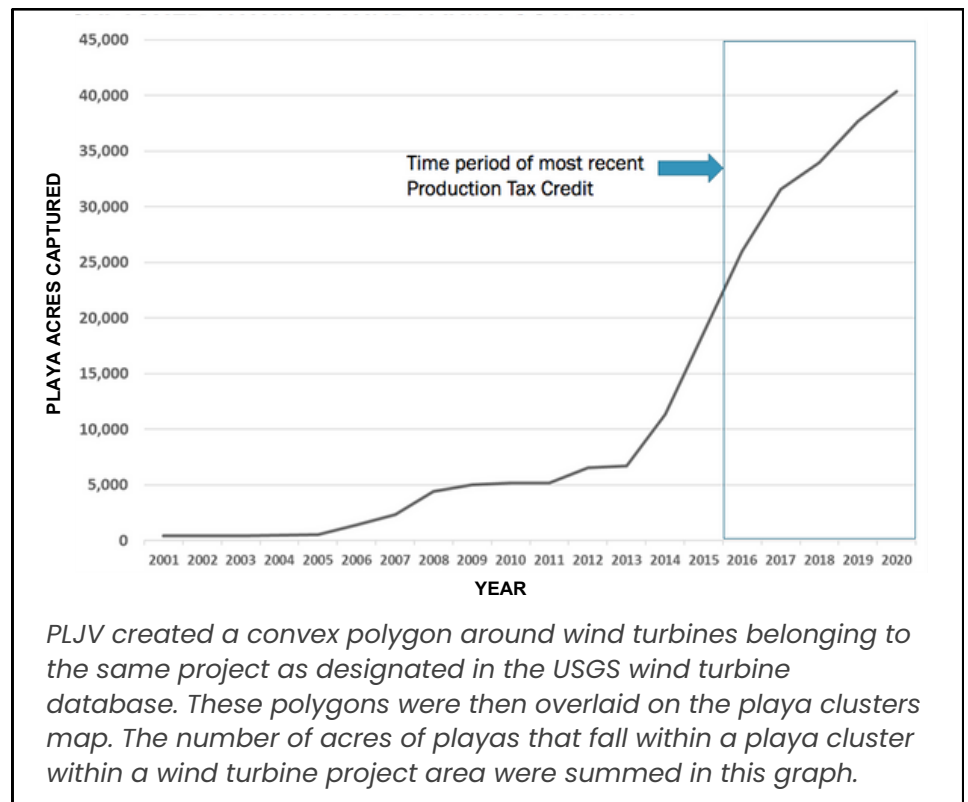
Playa Lakes Joint Venture is committed to working with renewable energy companies to help mitigate climate change impacts to bird habitat, but we must also work together to conserve natural resources for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Often the footprint of renewable energy infrastructure can impact existing wildlife habitat and lessen playa restoration opportunities, making the goal of providing habitat for birds much more difficult.

For over 20 years, PLJV and partners have worked with many renewable energy partners to develop and implement avoidance guidelines, which advise that all energy development and associated infrastructure avoid large isolated playas and playa clusters. This is because infrastructure on or near playas or playa clusters may adversely affect wildlife habitat and energy development on playas may limit their hydrologic function.

However, the rate of playa acres captured within a wind farm footprint continues to increase. The graph above shows the yearly rate of cumulative acres of playas within clusters that are captured within a wind farm project area, highlighting the continued increase.

Avoid. Mitigate. Donate.

PLJV fully supports avoidance of important habitat and biological features on the landscape, but this often becomes challenging when considering the realities of siting renewable energy. While PLJV also continues to support mitigation when it is necessary, appropriate, and recommended by natural resource agencies, we recognize the need for a more uniquely effective strategy. As a third tool in the toolbox, the Clean Energy Voluntary Donations Program is another option and an alternative that can drive non-regulatory conservation progress by providing opportunities for companies to contribute at a scale that works for them, while benefiting wildlife.



PROGRAM DETAILS

- Companies come to the program voluntarily.
- The PLJV partnership works with companies to identify habitat that is being most affected by a wind farm or transmission project and determines what kind of project will benefit the affected resource.
- A donation amount will be suggested, with the final donation negotiated among partners. The donation should be relative to the overall cost of the project.
- Projects are then solicited for funding based on what was most affected (i.e. playas, prairie, etc.) within a site.
- Companies will be offered the opportunity to donate funding to a specific project or contribute funds to a pool to be used on an affected resource or habitat.
- The entire amount of donated funding is transferred to partners implementing specific projects addressing the affected resource; there is no administrative fee.
- Best practices for siting, including avoidance of playas and playa clusters, is of utmost importance. Companies may be asked to demonstrate an effort to follow these best practices as part of their participation in this program.
- Companies will receive recognition for their voluntary contribution and support in developing and distributing messaging about the project.

***To learn more and access tools, visit
pljv.org/renewable-energy-development-tools***



PLAYA LAKES JOINT VENTURE

Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) is a regional partnership of federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups, and private industry dedicated to conserving bird habitat throughout the western Great Plains — including portions of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. PLJV is adept at biological planning and has tools and resources to design appropriate biological offsets and can work to minimize hurdles associated with a meaningful conservation donation.

PLAYA & RENEWABLE ENERGY COLLABORATIVE

PLJV facilitates the coordination of the Playa & Renewable Energy Collaborative. The group aims to raise awareness of the importance of playas within the renewable energy industry while also facilitating conversations between wildlife and energy development professionals on how the groups can more effectively interact.

By collaborating, renewable energy developers and natural resource conservationists can ensure playas and renewable energy infrastructure continue to benefit both people and wildlife for years to come.

WHAT IS A PLAYA?

Playas are round, shallow wetlands found at the lowest point of a watershed. Their basins are lined with clay soil, which collect and hold water from rainfall and runoff, creating temporary lakes. They provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife and are a primary source of groundwater recharge to the Ogallala aquifer.

A healthy playa has an intact clay basin — without excavated pits or ditches — that is not buried by sediment from nearby fields. Water from the surrounding watershed freely enters the basin through a native vegetative buffer without being diverted from the playa by roads, terraces, or other impediments.

