

Partnering for Renewable Energy and Wildlife

Renewable energy in the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) region is a rapidly growing industry that will continue to expand in the coming years. As this happens, it is important to ensure that siting new energy infrastructure is done in ways that benefit both industry and wildlife.

The Playa & Renewable Energy Collaborative 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 two groups can more effectively interact.

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



Why Avoid Playas?

The PLJV region, which is home to many important renewable energy sites, is also densely populated with playas. Because they are temporary wetlands and often dry, playas can go unnoticed or be overlooked, presenting problems for developers once water and birds show up.

Unfortunately, the impact of energy infrastructure on these important wetlands, and the wildlife that depend on them, is not fully understood. Overall, we advise that all energy development and associated infrastructure avoid large isolated playas and playa clusters, as infrastructure on or near playas or playa clusters may adversely affect wildlife habitat and energy development on playas may limit their hydrologic function.

Playa clusters are mapped using waterfowl data to reflect how waterfowl use and travel between playas, representing areas where obstacles would be detrimental. Playa clusters were developed by modeling how waterfowl, specifically Northern Pintails, use playas. Birds tend to be attracted to clusters of playas and once there are likely to move among playas in a cluster. The resultant maps tend to map an avoidance distance of the cluster while clearly delineating the cluster of playas themselves.

While much of the focus has been on siting wind turbines, solar energy development will also be a key player in the region. There are few published studies evaluating the effects of solar developments on birds and other wildlife. Given the scarcity of publicly available information, we endorse a precautionary approach as best.

PLJV's recommendations for energy development near playas are used by state wildlife agencies and shared with industry professionals to be considered during the siting process.



Playa & Renewable Energy Collaborative

Time and time again, we see that when people talk and work together, solutions come to the fore.

The Playa & Renewable Energy Collaborative serves as a venue for industry professionals working on renewable energy and wildlife to share experiences and build awareness of playas while also exploring siting tools for playa wetlands.

What does being on the Collaborative involve?

- Participating in discussions with other collaborative members about renewable energy and playa avoidance.
- Providing feedback and opinions on PLJVs Energy Development Siting Recommendations for Playas and tools, as well as related communications materials.
- Sharing information about PLJVs recommendations with renewable energy consultants, developers and other professionals working in the renewables industry.

Get Involved

To explore how PLJV's tools and guidance can be a part of your planning process, visit PLJV.org.

To participate in the Playa & Renewable Energy Collaborative, contact PLJV Communications Specialist Lily Abromeit at 720-507-4035 or lily.abromeit@pljv.org.

