



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

APR - 6 2022

The Honorable Alan S. Lowenthal
Chair, Subcommittee on Energy
and Mineral Resources
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Lowenthal:

Enclosed is the Bureau of Land Management's response to questions for the record submitted following the May 24, 2021, legislative hearing entitled "*Expanding Clean Energy on Public Land.*" We apologize for the delay in our response.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this material to the Committee.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Salotti
Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Pete Stauber
Ranking Member

Question for the Record
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
U. S. House Committee on Natural Resources
Expanding Clean Energy on Public Lands
and on H.R. 3326, the Public Land Renewable Energy and Development Act
May 24, 2021

Question from Chairman Alan Lowenthal

Question: Would the language regarding variance lands on page 7 of H.R. 3326 stating that “applications for a given renewable energy source located in those variance areas shall be timely processed in order to assist in meeting that goal” change BLM’s current procedure for considering applications on variance lands?

If enacted, would this language affect BLM’s ability to use the full scope of its authorities, as appropriate, under the variance process created under the 2012 PEIS for Solar Development in Six Southwestern States? If so, in what ways do you believe policy or procedure would change?

Response: The language in section 4 of H.R. 3326 stating that “applications for a given renewable energy source located in those variance areas shall be timely processed in order to assist in meeting that goal” would not change the Bureau of Land Management’s (BLM) current procedure for considering applications on variance lands. We also acknowledge the importance of identifying low conflict priority and variance areas. The BLM will be undertaking a renewable energy rulemaking, and we will use that opportunity to address prioritizing wind and solar projects in designated leasing areas, as well as addressing processing in variance areas. This rulemaking will enable projects to be prioritized and timely processed in lower-resource conflict areas, including where land use planning has yet to identify priority areas like solar energy zones or designated leasing areas. The BLM is also updating a national policy to support appropriate and consistent due diligence for adjudicating and processing applications in a more timely fashion.