



Monthly Energy Update

BLM Proposes Solar Plan Expansion to Include 11 Western States

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NREL Study Examines Reshaped Western Grid

Greater grid cooperation between California and other Western States would result in lower costs and common state energy goals, new research shows.

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) issued the new report, which looks at dozens of other technical studies that have been conducted since 2015. NREL released the draft study on regional cooperation on Jan. 13, the result of Assembly Concurrent Resolution 188, sponsored by California Assm. Chris Holden (D-Pasadena).

NREL, under the legislation, undertook a review of previously conducted technical studies spanning a wide range of topics. The California Independent System Operator (CAISO) launched the new study process in October 2022.

"The measurable benefits of regional cooperation include production cost savings, resource capacity savings, emission reductions, and enhanced reliability, especially under stressful conditions," NREL said.

Better regional coordination would provide enhanced grid resilience, such as being able to more easily mitigate or recover from extreme weather events and other outages, and would make for less curtailment of wind and solar generation due to transmission congestion, the report says. It would also enhance California's ability to move excess wind and solar across the West and provide more flexibility to manage those resources.

California will need three things from a regional market: more commercial procurements from the rest of the West; more ability to export solar energy in the middle of the day; and reserve sharing, especially with the Southwest, as the California works to improve its internal reserve margins.