

We attended the public comment meetings for the Bureau of Land Management's proposed Solar Energy Zones—areas on the public lands in five western states the BLM believes are suitable for solar energy development. Environmental activists speaking at the meetings overwhelmingly supported the idea of solar power and the idea behind the Solar Energy Zones. They did not, however, support these particular zones. The proposals appear to go too far, are in the wrong places and need to be modified or, in some cases, were outright rejected. Concerns were raised about the effects on the Sonoran Desert Tortoise, gullies and other riparian areas, animals and insects. The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance noted that the Wah Wah Valley (one of three proposed Solar Energy Zones in Utah) is too near lands with Wilderness characteristics. Other groups complained about insufficient water in the Wah Wah Valley to sustain solar production. In written comments, the Sierra Club asked that two of the Solar Energy Zones in California be removed from consideration entirely. All told, there is little 'uncontroversial' land available for solar energy production on the BLM's 258 million acres in the West.

In our new book, *Green vs Green*, we describe green opposition to green energy development as a green activist versus green energy dilemma. Green activists compare the costs from local green energy development with the local benefits of preservation. The costs are almost all local—hundreds if not thousands of acres must be devoted to solar or wind farms, windmills and solar farms destroy traditional farming, birds and bats are killed. The benefits, however, tend to be exported as the energy is usually sent elsewhere and any benefits from lower carbon production are shared widely. Thus, local costs are much higher than local benefits.

Local concerns vary. A solar farm that generates as much electricity as a natural gas well and power plant takes up thousands more acres and effectively destroys all vegetation under the collectors. Wind farms disturb thousands of acres and significantly

affect viewsheds. Wind turbines have also been known to kill bats and some birds, including species that are endangered. Geothermal plants disturb one to eight acres per megawatt. Permits to disturb plant and animal life on public lands have to be granted through a drawn-out permitting process, often five years or more. At the very least, an Environmental Assessment has to be done and often an Environmental Impact Statement. State legislators want to tax green energy development to increase tax revenues, local communities want to charge impact fees to build local infrastructure, and Native American Tribes are concerned with negative impacts on sites they consider sacred. Farmland preservationists worry that windmills or solar farms will destroy traditional farming. It quickly becomes clear that the constraints on alternative energy development are not just physical—long distances from transportation corridors, desert or mountainous terrain, necessary and available water supplies—but political.

Our book details several cases where local preferences trump global preferences by using environmental laws and regulations. The network of interest groups, litigation, and the culture that make up modern environmentalism fights green and traditional energy development alike. As national policymakers continue to tout 'green' initiatives, 'green' interest groups will oppose them. We should expect lengthy court cases, tedious environmental review processes, and protests to continue.