

As one example of the growing conflict over use of sensitive lands for renewable energy projects (Ann recently blogged about this tension [here](#)), check out Sen. Feinstein's [letter](#) to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar asking that the BLM suspend consideration of proposed leases on federal lands near Joshua Tree National Park being considered for solar energy fields. "While I strongly support renewable energy," she writes, "it is critical that these projects move forward on public and private lands well suited for that purpose. Unfortunately, many of the sites now being considered for leases are completely inappropriate and will lead to the wholesale destruction of some of the most pristine areas in the desert."

According to the Senator's letter, written in early March but made public this week (here's the [Greenwire story](#)), about 600,000 acres in southern California were purchased by the Wildlands Conservancy with private donations and federal conservation funds, and then donated to Interior "to preserve these lands in perpetuity"-but BLM now considers the land open for all uses except mining. Feinstein says that she'll soon be introducing legislation to "protect these areas and encourage energy development on more suitable lands."