



Yesterday, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Nevada Senator Harry Reid [announced](#) a series of initiatives to create a “fast track” for the development of utility scale solar energy facilities on Western public lands. This will include designating certain tracts of land as especially promising based on solar potential and land use compatibility, funding environmental studies, opening new solar energy permitting offices, and speeding up project review. Areas under evaluation cover 670,000 acres in the West, and could produce 100,000 megawatts of power.

No doubt, there will be an effort to coordinate these activities with the work of two existing projects: California’s [Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative](#), and the [Western Renewable Energy Zone](#) process established by the Western Governor’s Association. Both have sought to identify the remote areas of highest potential for renewable energy development in order to determine the need for new electric transmission projects. Regardless, this is not looking like our fathers’ Interior Department.