

Eagle conservation plan could delay wind power

By Mark Jaffe
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An eagle conservation plan proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the wind-power industry worried.

"The sense is that this is going to add years to the time it takes to develop a project," said Ellen Casey, a spokeswoman for the American Wind Energy Association, a trade group.

There has been steady growth of wind farms on federal land — there are about 330 megawatts of generation in the West and another 820 megawatts is being "fast-tracked" by the Bureau of Land Management.

The goal of the draft conservation plan is to take the best data and apply it to wind development, said BLM director Bob Abbey.

"The aim is to have development but mitigate the impacts on bald and golden eagles," Abbey said.

One issue is a proposed 10-mile buffer around a development site, said Andrew Spielman, an energy and natural-resources attorney with the Denver office of Hogan Lovells.

"It will be hard to come by a 314-square-mile area in the West that doesn't have nesting eagles or eagle prey in it," Spielman said.

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