



Secretary Brooke L. Rollins

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

SECRETARY'S MEMORANDUM 1078-016

August 21, 2025

Efficiency Screening Criteria for Proposals Concerning Power Generation on National Forest System Lands

1. PURPOSE

Executive Order (E.O.) 14156, *Declaring a National Energy Emergency* (January 20, 2025), and E.O. 14315, *Ending Market Distorting Subsidies for Unreliable, Foreign-Controlled Energy Sources* (July 7, 2025), emphasize the importance of domestic energy projects' contribution to national energy security while preserving the environment. The United States has abundant energy resources and a great potential for power transmission capacity to meet our domestic energy needs. Past misguided federal policies have prevented full utilization of these resources and made us reliant on foreign energy. It is vital that USDA contribute to the immediate reversal of these policies and increase domestic energy production to protect our national and economic security. We can manage energy generation and transmission projects on national forests to better provide domestic energy supply, create jobs and prosperity, and decrease both project construction and consumer energy costs. It is therefore the policy of the USDA to:

- (a) Promote the efficient use of federally managed lands prioritizing technologies and designs that optimize energy output per unit of land area; and
- (b) Ensure that energy projects align with the principles of multiple use, sustained yield, and environmental stewardship.

This Secretarial Memorandum details the actions I am directing the U.S. Forest Service to take in response to E.O. 14156 and E.O. 14315.

2. AUTHORITIES

This Memorandum is issued under the authority of the Organic Administration Act of 1897 (16 U.S.C. §§ 473-482, 551); Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. §§ 528-531), Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended (16 U.S.C. §§ 1601-1614), as well as other statutory authorities governing the management, administration and protection of the National Forest System. Other authorities include, but are not limited to E.O. 14156.

3. BACKGROUND

The USDA manages approximately 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands in 43 States, much of which could be a critical component for increasing domestic energy generation and transmission capacity development. Policies which encourage reliance upon foreign energy must be reconsidered.

Equally important, USDA must do its part to ensure domestic energy production proposals are efficiently and effectively evaluated so that successful applications may be expedited. Generally, projects with higher land-use efficiency, *i.e.*, optimizes the amount of useable energy produced per acre, typically have lower environmental impacts, require less land disturbance, and allow more National Forest System lands to be made available for multiple uses, such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.

Immediate action is needed to ensure USDA efficiently contributes to domestic energy capacity while mitigating environmental risk and supporting local and rural economies. We should ensure only the most efficient proposals are evaluated and thereby do more to contribute to American prosperity and protect our national and energy security.

Different generation types (e.g., wind, solar, gas, etc.) require different amounts of land (and land parcel sizes) to generate similar amounts of power, and as a result different generation types have widely varying environmental impacts.

4. DIRECTIVE

To achieve the purpose set forth above, this Memorandum directs the Forest Service to develop and use the necessary administrative processes to incorporate land-use efficiency metrics into the screening of applications for power generation on National Forest System lands. The agency shall promulgate screening criteria to ensure that energy-related permit applications optimize energy generation per unit of land area while taking into consideration environmental, social, and economic considerations.

In developing screening criteria, the Forest Service shall take into consideration the following:

(a) Screening Criteria for Land-Use Efficiency:

- (i) The agency shall evaluate proposed power generation projects based on their land-use efficiency, expressed as megawatts (MW) or nameplate capacity (MW) per acre.
- (ii) Projects that demonstrate higher land-use efficiency shall be prioritized, provided they meet other environmental, social, and economic criteria.
- (iii) The agency shall consider the varying land use requirements and related environmental impact by various power generation type when evaluating any power generation project or related major federal action.
- (iv) In considering the factors, the agency shall consider the power project boundary being proposed and evaluate whether alternative generation technology may deliver a similar amount of effective annual power while using a smaller perimeter and therefore disrupting and/or destroying less natural habit and displacing fewer species.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for implementing all aspects of this Memorandum. In the absence of an Under Secretary, the Chief of the Forest Service will carry out the responsibilities assigned in this Memorandum.

6. EFFECTS OF THIS MEMORANDUM

This Memorandum is intended to improve the internal management of the Department, assure implementation of the above-referenced Executive Orders, and ensure compliance with applicable federal laws. This Memorandum is not intended to, and does not create, any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, officers, or employees, or any other person. This Memorandum is intended to facilitate future decision-making and does not authorize, fund, or carry-out any natural resource or project decision.

To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this Memorandum and any federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Memorandum is effective immediately.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brooke Rollins". The signature is stylized with a large, prominent "B" and "R".

/s/ Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture