

# TNC in WYOMING

## Brightfields Energy Siting Initiative GIS Map Tool

### Background

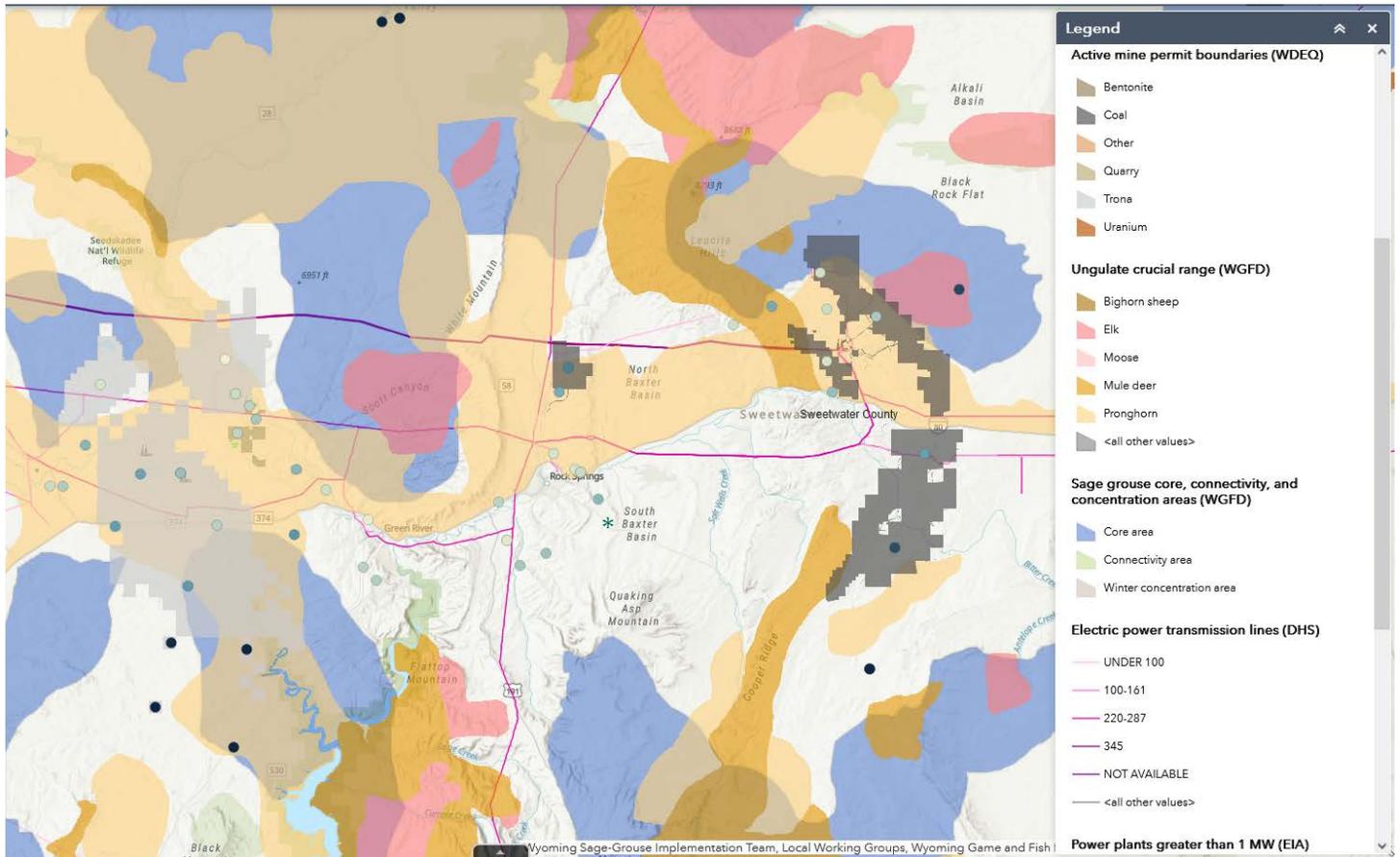
To stabilize our planet's climate and meet energy demand, 10 times the world's current renewable energy capacity is needed. However, it's estimated that new energy construction in the United States could spread over an area larger than Texas by 2040<sup>1</sup>. Most utility-scale renewable projects have been built on "greenfields"—undeveloped sites including vital natural wildlife habitat. As solar is expanded, the buildout will increase the likelihood of conflict between development and environmental and social values, creating obstacles for project developers and slowing the transition to clean energy.

To smooth the transition to clean energy while protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends, TNC is helping governments, energy developers and others drive solar energy development onto previously disturbed lands. By using former mines, brownfields, landfills and other industrial sites for renewable energy, communities can turn unproductive lands into assets, generating jobs and tax revenue, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and conserving vital natural landscapes. Our Brightfields Energy Siting Initiative (BESI) is a win-win-win approach that benefits communities, climate and conservation.

### What the BESI Map Tool Will Do

- Combine data layers showing existing infrastructure, areas of conservation value, and areas of industrially disturbed lands to make siting information as visible and easy to access as possible.
- Help project developers identify and prioritize land areas that have already been disturbed by industrial activity and steer development away from lands that are important for clean water, wildlife, carbon sequestration and tourism.
- Help policy makers identify and delineate areas that are best preserved and areas that can be safely incentivized for energy development.
- Minimize land use conflicts from energy development and accelerate the development of good projects.

<sup>1</sup> <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0162269>



## The Opportunity

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that more than 43 million acres of brownfields and former mine lands in the U.S. could be suitable for energy siting. TNC in Wyoming has mapped over 500,000 acres of industrially disturbed mine lands and other brownfields, which could support over 83 GW of solar energy generation. However, to make mine lands and brownfields more attractive for renewable energy development than greenfields, we must create incentives to overcome barriers, including lack of information, financial costs, conflicting policies and environmental liabilities.

Following in the footsteps of Mining the Sun programs in Nevada and West Virginia, TNC in Wyoming's Brightfields Energy Siting Initiative will work with partners in the state to address these barriers. We will determine if there are feasible ways to provide incentives to developers to site projects on previously disturbed lands, conserving important wildlife habitat and recreation sites, and bringing new economic life to former industrial sites.

**The BESl GIS Map Tool is hosted online, the link below will take you there:**

[Click Here to Access](#)

## HOW CAN I HELP?

If you are interested in learning more, please contact:

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PHOTOS: Towers © Dave Lauridsen; Sunrise at Bear Rocks Preserve in West Virginia © Kent Mason

## Endorsements

"Siting a new project is a lengthy and complex process that can often cause inconvenient delays. The BESl map tool aims to aid the energy industry in this process. Information is power and BESl has the capability to help energy producers in Wyoming move forward with their projects. It's a win-win for energy producers and the state."

**Glen Murrell, Executive Director, WEA**

"Siting solar and wind development is the most critical part of project planning for minimizing impacts to fish and wildlife. TNC incorporated important fish and wildlife habitats in an easy-to-access tool that is a valuable starting point for developers looking to work in Wyoming. Game and Fish thanks TNC for working proactively to create resources to aid developers and benefit wildlife."

**Angi Bruce, Deputy Director, WGFD**