

# NV Energy pulls wind project because of threatened bird

By [Cy Ryan](#) Las Vegas Sun

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CARSON CITY - More studies by the federal government on the future of the sage grouse has prompted NV Energy to pull out of developing a major wind energy project touted to supply 100,000 homes.

NV Energy was working with RES America Development to build the China Mountain Wind Project with anywhere from 170 to 200 wind turbines in Elko County and Idaho.

NV Energy says it has spent \$6 million on the project.

The project would be developed on about 25,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management property, and 10,000 acres belonging to private parties and the Idaho Department of Lands.

But the BLM notified the companies in March it has deferred work on its environment impact statement. It said the project encompasses 42 percent of the sage grouse population in the western United States.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service determined it wants to re-evaluate the status of the bird by 2015. The BLM says it will complete its analysis in 2014.

A draft environmental impact statement by the BLM released in April 2011 said the project "could have more than minor adverse effects to sage-grouse due to the importance of the involved habitat" and population issues in the area of south-central Idaho and Northern Nevada.

The BLM said, "We believe it wiser to defer continued work on the project so that it can be considered in the context of, and informed by, the analyses and decisions in the Idaho Resource Management Plan resources."

NV Energy then decided to terminate its part in the project and has notified the state Public Utilities Commission.

The Las Vegas based utility has signed a stipulation with the staff of the PUC and the Bureau of Consumer Protection to bow out of the project. The agreement says it is not a determination that NV Energy "prudently or responsibly administered the project."

The PUC staff and the consumer bureau say they retain the right to examine and challenge the money invested in the project if NV Energy tries to collect it in a future rate increase. The company says it spent \$6 million on the project.

The stipulation is expected to be presented to the PUC on Wednesday.

Nevada reported last month it reached the mandate set by the state Legislature in supplying renewable energy to its customers. The company said it hit 16.7 percent when the obligation was 15 percent in the past year.