

January 23, 2013

subject: DRECP NEPA/CEQA comment

California Energy Commission □ Dockets Office, MS-4 □ Docket No. 09-RENEW
EO-01 □ 1516 Ninth Street □ Sacramento, CA 95814-5512 □
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Dear California Energy Commission,

Thank you for inviting comments regarding the proposed mapping for the DRECP. We serve on the board of the Morongo Basin Conservation Association and are twenty-two year residents in the Pioneertown area (92268).

We live adjacent to the iconic Flat Top and Black Lava Buttes of Pipes Canyon. These are BLM managed lands that until recently were leased by Element Power to evaluate the potential to develop a wind project. To the great relief of our community, this month Element terminated of their right-of-way grant for wind testing undertaken over the past two years. Honestly, until this decision was announced thousands of us in the community were in a state of near panic as we envisioned the unthinkable consequences that an industrial scale wind turbine operation would have on this tranquil, unspoiled environment. Scores of us worked diligently to oppose Element moving ahead. We had previously prevailed against LADWP's "Green Path" transmission corridor through the Morongo Basin and weren't any more inclined to favor a wind project and the accompanying transmission hook-up.

What an irony it would have been to see giant turbines on the Buttes from our living room window. We have recently completed construction of an off-the-grid home. Covering the Buttes with 400' turbines would have been the ultimate desecration and pollution of our environment. The Serrano Indians have considered the Buttes sacred for thousands of years and do so today. The San Manual tribe vigorously opposed the project - writing a letter to BLM Barstow imploring the area's protection and ACEC designation.

The work of applying to the BLM for the Buttes designation as an ACEC continues. We managed to "dodge the bullet" with the Element threat and want to ensure a subsequent applicant won't come forward. The Buttes are located very near the Wildlands Conservancy's Pioneertown Mountains Preserve. For this and other reasons, this is an inappropriate site for locating a renewable energy project. This area and others like it should not be "green lighted" for development. The Pipes Canyon Buttes are however open for development in DRECP map option 5.

Some things are sacrosanct. Please eliminate unspoiled landscapes, wildlife corridors on public lands from consideration – off limits - for commercial use. We certainly need new energy sources, but they can be appropriately located in a distributed, rooftop manner. Lands with high conservation values should not be incentivized to renewable energy developers.

We are doing what we can to support saving what is left of the wild places in the Mojave desert. The DRECP has the power to provide assurance that pristine wild places are protected now and in the far future. They are not renewable resources! We implore the DRECP decision makers to make this happen.

We join our local organizations, the California Desert Coalition, the Morongo Basin Conservation Association, and Save Our Desert in advocating the following two positions:

1) “Variance Lands” are not acceptable in any of the proposed Alternatives. They have not been evaluated scientifically to the extent needed and have not been part of the process; they have been inappropriately “added in” late in the process.

2) Incursion into the Morongo Basin in any of the Alternatives is inappropriate due to the large amount of conserved lands within and around the Basin, including the Wildlands Conservancy Pioneertown Mountains Preserve as well as the Joshua Tree National Park and Mojave National Preserve and the proposed Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments.

Sincerely,
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