



# California Wind Energy Association

September 16, 2013

Jim Kenna  
California State Director  
Bureau of Land Management  
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623  
Sacramento, CA 95825-1866  
*Via email:* Jim\_Kenna@blm.gov



California Energy Commission  
Dockets Office, MS-4  
Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01  
1516 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 98514-5512  
*Via email:* docket@energy.state.ca.us

**RE: DRECP and West Chocolate Mountains Renewable Energy Evaluation Area**

Dear State Director Kenna,

It has come to CalWEA's attention that a Record of Decision has been issued for the West Chocolate Mountains Renewable Energy Evaluation Area (REEA), which lies entirely within the DRECP planning area. CalWEA has several concerns with the issuance of this ROD, including the extra-jurisdictional rationale for prohibiting wind energy in the area, the inconsistent treatment of renewable energy impacts, and the lack of coordination between the REEA and the DRECP process.

CalWEA is very concerned about the decision by the BLM to prohibit wind energy development in the REEA based on presumed incompatibility with military operations and equipment. The justification behind this broad prohibition conflicts with comments submitted to the DRECP by Michael Aimone, Executive Director for the Department of Defense Siting Clearinghouse, on February 12, 2013. The letter states that areas coded "yellow" by the Siting Clearinghouse in July 2012, such as the REEA, "[r]epresent locations where there is some likelihood of an unacceptable risk to national security, but that the technology identified probably will not impact military operations, testing, and training" (emphasis added). The BLM's broad-brush decision based on presumed conflicts potentially pre-determines the outcomes from site-specific review of projects in this area by the Department of Defense Siting Clearinghouse via Section 358 as well as the FAA Obstruction Evaluation/Airport Airspace Analysis. This action sets a dangerous precedent for the BLM making decisions based on airspace use, which is the purview of other agencies and undermines established processes. While this particular REEA is of relatively little interest to the wind industry at present, we would be greatly concerned if this approach were to be taken under the DRECP.

CalWEA is also disturbed by the treatment of wind energy to date in DRECP planning that appears to be wholly incongruous with decisions made in the REEA. In the December 2012 DRECP documents, certain land designations (such as ACECs) covering vast areas of the desert, many with 1% surface disturbance caps, are proposed to be *prohibited* to wind energy development to protect species such as the desert tortoise, despite scientific evidence of compatibility. In the REEA, lands with high-value desert tortoise habitat were zoned for solar and geothermal development with a 10% surface disturbance stipulation. The BLM's proposed virtual ban on wind energy in the DRECP on the basis of terrestrial impacts seems grossly unfair to us, particularly in light of the agency's willingness to make concessions on surface disturbance for other types of development in high-value habitat.

Lastly, we are concerned at the lack of attention that this overlapping effort has received throughout the course of the DRECP process. In contrast to the solar PEIS, the REEA virtually has not been mentioned in meetings, documents, or communications to stakeholders. We are perplexed as to why discussion of this overlapping effort has been largely absent from the DRECP process, and why it was necessary to create this REEA before the DRECP-wide planning effort was even preliminarily completed. Given a dearth of interest shown in this REEA by renewable energy developers, as evidenced by a lack of applications in the past, the area's value for conservation may exceed its value for renewable energy in the context of the larger plan. In any case, the impetus behind separate action on this REEA is not apparent to us.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We welcome any opportunity to discuss these issues with you.

Sincerely,



Nancy Rader  
Executive Director



Ashley R. Richmond  
Director of Siting Policy

cc: Commissioner Karen Douglas, California Energy Commission  
Kevin Hunting, California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
John Anderson, American Wind Energy Association

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