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A Draft Proposal Kern County Participation in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)

Counties have been asked to become partners in the DRECP and permit holders for Incidental Take Permits and coverage for other species and plants. At this time the California Energy Commission is proposed as the permit holder. While the DRECP was originally focused on public lands, it has proposed that areas on private land be included for consideration. As Solar P V and Wind energy projects on private land are exclusively the jurisdiction of local decision makers, it is important that the concerns and issues of counties be resolved in the formulation of the plan. This is a unique NCCP as it only provides coverage for one industry: renewable energy developers which provide a California-wide benefit. Counties have many other constituent needs and limited land use opportunities , in the desert after military and other federal/state owned lands as well as private conservation lands are eliminated from development potential. Therefore this NCCP conservation strategy should be uniquely designed as well.

DRAFT PROPOSAL

- Renewable Energy Project Developer Mitigation Fee Conservation Strategy
 - ✓ No acquisition of private lands for mitigation
 - ✓ Funds should be used for enhancement of Public Lands including State owned lands, or directed toward research, inventory, monitoring and recovery of species affected by the development.
 - ✓ Any limited acquisition of private land for corridors or special plants has to provide a monetary enhancement to the county or city where the private land is located to offset the loss of

property taxes. PILT (Payment in Lieu payments from the Congress) are already capped for the counties with larger public land acreage, and therefore PILT will not offset the revenue loss.

- ✓ Any elimination of multiple uses on public land (such as OHV or mining) due to a renewable energy project should be mitigated with an additional area or funding for private land development of the eliminated use. With this policy renewable energy developers will be discouraged from displacing existing land uses or be required to mitigate the loss.

- Objection to “ Business as Usual “ Strategy
 - ✓ Renewable energy is unlike residential/commercial development in a standard NCCP in which each county can expect some share of the growth (benefit) to offset their share of land acquisition (cost). In this case, it is possible that all the projects could occur in one county while all the mitigation for a particular species could occur in another county. Where is the balance and why participate ?

 - ✓ The Western Mojave Desert already has significant public lands (1/3 military, 1/3 BLM/State , 1/3 Private). Giving up more private acreage is not tenable for decision makers.

 - ✓ Inclusion of a policy that would allow acquisition of grazing allotments on Federal lands by renewable energy developers if the land is converted to a permanent conservation purpose as part of mitigating project impacts, is an example of the kind of thinking counties are seeking.

 - ✓ Current Recovery Plans (e.g. desert tortoise) and other studies have shown that the recommended measures for the recovery of a variety of species have not been a success due to lack of

funding, inconsistent implementation, and lack of appropriate monitoring of efficacy related to measures taken. A focused approach is even more important now rather than adding more land that will also not have funding to be managed, or adopting mitigation measures which may not be successful or even appropriate.

Counties have already been significant partners in permitting and constructing transmission and renewable energy projects (ex. Kern County : 7082 MW, Imperial County, 989 MW, etc.). It is time for the DRECP to engage in a useful dialogue with the stakeholders on a unique approach that could begin to assist counties in formulating a positive recommendation to their Boards of Supervisors for consideration for participation in the DRECP if energy developers are interested.