

October 27, 2014

California Energy Commission
Media and Public Communications Office
1516 Ninth Street, MS-29
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

RE: Please Improve the Plans for the California Desert

I am writing because America needs clean energy and conservation, and I ask your help to improve the plans for the California Desert. The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a unique opportunity for all Americans to ensure we protect the places we love while developing the clean, renewable energy resources we need. California has the consistent winds and bright sunshine to power millions of homes. It also has immaculate desert wild lands that need to be protected.

To be successful, the plan must protect and conserve special places in the California desert for their natural, cultural and recreational values, including setting aside some places from all types of development. The plan must guide wind, solar and geothermal projects to areas of low conflict where development is most suitable and away from sensitive areas.

I support the approach in the draft but believe the plan should be strengthened in the following ways to balance our energy needs and conservation of the desert's irreplaceable wild lands and wildlife. I agree with the Wilderness Society that the plan needs to:

- Protect at least 3.5 million acres of regionally and nationally significant areas in the California Desert as National Conservation Lands, including Chuckwalla Bench and Panamint Valley.
- Protect habitat for the rare desert tortoise. Currently there are key tortoise habitat areas that are zoned for development.
- Exclude additional important areas from potential development and instead set them aside for recreation or conservation purposes - including the remote and beautiful Silurian Valley, with its remarkable historical, scenic and wild land values.

I urge you to continue to work with all Americans to develop the best plan possible for the future of the California desert. The current proposal is a solid building block, but additional improvements are needed.

Americans are counting on you to ensure that our treasured desert lands are protected now and for future generations. We must protect bighorn sheep, desert tortoises, Joshua trees, and a rainbow's worth of wildflowers — and put more solar panels and wind turbines on the ground. The DRECP should ensure the desert's natural, cultural and recreational values are protected while guiding wind, solar and geothermal away from sensitive areas.

Thank you for your help in protecting pristine wild lands, and putting clean energy in the right places.

Yours truly,



J. Capozzelli

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