

Energy - Docket Optical System

From: Gordon and Michelle Sinning <gmsinning@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2015 10:10 AM
To: Energy - Docket Optical System
Subject: DRECP NEPA/CEQA

California Energy Commission

DOCKETED

09-RENEW EO-1

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California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01

RE: DRECP NEPA/CEQA

Dear agencies:

I urge you to reconsider your approach to wind energy development in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. After reviewing comments on the Alternatives Analysis, I am gravely concerned about what appears to be a major misstep in the way wind impacts are evaluated. My conclusion is that the DRECP will effectively be a de-facto ban on wind energy development in the California Desert.

Wind experts' position that the proposed Development Focus Areas will not support the Draft Plan's wind energy goals due to lack of area with sufficient wind resource quality is very concerning to me. Was NREL properly consulted in developing these DFAs? It is also my understanding from talking to wind experts that insufficient wind-specific environmental analysis has been done to support the very limited areas that have been provided (or ruled out) for wind energy development in the DRECP.

I am not currently working in the wind industry but I spent more than four years doing community outreach for a wind project and in that time I learned a great deal about impacts. Wind energy development results in very little ground disturbance and should be given greater consideration due to its low impact to sensitive terrestrial species such as the desert tortoise. A properly sited wind project has very little avian impact, as well, especially considering the greater impact of doing nothing and the decimation that climate change will impose on all species. Siting decisions should not be made without detailed, site-specific studies and greater knowledge about the golden eagle populations in the area, in particular. Wildlife experts agree that mitigation through power line retrofits and other measures can more than offset any incidental golden eagle takes that result from a properly cited wind farm.

A stated goal of the DRECP is to, "further identify the most appropriate locations within the DRECP Plan Area for the development of utility-scale renewable energy projects, taking into account potential impacts to threatened and endangered species and sensitive natural communities." For the reasons stated above, I do not believe that the Draft Plan achieves its goals. The current Draft DRECP, if implemented, is setting a dangerous precedent that I fear will snowball and spread to other states. Misguided planning will take a long time to unravel. Please fix it now!

Wind energy is clean, cost effective and low impact compared to other sources of energy. I encourage you to revise the DRECP to allow wind energy development to play a more meaningful role in California's clean energy future.

Sincerely,

Michelle Sinning