

Energy - Docket Optical System

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Subject: DRECP comments

California Energy Commission

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To the California Energy Commission:

I am a new student Desert Ecology and Botany at UC Riverside Extension. I am a middle age person and have loved the desert wilderness for most of my life--since I discovered it at age 25.

I have a degree in Business Management, and my hobby for 10 years has been searching for desert wildflowers. Because of the many threats to our public lands where wildflowers are located, particularly in the desert, I decided that I wanted to educate myself so that I could try to help protect our wilderness.

I have attempted to read and digest the DRECP but it is just too massive and vague for me to get a proper understand of everything it entails. As I understand it this is the common consensus--that the plan is difficult to read, and opens up some of the largest intact parcels of undeveloped land in the public domain.

Here are my reasons that I believe the plan should not be passed as is:

- 1) The desert is not a wasteland. It is an important ecosystem with viable plants and animals that are just as important as any other ecosystem, forest, marine, etc. I should not be sacrificed in lieu of anything else. We need to get away from the colonial idea that this is where we dump our garbage, do mining, conduct military bombing, or bulldoze six square miles for one renewable energy facility. This land is valuable to Californians and Americans alike.
- 2) Solar should be placed on previously developed or degraded lands and rooftops of shopping centers, over parking lots, schools, commercial and industrial warehouses and on individual homes. WE HAVE PLENTY OF PLACES TO PUT SOLAR OTHER THAN THE DESERT. Look at what Germany has done with solar in a more northerly latitude with less sun. We need to plan as intelligently as possible.
- 3) I learned in my first Desert Ecology class yesterday (taught by James Cornett (JWC Ecological Consultants, Palm Springs) that once a desert habitat is destroyed, it will take approximately 1,000 years to return to its previous state, if ever, whereas a forest would take only about 100 years. (I am not indicating that he commented on the DRECP--he didn't.) The desert is certainly more fragile than other ecosystems because it receives less rain and everything grows more slowly. With this in mind, we should protect it more stringently than we protect the forests.
- 4) As with any other ecosystem, there are endangered plants and animals. They are both being threatened further with renewable energy facilities. Creosote shrubs, although plentiful, are some of the oldest living things on earth. Redwoods used to be plentiful also, and mass communities of ancient flora like the creosote will dwindle just as the redwoods have.
- 5) Many renewable energy facilities require a substantial supply of water, specifically to clean mirrors or provide steam for proper functioning of the facility. The desert can spare NO WATER. With climate change and the droughts in California, there is far too little as it is. Flora and fauna will be severely impacted.
- 6) Many animals, such as the federally threatened Desert Tortoise, Golden Eagles are dying despite mitigation efforts. Crowding tortoises into a smaller area is pointless--they need room to forage and mate without excessive competition. The horror of the incinerated birds at Ivanpah should stop and not be repeated.
- 7) Large-scale solar and wind facilities require miles of transmission lines to be built to bring power from very remote locations to large cities. This means even more development of public lands, as well as potential danger and unsightly towers for anyone in range of them.
- 8) Distributed (rooftop) solar is a much better alternative!!
 - a) It removes the potential for a terrorist attack on an energy facility to cripple communications and emergency response
 - b) The energy source is at or near the place where it is needed, not hundreds of miles away
 - c) Federal tax dollars and loan guarantees should be given to ordinary citizens through further tax credits rather than given to large corporations who already benefit from many tax loopholes.

d) If I recall, the CEESP recommended this several years ago and it is a much better alternative that should have been implemented before now.

I would like to close by saying that I am not an expert but a passionate naturalist, particularly where that applies to the desert. I may some day have better credentials to speak against destroying beautiful wilderness (and the ecosystem) when it is just not necessary, and hope that there will still be something to protect when that day comes.

Thank you,

Sondra Sampson