

Energy - Docket Optical System

From: deb [deb@bollingerconsultinggroup.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 07, 2012 4:03 PM
To: Energy - Docket Optical System
Subject: DRECP Alternative Scenarios of July 25, 2012
Attachments: image003.jpg

SUBJECT: DRECP Alternative Scenarios of July 25, 2012, Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the July 25, 2012, renewable energy development alternatives of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP).

I am a water conservation consultant who has worked to protect resources in small desert communities for the past eight years. I have some serious concerns about DRECP plans for the Morongo Basin and its surrounding communities, where there is a long heritage of commitment and action to protect desert lands. This area comprises a unique collection of high-desert small towns and communities nestled among conserved lands: Joshua Tree National Park, Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, Pioneertown Mountains Preserve, and Bighorn Mountain Wilderness. In addition, these communities have pitched in their own money to acquire lands identified for protection, purchasing private lands and gifting them to Joshua Tree National Park.

I am particularly concerned that Alternatives 3 and 5, polygon 11, will undermine local conservation efforts. This geography is a foundational element of the area's quality of life and economic base. Our economy is significantly based on tourists who come to see pristine desert with huge vistas and stunning wildflower displays. I expect that disturbance of fragile soil crusts by industrial-scale solar and wind developments will result in intrusion of invasive plants such as Sahara mustard, that are a serious threat to as-yet intact desert ecosystems. While I support the effort to develop renewable energy in general, I believe that the siting of such development in locations like the Morongo Basin and its surrounding area would have serious impacts on our quality of life and to the tourism-based economy.

Local citizens rallied to successfully oppose the ill-sited Green Path North transmission line proposed by LADWP to be built in undeveloped backcountry and along the viewshed of these high-desert communities. That inappropriate project could have been the door that opened the floodgates to more inappropriate energy development and transmission. That citizen effort led me to become a proactive participant in renewable energy siting decisions, first with the RETI process, then the Solar PEIS and now the DRECP.

The July 25 published scenarios of the DRECP were surprising. I am very disturbed and oppose the scenarios siting solar and wind development in the Morongo Basin on BLM lands next to Joshua Tree National Park and in undeveloped backcountry surrounding Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, Pioneertown Mountains Preserve, and Bighorn Mountain Wilderness. This siting and the addition of variance lands for more development is just inappropriate and inconsistent with the area's quality of life, its citizens' values, the tourism-based economy, and the San Bernardino County Master Plan.

Another concern is with the DRECP process, which failed to include any outreach to affected communities. There were no workshops or meetings held in the Morongo Basin area, and its citizens received no correspondence or communication of any kind. The alternative maps have changed with little or no explanation, and the iterations of these alternatives have not allowed ample time for thoughtful comment. Considering the long-term effect of the plan, the comment period should be extended beyond the August 8 deadline.

I strongly urge you to consider a scenario that does not develop renewable energy in the high-desert, tourism-based communities. I encourage adoption of Alternative 1 after first deleting the variance lands or adoption of Alternative 2.

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