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Soda Mountain Solar Project

Please select the No Project Alternative for the Soda Mountain Solar Project.

The California Energy Commission (CEC) has determined that the project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to desert bighorn sheep. The site is adjacent to a critical herd in the Cady Mountains that relies extensively on the southern Soda Mountains. The required 8-foot chain-link security fencing would exclude large wildlife and partially block an established movement corridor, preventing passage by bighorn sheep.

The CEC has also determined that the project would have significant and unavoidable impacts on visual resources. The project site is adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve and would conflict with visual resource standards established by the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

The project would impede habitat connectivity for the federally threatened and California state-endangered Mojave desert tortoise.

Aeolian sand transport would be disrupted, and habitat would be removed for the Mojave fringe-toed lizard.

Habitat loss would also affect rare plant species, kit fox, American badger, and burrowing owl populations.

Groundwater extraction from five on-site wells would contribute to cumulative groundwater decline affecting the springs at Zzyzx and the federally endangered Mojave tui chub. An alternative relying on off-site wells was not selected.

Proposed lithium battery energy storage systems (BESS) present a risk of thermal runaway events that could release toxic smoke and hazardous chemicals, potentially affecting the local environment and motorists on Interstate 15. An alternative excluding lithium battery storage was not evaluated.

Project review should be suspended pending development of a Comprehensive Management Plan for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The project location was not designated for solar development under the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and is not within a Development Focus Area.

Caltrans is constructing a wildlife crossing over Interstate 15 to maintain habitat connectivity for desert bighorn sheep; the proposed project would undermine the

effectiveness of this measure.

For these reasons, the CEC should select the No Project Alternative.

Thank you for your consideration.