

DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	24-OPT-03
Project Title:	Soda Mountain Solar
TN #:	268830
Document Title:	Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Comment Letter
Description:	N/A
Filer:	System
Organization:	Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation
Submitter Role:	Public
Submission Date:	2/26/2026 1:37:25 PM
Docketed Date:	2/26/2026

*Comment Received From: Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation
Submitted On: 2/26/2026
Docket Number: 24-OPT-03*

Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation Comment Letter

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation

February 25, 2026

California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Soda Mountain Solar Project – Docket Number 24-OPT-03 – OPPOSE

Dear Chair Hochschild and Members of the California Energy Commission:

On behalf of Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation (Nation), a federally recognized Indian Tribe, I respectfully write in opposition to the proposed opt-in procedure for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Soda Mountain Solar Project.

While we recognize that the Commission is charged with advancing the state's energy policy, including the development of renewable energy resources, we value the diligence you bring to evaluating the potential impacts of projects that come before you, particularly where sensitive and fragile landscapes are concerned.

The proposed Soda Mountain Solar Project, located adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve within a sensitive and largely undisturbed desert ecosystem, as proposed, would adversely affect bighorn sheep—an animal of profound cultural and environmental significance to the Nation—as well as the broader surrounding environment.

As currently designed, the project site lies within a proposed wildlife corridor connecting the Soda and Cady Mountains to the Mojave National Preserve and is likely to significantly impede use of the Soda Mountain Wildlife Crossing by desert bighorn sheep. A failure to facilitate successful passage across this corridor would exacerbate the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation caused by Interstate 15. These impacts include reduced genetic diversity, increased inbreeding potential, and a heightened risk of vehicle-related mortality.

As stewards of our 7.4-million-acre ancestral territory spanning Los Angeles, Riverside, Kern, and San Bernardino Counties, we carry a sacred responsibility to protect and preserve our cultural resources, the environment, and the landscapes entrusted to us. Accordingly, we respectfully submit the following recommendations:

Establishment of Enhanced Buffer Zones

- Implementing a robust setback between the solar facility and critical habitat should be incorporated into any project design. This buffer should, at a minimum, meet the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's recommendation of 0.25 miles; however, we advocate extending the buffer up to 1.25 miles.

Project Deferment

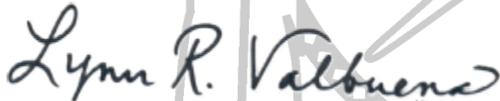
- Delaying the 2,670-acre solar development until the wildlife crossing is completed, which is currently scheduled for late 2027, will allow for essential environmental studies to verify the crossing's efficacy for bighorn sheep prior to further development.

We support efforts to ensure effective wildlife movement and habitat connectivity, recognizing that these actions reflect a shared commitment to environmental sustainability and the preservation of natural resources. Such measures align with our values of protecting native wildlife and honoring our longstanding traditions of environmental stewardship.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the California Energy Commission reject the opt-in procedure for the EIR and deny further approval of the Soda Mountain Solar Project as currently proposed.

The Nation welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with the California Energy Commission and remains committed to strengthening and maintaining a meaningful government-to-government relationship. Should you have any questions regarding the Nation's position, please contact Clifford Batten, Director of Environmental Management, at Clifford.Batten@sanmanuel-nsn.gov

Thank you for your consideration,



Lynn R. Valbuena

Lynn R. Valbuena
Chairwoman
Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation