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Soda Mountain Solar Comment letter

Dear Commissioners:

California governance seems to be caught up in a recent, temporary urge to skirt previous environmental law and regulations. It is doing this with energy projects and housing approvals, and seems to be motivated mostly by the desire to show that the predominant political party in California can get things done “ in other words, for political reasons.

I urge the CEC to instead consider that environmental guard rails came into being for a reason, and to reject projects that do not meet rational standards.

The Soda Mountain Solar project is an example of an energy project that does not meet rational standards. It has a long history of being rejected by local towns, the county of San Bernardino, East Kern County, the Mojave Desert Resource Conservation District, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and local Native American Nations. It was rejected by the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). It has been rejected by environmentalists who fully understand climate change but comprehend that the benefit of this project does not justify the costs, and that there are much better alternatives, like solar energy from rooftop solar and solar projects on disturbed urban lands.

The Soda Mountain Solar project has a long list of environmental harms:

- 1) It will harm Desert Bighorn Sheep, the federally threatened Mojave Desert Tortoise, the Mojave fringe-toed lizard, Kit Foxes, American Badgers and Burrowing Owls.
- 2) It will use up scarce ground water in a desert environment.
- 3) There is the potential risk of fire from lithium batteries in a location that has limited fire control resources.
- 4) It will likely impact the Old Spanish National Historic Trail. There is pending BLM/NPS planning for a 5 mile buffer that the project would fall within.
- 5) Visual impacts would be significant and should not be ignored with a simple statement that this is unavoidable and unmitigatable.
- 6) Dust from disturbed desert has a significant potential for harm to public health.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to look for better alternatives to site solar energy projects, to set an example for wise use of our public lands, and to choose a NO PROJECT alternative for the Soda Mountain solar project.