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Select a No Project Alternative for the Soda Mountain Solar Project

I am a public health professional who lives in and recreates in the desert, contributing to local economies. I urge you to select a No Project Alternative for the Soda Mountain Solar Project. It will significantly and permanently harm the environment, harming people, plants and animals, outlined below.

The California Energy Commission (CEC) determined this project will significantly and unavoidably harm desert bighorn sheep. The project is adjacent to an essential bighorn herd in Cady Mountains that uses the south Soda Mountains extensively. The solar project will block a sheep movement corridor, due to its 8-foot-tall chain-link security fences.

The CEC concluded the project will significantly and unavoidably harm visual resources. The project would be adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve and violated the visual standards implemented by the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

The project will block connectivity for federally threatened and California State Endangered Mojave Desert Tortoise.

The project will block sand transport, and remove habitats for Mojave fringe-toed lizard, for rare plants, kit foxes, American badgers and burrowing owls.

The project would extract water from 5 onsite wells exacerbating a cumulative groundwater decline for the springs at Zzyzx and for federally endangered Mojave tui-chub. An alternative using offsite wells must be selected.

Lithium battery banks or BESS storage could cause a thermal runaway fire which would emit toxic smoke and chemicals to the local environment and endanger motorists on Interstate 15. An alternative eliminating lithium battery storage was not considered. It should be.

The analysis of this project should be immediately paused until a Comprehensive Management Plan can be established for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

The location of the Soda Mountain Solar Project was not designated for solar energy development under the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. The Soda Mountain area is not a Development Focus Area.

Caltrans is building a wildlife crossing over Interstate 15 to maintain linkage for desert bighorn sheep, but the Soda Mountain project would block it.

For all these reasons, CEC must select a No Project Alternative!

Thank you