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Comments on RB Inyokern Data Center – CEC Docket 26-SPPE-01 – Request Full Environmental Impact Review

I am a resident of Inyokern/the Indian Wells Valley writing to express concern about the proposed RB Inyokern Data Center currently being reviewed under the CEC Docket 26-SPPE-01.

Issue 1

The Indian Wells Valley groundwater basin is formally designated as critically over drafted. Current pumping is 20,840 acre-feet per year against the reported sustainable yield of only 7,650 acre-feet. A facility of this size, using evaporative cooling in desert conditions, can consume roughly 500,000 gallons or more of water per day – close to 8 percent of the basin's entire sustainable annual yield. The RB Inyokern Data center builder is claiming nearly 17,000 gallons of water a day which is well below the amount indicated by internet research.

This basin has no surface water, no river and no backup. The aquifer is the only source of water for 38,000 residents and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake. Phase 2 of the water rights adjudication goes to trial June 1, 2026. The proposed pipeline to mitigate the critical over draft, has no appropriated funding or complete design. It is considered by many to be unfeasible and depends on a State Water Project that delivered only 5% of contracted water in 2022 and sits at 30% for 2026. There is no margin for new large-scale groundwater demand at this time.

Issue 2

Noise

A 50MW data center typically produces significant, continuous noise, often reaching roughly 65 dB at the property line. While high-frequency sound decreases, low-frequency hums can remain audible for 0.5 to 2.5 miles (0.8–4 km) in quiet environments, particularly impacting nearby residents with a constant, low-frequency buzzing.

Noise Characteristics & Distance Impact

• **Property Line Level:** Data centers are often designed or regulated to maintain sound levels around or lower at the property boundary.

• **Audibility Range:** Sound is often reported as audible up to 2.5 miles (4 km) away.

• **Impact Zone:** The most severe noise, which can cause significant annoyance, is typically experienced within 3,000 feet of the facility.

• **Low-Frequency Hum:** Data center cooling systems (fans and HVAC) create continuous low-frequency noise that penetrates buildings easily and travels long distances, reducing only about 0.2 DB per mile.

There are residences within 1000 ft and a school within 2000 ft of the proposed data center.

Issue 3

Electrical utility cost increases to the surrounding residents.

Data centers, particularly those supporting AI, are causing significant electricity price

hikes for consumers by demanding massive, rapid infrastructure upgrades (poles, wires, substations). Utilities often pass these costs to households through increased rate cases and higher monthly bills to subsidize grid expansion for these large users.

How Costs Are Passed to Consumers:

• Infrastructure Upgrades: Utilities invest billions in new infrastructure to support data centers, and these expenses are approved by regulators to be recovered from all customers.

• Rising Wholesale Prices: High power demand from data centers drives up regional wholesale electricity costs, which are passed down to retail customers.

• Rate Design & Subsidies: Because data centers often negotiate lower special rates or incentives, the costs of upgrading the grid to serve them are disproportionately shared with residential and small business customers.

• Increased Demand Charges: 24/7 high-power usage by data centers triggers peak load charges, which are passed to the general ratepayer base.

Issue 4

Property values

Property values will significantly decrease in the vicinity of the data center, causing financial loss to the residents within the footprint.

I respectfully request a full environmental review with specific attention to water supply impacts, noise abatement and infrastructure costs to the residents. I would ask that any approval require demonstrated water-neutral or dry cooling technology and demonstrated sound levels before construction begins.

John Baker

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