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Comment Received From: Marissa Bennett

Submitted On: 5/19/2026

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Request to Temporarily Suspend Review of SPPE Application (Docket 26-SPPE-01) Pending Resolution of Indian Wells Valley Groundwa

Dear California Energy Commission,

I am a resident of Ridgecrest, Kern County, and strongly oppose approval of the Small Power Plant Exemption (SPPE) for the proposed RB Inyokern Data Center (99 MW Phase 1) at this time.

The Indian Wells Valley is a critically overdrafted groundwater basin currently undergoing a comprehensive adjudication (Indian Wells Valley Water District v. All Persons Who Claim a Right to Extract Groundwater in the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin).

This adjudication will determine essential facts that are required for any credible environmental review, including:

• Sustainable yield of the basin

• Water rights allocations

• The legal baseline for future groundwater use

Without these facts, it is impossible to complete a meaningful analysis of water supply availability or cumulative impacts under CEQA.

The CEC cannot responsibly make the required SPPE finding of “no substantial adverse impact on the environment or energy resources” when the fundamental data on water resources remains unknown.

California agencies have discretion and precedent to temporarily suspend review or hold applications in abeyance when key environmental facts “particularly water availability in adjudicated basins” are still being determined through related litigation. Proceeding with this application now would result in an incomplete and speculative review that risks being challenged or reversed later.

I respectfully request that the CEC:

1. Reject the current SPPE application (or hold it in abeyance) until the Indian Wells Valley groundwater adjudication is resolved and the developer can provide a complete, accurate project description based on the final adjudication outcomes.
2. Temporarily suspend review of this and any other new or expanded data center applications in the Indian Wells Valley until the adjudication is completed and full cumulative impact studies on water resources can be conducted.
3. Require a comprehensive cumulative impacts analysis based on the post-adjudication water baseline before any further processing or approvals.

The residents of Inyokern, Ridgecrest, and the Indian Wells Valley deserve full transparency and protection of our limited water resources before any approvals move forward. Approving projects now, while the basin’s sustainable limits are still being legally determined, would be premature and irresponsible.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Marissa Bennett
Ridgecrest, CA
93555