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California Energy Commission

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RB Inyokern Data Center Project (R&L Capital, 99 MW) Direct Impact to Residential area

I am a resident of the Indian Wells Valley submitting this comment on the proposed RB Inyokern Data Center. The project site is located at the northwest quadrant of US Highway 395 and State Route 178 in Inyokern. Nearest residential homes are approximately 800 feet away – directly across the highway in this small rural desert community.

The developer's SPPE application (over 3,000 pages) claims "less-than-significant" impacts based on studies addressing only the initial ~50-acre phase. However, the developer's own promotional materials and filings advertise an 80-acre expansion site approximately one mile away, with an additional Method of Service already filed for another 99 MW. This creates a foreseeable hyperscale campus potentially exceeding 198 MW in close proximity.

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This piecemeal approach fails CEQA cumulative impact requirements (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15064(h), 15130, 15355). CEQA mandates analysis of a project's incremental effects together with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. The Laurel Heights precedent (1988) requires evaluation when future expansions are a logical consequence that could significantly alter environmental effects. Approving the initial phase without this analysis risks understating cumulative burdens in a critically overdrafted basin and residential area.

Real-World Concerns vs. Developer Studies:

• Noise (Appendix G): Modeling claims 45–55 dB at the property line with mitigation for 40 diesel generators. In open desert terrain, low-frequency sound

propagates 1–2+ miles. Homes directly across US-395 will experience persistent disruption from testing, maintenance, and emergency operations. Expansion would compound this significantly.

• Visual & Lighting: The 238,000 sq ft building (up to 30 feet tall) and constant industrial lighting will dominate views and degrade dark skies valued by the community. Simulations do not address cumulative visual change with the advertised 80-acre phase.

• Air Quality, Heat & Operational Effects (Appendix F): Proximity increases exposure to emissions, dust, and heat plumes during frequent desert heat waves (>100–110°F). Studies lack combined modeling for both phases.

• Hydrology & Water Supply (Appendix E): Claimed 37–49 AFY use relies on optimistic hybrid cooling assumptions. In the critically overdrafted Indian Wells Valley (sustainable yield ~7,650 AFY vs. 20k–28k+ AFY pumping), cumulative effects with expansion, Navy, agriculture, and adjudication (Phase 2 trial June 2026) require full analysis.

Conclusion and Request:

The current studies present an incomplete project description that does not meet CEQA standards for cumulative impacts or full disclosure. A project of this scale, sited immediately adjacent to homes with documented expansion potential, demands rigorous review.

I respectfully request the California Energy Commission:

1. Deny the Small Power Plant Exemption.

2. Require a full CEQA Environmental Impact Report including independent peer review, worst-case desert scenario modeling, complete cumulative analysis (initial + 80-acre expansion), and site-specific mitigation for nearby residences.

3. Hold the application in abeyance until the full foreseeable project scope is disclosed.

Thank you for considering these comments.