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*Comment Received From: Melissa Smiley
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Docket Number: 26-SPPE-01*

California Energy Commission Docket 26-SPPE-01 – Opposition to the Proposed RB Inyokern Data Center

****RE: California Energy Commission Docket 26-SPPE-01 – Opposition to the Proposed RB Inyokern Data Center****

To the California Energy Commission,

My name is Melissa Smiley, and I am a homeowner and resident of Ridgecrest, California. I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to the proposed RB Inyokern Data Center and to request that the California Energy Commission deny the Small Power Plant Exemption or, at a minimum, require a full Environmental Impact Report before allowing this project to proceed.

Our community is located in one of California's most water-scarce desert regions. The Indian Wells Valley has been in a state of groundwater overdraft for years, and residents have repeatedly been asked to conserve water because our aquifer is not being replenished at the rate it is being pumped. Despite these well-known challenges, this project proposes to introduce a large industrial facility with significant long-term water and energy demands.

The Indian Wells Valley has already experienced years of conflict over groundwater shortages. Farmers, residents, and businesses have all been asked to reduce their water use because our aquifer is in overdraft. Agricultural operations have faced increasing costs and uncertainty due to groundwater restrictions. If our community is already making difficult sacrifices to protect this limited resource, it is difficult to understand why a large industrial data center should be allowed to place additional demands on the same groundwater basin. Sustainable water management should prioritize the long-term needs of existing residents, agriculture, and future generations.

In addition to water concerns, this proposal raises numerous unanswered questions regarding:

– Increased strain on our electrical infrastructure.

– Air pollution and noise associated with the proposed diesel backup generators.

– Increased traffic during construction and future maintenance.

– Public safety and emergency response demands.

– Potential impacts on local wildlife and our fragile desert ecosystem.

â€¢ Long-term cumulative environmental impacts.

â€¢ Compatibility with surrounding residential communities and nearby Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake.

As a homeowner, I am deeply concerned about the potential effect this project could have on local property values and the future of our community. My home is one of the largest investments I will ever make. Ridgecrest is valued for its open desert landscape, dark skies, small-town atmosphere, and quality of life. The introduction of a massive industrial data center has the potential to change the character of our community and could make our area less attractive to future homeowners, businesses, and families considering relocating here.

While I understand the argument that this project could create jobs and generate tax revenue, those benefits must be weighed honestly against the long-term costs. Construction jobs are temporary. The environmental impacts, water consumption, infrastructure demands, and risks to our community could last for decades.

I am also concerned that approving this project sends the wrong message to the people who already live here. Residents are continually encouraged to conserve water and accept restrictions because of our limited resources. Existing businesses and agriculture have had to adapt to those realities. It seems fundamentally unfair to ask our community to make sacrifices while simultaneously approving a project that could place even greater demands on the same limited groundwater supply.

I respectfully ask the Commission to require:

â€¢ A full Environmental Impact Report.

â€¢ Independent studies evaluating long-term groundwater sustainability.

â€¢ Complete disclosure of projected annual water and electrical consumption.

â€¢ A comprehensive analysis of cumulative environmental impacts.

â€¢ Continued opportunities for meaningful public participation before any approvals are granted.

The Commission's responsibility is to protect the public interest, not simply facilitate development. Decisions of this magnitude should be based on transparent science, thorough environmental review, and the voices of the residents who will live with the consequences.

If this project truly serves the public interest, it should withstand the scrutiny of a full Environmental Impact Report. Anything less risks undermining public confidence in the

review process.

Our valley is already facing difficult decisions about water, growth, and sustainability. We should not jeopardize our future for a project that primarily benefits private interests while placing additional burdens on our natural resources and our community.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the California Energy Commission deny the requested Small Power Plant Exemption or require a complete Environmental Impact Report before any further approvals are considered.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Melissa Smiley
Ridgecrest, California