

DOCKETED

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September 18, 2026

California Energy Commission

Docket Unit MS-4

Docket No. 24-OIIP-02

715 P Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on the Lithium Valley Vision Workshop

Dear Commissioner Gallardo:

Climate Jobs California (CJC) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments on the Lithium Valley Vision Workshop held February 19, 2025.

As you know, Imperial County sits at the center of one of California's most significant clean-energy opportunities, with the Salton Sea region estimated to contain enough lithium to supply hundreds of millions of electric-vehicle batteries. CJC, in partnership with the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, its 21 local building trades councils, and its environmental and environmental justice partners, views this immensely promising opportunity through a workforce lens: not just how many jobs it could create, but what kind, who'll get them, and whether they'll last.

And this opportunity reaches well beyond lithium itself. Geothermal development requires drilling, site work, concrete, electrical and mechanical work, and plant construction, plus new transmission, substations, roads and water systems. Lithium extraction and processing will add another layer, with manufacturing and supply-chain jobs likely to follow. Registered apprenticeships are what will turn that growth into real careers for Imperial County residents.

I'm pleased to say that some of that groundwork is already underway. Imperial County's Board of Supervisors recently adopted the *Lithium Valley Construction Workforce Ordinance*, which guarantees 40% local hires alongside apprenticeship pathways and high-road union jobs. Under its provisions, Imperial Valley residents also have access to MC3 (Multi-Craft Core Curriculum), a pre-apprenticeship program that prepares candidates to enter registered building trades apprenticeships, as a real on-ramp rather than a promise on paper.

Geothermal also stands out because it runs continuously, providing firm, around-the-clock power with benefits for grid reliability as well as climate goals. For our members, that will also mean sustained construction work across many trades, followed by decades of operations and maintenance careers.



CJC believes that labor standards for this development should be straightforward: prevailing wage, registered apprenticeship, a skilled and trained workforce, project labor agreements or collective bargaining agreements, meaningful local hire, community benefits, and strong health and safety protections, all built in from the outset rather than negotiated later.

California cannot take this generational opportunity for granted. Three years after this vision was announced, legal delays and shifting federal energy policy have continued to slow progress, and workers trained through programs like MC3 are still waiting for jobs to materialize. San Diego State University opened an \$80 million facility in Imperial County to prepare students for this industry, and its leadership has warned that without faster progress, these students risk graduating into an empty job market. Workforce development, infrastructure and political support need to be built and deliberately connected and coordinated now.

CJC's interest here is simple and straightforward: that the people of Imperial County come out ahead. Family-supporting careers, expanded apprenticeships, and stronger local infrastructure are what should be left behind once construction is finished. CJC looks forward to continuing in this important work as a resource and partner to the Commission.

Signed,

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