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**Conservation Parties Comments on July 21 RETI 2.0 ELUWG County Meeting -
Land Use**

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



To: Dockets Unit
California Energy Commission
Docket No. 15-RETI-02
1516 Ninth Street, MS-4
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512
docket@energy.ca.gov

From: Kim Delfino, Defenders of Wildlife
Erica Brand, The Nature Conservancy
Sarah Friedman, Sierra Club
Helen O'Shea, Natural Resources Defense Council
Garry George, Audubon California
Alex Daue, The Wilderness Society

Date: August 5, 2016

Subject: Comments to Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative 2.0 ELUTG County Meeting (July 21, 2016)

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Introduction

Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council, Audubon California, and The Wilderness Society ("Conservation Parties") respectfully submit these comments on the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) 2.0 Environmental Land Use Technical Group (ELUTG) County Meeting, held on July 21st, 2016. We strongly support the ongoing work of the California Governor's Office, California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the California Energy Commission (CEC), the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the California Independent System Operator (CAISO), and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to align renewable energy

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development and transmission planning with natural resource protection. RETI 2.0 presents an opportunity to coordinate these processes through the Data Basin platform in support of a sustainable, low carbon energy future.

Achieving a low carbon energy future is critical for California – for our economy, our communities and the environment. Key to this future is not only rapidly decarbonizing the energy and transportation sectors, but also protecting and managing the natural and working lands that provide for conservation of species and habitat along with important co-benefits such as sequestering carbon and protecting water quality and supply.

Land Use and Environmental Planning in RETI 2.0

As stated on the RETI 2.0 home page¹ RETI 2.0 will:

“... explore the abundant renewable generation resources in California and throughout the West, consider critical land use and environmental constraints, and identify potential transmission opportunities that could access and integrate renewable energy with the most environmental, economic, and community benefits.”

We are pleased to see the start of a RETI conversation with the Counties and strongly support the consideration of local land use planning and polices within the Transmission Assessment Focal Areas (TAFAs) as an integral part of the RETI process. The questions posed to the Counties during the July 21st meeting are important first steps.

Substantial effort has been made by Counties and stakeholder groups working to plan for a renewable energy future. Much of the County work has been funded by or supported by the CEC. These processes have identified areas for renewable energy development as well as areas for conservation and are a fundamental part of understanding land use and environmental opportunities and constraints. RETI should include and build upon these

¹ <http://www.energy.ca.gov/reti/index.html>

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previous work products, which have been successful demonstrations of collaborative approaches to renewable energy land use planning.

Consultation with the Counties and use of mapping technologies including Data Basin would inform the RETI process and provide richer results to support informed, least regrets development of a comprehensive renewable energy system. Per the website, RETI 2.0 is expected to identify locations that are best suited to renewable energy development:

“In addition to the 2008 Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative, state, federal, and local agencies have collaborated on other landscape planning processes to identify the most appropriate locations for renewable energy development, including the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and the San Joaquin Valley Solar Project. RETI 2.0 will incorporate and build off of the science, data, and analyses from these efforts.”²

The RETI 2.0 process should capitalize upon existing planning efforts and align and prioritize transmission investment to serve and support lower conflict project areas – including those identified via the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) and San Joaquin Valley solar study. Much of this data is readily available in Data Basin or from the Counties.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process and strongly support the coordination with the Counties to include local land use planning efforts that address renewable energy development and transmission. We also strongly support RETI building upon existing landscape scale renewable energy planning efforts such as the DRECP and San Joaquin effort to maximize environmental, economic, and community benefits.

We believe that RETI 2.0 presents an opportunity to create a vision for rapidly decarbonizing the electricity sector while protecting the natural and working lands that provide for the conservation of species and habitat as well as other important co-benefits

² <http://www.energy.ca.gov/reti/>

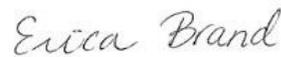
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such as carbon sequestration. We look forward to working with you to ensure that RETI
2.0 fulfills this opportunity and moves California forward in its efforts to meet its climate
goals.

Respectfully submitted,



Kim Delfino
California Program Director
Defenders of Wildlife
kdelfino@defenders.org



Erica Brand
California Energy Program Director
The Nature Conservancy
ebrand@tnc.org



Sarah Friedman
Senior Campaign Representative
Sierra Club
sarah.friedman@sierraclub.org



Helen O'Shea
Director, Western Renewable Energy Project
Natural Resources Defense Council
hoshea@nrdc.org



Garry George
Chapter Network Director/Renewable
Energy Director
Audubon California
ggeorge@audubon.org



Alex Daue
Assistant Director, Energy and Climate
The Wilderness Society
alex_daue@twc.org

Defenders of Wildlife, The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council,
Audubon California, and The Wilderness Society
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CC: Brian Turner by email (Brian.Turner@resources.ca.gov)
Scott Flint by email (Scott.Flint@energy.ca.gov)
Misa Milliron by email (Misa.Milliron@energy.ca.gov)