

Docket Optical System - Docket No. 02-REN-1038

From: Chris Stephens <Chris.Stephens@ventura.org>
To: <docket@energy.state.ca.us>, <sneidich@energy.state.ca.us>
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California Energy Commission Docket Office:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Renewable Planning Permitting Program Grant. First, I applaud your effort to make funding available to local governments to assist them in updating their general plans and zoning ordinances so that they better reflect the goals we all share regarding the expanded development of renewable energy. For Ventura County, and I know for most other California counties, such funding assistance will be vital in our being able to address this issue in a timely manner.

Aside from expressing my general support for the program, I would offer two specific comments. First, I believe it is important that you clearly state in your program that the preparation of environmental documents in support of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments be eligible for grant funds. The preparation of the required CEQA documents is a critical and often costly part of the process, and funding to support it is essential. And second, I would offer that because of the nature of historical development patterns and the common requirements/impacts of renewable energy facilities, most of these facilities will be located within unincorporated county areas. Therefore, I would recommend that the grant program be structured so that the majority of the funding be set aside for County efforts. Yes, it is possible that substantial solar or wind facilities *could* be located within cities, but it is very unlikely this will be the case. It will undoubtedly be the Counties that will serve as the lead agencies for most all sizable renewable energy projects.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to seeing the details of this important grant opportunity in the future.

Chris

*Chris Stephens, Director
 Resource Management Agency
 County of Ventura*