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Comment Received From: Thomas TorteZ Jr
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Follow up on January 21st comments

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



TORRES MARTINEZ DESERT CAHUILLA INDIANS

66725 Martinez Road
Thermal, CA 92274
(760) 397-0300 Office

October 28, 2022

Chair Silvia Paz
Lithium Valley Commission
California Energy Commission
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Follow Up on January 21, 2022 Comment Letter to The Lithium Valley Commission

Honorable Chairwoman and Commission Members, as Chairman of the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians (TMDCI), a Federally recognized tribe and sovereign nation, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Lithium Valley Commission for providing initial tribal stakeholder engagement opportunities in the Lithium Valley area over the past year. I appreciate the chance to provide comments to the Lithium Valley Commission on January 21, 2022 and as a guest speaker at the Tribal Perspectives session held on July 21, 2022 and the Tribe continues to appreciate the opportunity for Tribal Council Member Richie Lopez to serve as TMDCI's representative on the appointed Blue Ribbon Commission.

Our Reservation encompasses 24,000 acres of Salton Sea area lands, home to our ancestors since time immemorial. The Torres Martinez reservation includes land submerged under the Salton Sea and areas to the northwest of the Known Geothermal Resource Area.

As our Tribe seeks to advance our socioeconomic development and energy plans, now is the time for entities that would like partner with TMDCI to reach out early before the details of emerging energy technology projects and infrastructure are finalized. We would like to help shape projects in advance instead of working to mitigate impacts to Any Tribal cultural landscape and resources after design decisions are made and permits are signed. **Thank you to General Motors for respectfully engaging with our leadership here in Thermal, California recently and to Controlled Thermal Resources (CTR) and Berkshire Hathaway for reaching out to plan meetings with us.** We encourage this and look forward to future discussions about ways to work together for mutual benefits and cultural and environmental sustainability.

The Tribe has reviewed the Draft Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission issued on 9/21/22. We continue to be interested in joining other stakeholders at the table for discussions on culturally respectful ways to viably extract and refine lithium from geothermal operations at the Salton Sea and ways to develop an inclusive local Lithium Valley workforce, that includes targeted job training and scholarships for Torres Martinez and local tribes, to support the developing local lithium market.

One of the Key Findings in the Report (Page 6) should be that there is deep local interest not only "in possible impacts to the environment, cultural resources, and public health due to increased development of geothermal power plants and lithium recovery" but also in job creation and business opportunities specifically for tribal communities that have been overlooked in the past.

As mentioned in our last comment letter, our tribal members are interested in developing the skills that are anticipated to be needed for the Lithium Valley workforce including hospitality, electrician, skilled labor, management and other roles. Please contact our Tribal Employee Rights Office (TERO) well before hiring commences to provide descriptions of jobs expected to be needed and their requirements and support job fairs and other mechanisms to assist our members in obtaining the needed certifications to be ready and qualified for Lithium Valley jobs. It is our goal to bring socioeconomic benefits to our tribal community through early partnerships and workforce development opportunities that have not previously been available to our Tribe's membership.

We also feel the need to restate that our Tribe and other low-income communities within Lithium Valley are at a significant disadvantage without technical resources to help us specifically understand the potential viability, risks, impacts, and costs and benefits of lithium related project development in the region. We would ask the Commission, again, to help provide qualified technical and engineering resources to assist us in evaluating the potential lithium resource from our submerged Salton Sea lands and opportunities to partner on geothermal energy development, lithium refinement, or support services for the future lithium marketplace coming to Imperial County. Without providing technical assistance and targeted outreach soon the Commission is unlikely to be able to meet its important inclusion goals and full participation from under-resourced areas including Torres Martinez is unlikely to occur. This support has not yet been provided and we hope to work with the Commission on this important aspect to help level the playing field this coming year. (See Table 1 from Draft Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel, Key Recommendations, Community and Tribal Perspectives, regarding providing financial and other capacity building resources to enable Tribes and other stakeholders to engage with developers and agencies)

The preservation of TMDCI and Quechan cultural sacred sites is of the utmost importance to our members. TMDCI is looking to partner with industries and agencies that will be sensitive to the tribal cultural needs and commit to working together with us in partnerships that will endeavor to preserve our sacred sites.

Your support and outreach to date is appreciated. Thank you for the opportunity to provide our perspectives. We would also respectfully like to request that the review period for the Blue Ribbon Commission Report be extended to 45 days to allow for discussion, accessibility, transparency, and meaningful feedback from all stakeholders.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at 760-397-0300.

Respectfully,

Thomas Torte, Jr.
Tribal Council Chairman