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Comments from Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

SANTA YNEZ BAND OF CHUMASH INDIANS

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RE: 2021 SB 100 Joint Agency Report, Achieving 100 Percent Clean Electricity in California: An Initial Assessment--CEC-200-2021-001 (the “Assessment”)

For SB 100 Staff Workshop, February 16, 2024

To the Honorable California Energy Commission (CEC):

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (also referred to as “Mission Indians” or “Tribe”) makes the following written comments on the above Assessment:

Regional Scope.

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians is the only federally recognized Chumash Tribe. The native lands of the diverse Chumash people extend from Morro Bay in Central California along the Pacific Ocean, south around Point Conception into the Southern California Bight, and south to Malibu Creek. This area historically contained at least 33 Chumash coastal village sites. Chumash homelands encompass San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Ventura, and parts of Los Angeles Counties, which include approximately 200 miles of coastline. Within these counties lie multiple municipalities including Morro Bay, Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Ventura, Oxnard, and Malibu.

The ancestors of the *autochthonous* people—now known as Chumash—have six distinct languages and have occupied Southern Central California for over 10,000 years with distinct customs, beliefs, traditions and maritime/riverine societies. The relationships between the land, rivers and valleys, transverse mountain range, coastal and marine ecosystems, and islands are essential components to a diverse Chumash heritage. Understanding these connections – and how they are being changed -- is one contributing factor that influences the future of Chumash communities.

Climate Challenges.

Chumash people adapted to major changes in the climate, such as sea level rise (SLR), long-term wet and drought conditions, by developing social, economic, and political customs and practices, such as marriage alliances in different ecosystems, long-distance trade, fishing and hunting management strategies and water collection and storage techniques. Coastal archaeological sites are valuable because they detail cultural identities, local histories, and human adaptations. Climate-caused damage to Chumash cultural heritage and archaeological sites is happening now along the California coast (Newland et al. 2017). There are 2328 archaeological sites currently recorded in the Santa Barbara Channel coastal zone (Reeder et al. 2012).

The projected rise in mean sea level, in concert with associated storm wave flooding and coastal erosion, poses a threat to Chumash cultural heritage. Many beaches will narrow considerably and as many as two-thirds of the beaches in southern California will be completely lost over the next century across the region. The further narrowing and/or loss of future beaches (and the ecosystems supported by those beaches) will primarily result from accumulating sea level rise (SLR) combined with a lack of ample sediment in the system, which together will continue to drive the landward erosion of beaches, effectively drowning them between the rising ocean and the backing cliffs

and/or urban hardscape. The remains of irreplaceable coastal villages and associated sites are also at risk due to climate change induced sea level rise and associated impacts.

Request for Tribal Input and Consultation in any further Assessment(s)

There are formal requirements (per State and Federal laws) and informal aspects to Tribal consultation and community-based engagement in coastal adaptation planning. Capacity building is a foundation to community-based engagement, energy adaptation and the cultivation of resilience. Moreover, Tribal capacity building is essential to the maintenance of Tribal sovereignty over Tribal information (such as identified Chumash archaeological coastal areas), self-determination, and cultural adaptation to a changing climate. Funds are required to organize the Tribal “sphere” so that Tribal members and staff can effectively consult and engage in coastal adaptation planning. Effective Tribal engagement and consultation requires an understanding of the scientific and technical information associated with SLR and climate-related impacts to cultural resources. However, this is more than a technical or scientific enterprise.

Risk reduction.

Based on the preliminary Phase I vulnerability assessments for each energy project, the project will identify and fill data gaps, refine identification of hazard zones, and will conduct a thorough overview of existing municipal vulnerability and adaptation plans or strategies in the planning area (e.g., City of Goleta, Carpinteria, Oxnard, and Counties of San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura). Following the data gap analysis, a vulnerability assessment of key cultural places and tribal resources at risk from SLR and coastal hazards will be conducted. This analysis will incorporate Chumash Ecological Knowledge (CEK) and will utilize higher resolution modeling of coastal hazards as appropriate. In some cases, the vulnerability assessment will require more site-specific hazard modeling of the risk and hazards associated with area than is currently available.

Sincerely,

Sam Cohen

Sam Cohen
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