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<b>Project Title:</b>	Lithium Valley Commission
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<b>Document Title:</b>	Draft Letter Regarding CERF Recommendations for Salton Sea Region
<b>Description:</b>	Draft Lithium Valley Commission letter to the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), Employment Development Department (EDD), and Economic Development (GO-Biz)
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<b>Organization:</b>	California Energy Commission
<b>Submitter Role:</b>	Commission Staff
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February 16, 2022

**To the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR), Employment Development Department (EDD), Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz):**

The Lithium Valley Commission respectfully requests your attention to an issue that has been raised by communities through the CERF public comment process and continues to be important in conversations regarding economic recovery and the future of a lithium economy in the Salton Sea region.

Current CERF regional maps divide the Salton Sea communities between two regions, the Inland Empire region and the Southern border region. Such division dilutes the interests, voices, and opportunities to create a strong economic recovery plan for two areas that have much more in common with each other than the areas they have been paired with. For these reasons, we request your reconsideration of the CERF regional map to carve out a region consisting of the Coachella and Imperial valleys, hence known as the Salton Sea region.

The designated Salton Sea region should cover all of Imperial County and much of Riverside County, extending from the Palm Springs area to Coachella and unincorporated communities near the sea, and then farther east to the California-Arizona border. This large area is notably economically distinct with approximately 150,000 people living and working in its communities. Major employment sectors across the area include agriculture and tourism, making these communities more similar to each other than they are to the economies of the Inland Empire and San Diego. This is even before lithium extraction comes in to further unify the regional economy.

Currently, there is a sustained effort underway to seed a high-road economy centered on inclusive, sustainable, and equitable use of lithium and other minerals in the Salton Sea's known geothermal resource area. If done correctly, this will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity with tremendous potential for transformative economic growth that could bring family-sustaining jobs and real economic opportunities to California's most underserved residents.

While there are dedicated resources in the form of grants and tax credits for Lithium Valley, the recovery of lithium from geothermal brines in and of itself will not advance a just recovery from COVID-19 nor create the transition to a sustainable, more equitable, high-road economy for the Salton Sea region. To have a chance at capturing the benefits of lithium extraction, our region needs dedicated resources to bridge any differences between business, labor, and community and produce, as CERF intends, a "regional roadmap for economic recovery and transition that prioritize the creation of accessible, high-quality jobs" consistent with the needs and assets of this region. This can only be achieved with the resources that come from being a designated CERF region.

Thank you for your consideration.

The Lithium Valley Commission

Cc:

Governor Gavin Newsom

Office of Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia

David Hochschild, Chair, CEC

Karen Douglass, Commissioner, CEC