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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION
LITHIUM VALLEY COMMISSION

In the matter of,)
)
Lithium Valley) Docket No. 20-LITHIUM-01
Community and Tribal Workshop)

COMMUNITY AND TRIBAL WORKSHOP ON THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE
BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION OF LITHIUM EXTRACTION IN
CALIFORNIA

Grace Smith Elementary School
9 E. 4th Street
Niland, CA 92258

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2022

6:00 P.M.

Reported By:
Elise Hicks

APPEARANCES

CEC Staff

Deanna Carrillo
Erica Loza
Silvia Palma-Rojas

Presenters

Lisa Ballin, Consensus and Collaboration Program,
College of Continuing Education, Sacramento State
Julia Csernansky, Consensus and Collaboration Program,
College of Continuing Education, Sacramento State

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 October 18, 2022 6:08 P.M.

3 MS. CARRILLO: Well, good evening. Thank you
4 for being here this evening and taking time out of your
5 busy days to participate. Before we get started, we're
6 providing interpretation in Spanish and Purepecha up
7 here. For those with like a translation service, please
8 connect with our interpreters so they can provide you
9 with a headset. We'll also have some small groups a
10 little later. Okay, looks like we're good.

11 Next slide, please. Perfect, thank you.

12 My name is Deanna, and along with a few
13 colleagues you see around the room, we're part of the
14 California Energy Commission team which is supporting
15 the Blue Ribbon Commission on lithium extraction in
16 California. And tonight, we're seeking community and
17 tribal input on its draft report. The Commission asked
18 the Energy Commission to develop some community
19 workshops to solicit oral feedback on the report. So,
20 we have a series of three meetings.

21 This public meeting is being transcribed by
22 our court reporter. Thank you. And the transcript will
23 be posted to the docket with a 15-day public comment
24 period, and the CEC will be providing a summary of
25 information we collect in our group discussions and

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1 providing it to the Commission's docket. A docket,
2 which I didn't know before, is an online source that
3 houses public information related to the Blue Ribbon
4 Commission's efforts.

5 And at the side of the room, you'll find
6 several resources in English, Spanish, and Purepecha.
7 Factsheets on the Blue Ribbon Commission, a general
8 Lithium Valley overview, the draft report, copies of the
9 authorizing statute, copies of the report, and workshop
10 workbooks for your reference in the group meetings
11 today. And outside of this, public comments can be
12 submitted at any time to the docket. Public comments on
13 the report are due October 28th through our e-commenting
14 system through the Lithium Valley Commission webpage.

15 It's really nice to see some familiar faces
16 tonight. I've had a chance to meet several of you at
17 prior meetings, but not most of you. And I'd like to
18 take a minute to acknowledge that we all come to this
19 workshop with different and unique familiarity with the
20 work of the Blue Ribbon Commission. For some of you,
21 you may have never heard of the commission before. And
22 you may have a lot of questions. And for those of you
23 who have not had a chance to read the report, which is
24 over 100 pages, we hope we can provide the information
25 needed for your participation today.

1 I want to recognize and appreciate that we
2 have these different backgrounds, and note that the
3 purpose of today's meeting is to seek public comment on
4 the draft report. Some of you may have specific
5 questions about projects or processes that aren't the
6 primary subject of today's meeting or can't be answered
7 by the team in this room, and I appreciate as those
8 questions may rise, we'll be taking them back to the
9 Commission.

10 I encourage you to use the comment form that
11 we've developed in the workshop workbook. We have more
12 forms if you need them. Again, today in focused on
13 soliciting input on the draft report, and the public
14 comment period closes October 28th.

15 This is one of three workshops we're having
16 this week. The others are tomorrow at North Shore beach
17 and Thursday in Salton City, and there's also a webinar
18 next Monday.

19 Next slide. Thanks.

20 The agenda for today's meeting is shown on
21 this slide. I'll be providing a brief overview of the
22 state's Lithium Valley Vision, and provide an overview
23 of the purpose of the report for those new to the
24 conversation. And we're going to spend most of our time
25 in group discussions soliciting feedback on the draft

1 report recommendations, there's 44.

2 And while we have organized this evening to
3 solicit feedback around those recommendations, we
4 welcome input on all aspects of the report. So, you can
5 provide input today orally, also in writing in the
6 docket, and we're here today to get the input that we'll
7 bring back to the Blue Ribbon Commission. What did the
8 report get right? What should be framed differently?
9 What might be missing? So just to keep some of those
10 things in mind.

11 Next slide please.

12 Okay, let's dive into a deep brief background
13 that led us to today.

14 Next slide.

15 So, what is lithium? Lithium is a naturally
16 occurring soft, silverly, white metal that is an
17 essential part of lithium ion batteries for consumer
18 products including cell phones, electric vehicles, and
19 energy storage systems. Again, lithium is naturally
20 occurring and it's a key material to the nation and the
21 world and making progress in our climate goals and
22 reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air
23 quality in our environment.

24 Lithium Valley is not a bound geographical
25 space. Rather, it's a term or concept used to describe

1 a potential world class economic hub or cluster with
2 economic benefits that crosses communities, and is
3 centered on the recovery of lithium from geothermal
4 brine from one of the locally known Geothermal Resource
5 Areas, which is found one to two miles under the
6 southern part of the Salton Sea.

7 Lithium is not in the Salton Sea. Rather,
8 it's in the geothermal brine that is one to two miles
9 under the floor of the Salton Sea.

10 Next slide please.

11 This opportunity led to the establishment of
12 the Blue Ribbon Commission on lithium extraction in
13 California.

14 Next slide.

15 Authored by Assemblymember Edward Garcia, the
16 Blue Ribbon Commission was created by the Assembly Bill
17 1657, and was supported by four legislative findings and
18 declarations. World demand for lithium it is expected
19 to grow as much as tenfold in the next decade, but
20 virtually none is produced in the United States. The
21 Salton Sea Geothermal Resource Area is well positioned
22 to become a competitive source of lithium that can
23 satisfy more than a third of today's development, and
24 requires investment and removal of barriers. And
25 there's a national security rationale for developing a

1 domestic supply of lithium. It's been identified as a
2 critical mineral essential to the economic and national
3 security of the nation. And the opportunity for lithium
4 production in California has the potential to unleash
5 billions of dollars of new economic infrastructure
6 development.

7 Next slide, please.

8 The statute established specific requirements
9 for each of the 14 Commissioners. We have one with us
10 tonight -- thank you, Commissioner Hanks, for being here
11 -- which ensured a broad and diverse representation of
12 perspectives.

13 Next slide.

14 And the statute tasked the Commission with
15 reviewing, investigating, and analyzing eight specific
16 topics. These here are just summaries. There's more
17 detailed language in the statute, and in the draft
18 report. And in reviewing and analyzing the topics, the
19 goal of the report is to bring recommendations to the
20 legislature for consideration.

21 So, after its review, the Commission is tasked
22 with providing a report to the legislature, this draft
23 report. And the report was due October 1st, but the
24 Blue Ribbon Commission extended its meetings to
25 incorporate additional community and tribal input prior

1 to developing the draft.

2 Slide 11. I'm sorry next slide, also slide
3 11.

4 The Commission has had over 21 public
5 meetings, most of them virtual during 2020 and 2021,
6 during the COVID pandemic. And once able, the meetings
7 have also been held at physical locations locally in the
8 fence line communities of Westmorland Niland, thank you
9 Superintendent, Calipatria, as well as the Torres
10 Martinez facility in Thermal, and at Imperial Valley
11 College.

12 Next slide, please.

13 And this brings us to the Commission's draft
14 report, and its recommendations to the legislature. The
15 draft report includes 44 recommendations for
16 consideration, several cross-statutory topics, and the
17 Commission worked to ground the report in the experience
18 of residents in the Imperial and Coachella valleys. The
19 report reflects the discussion of the issues required
20 under the law, and also includes the Commission's focus
21 to ensure community and tribal voices are represented.

22 Next slide please.

23 This slide notes the timetable for the Blue
24 Ribbon Commission to issue its final report. Our public
25 comment runs through October 28th. The Commission will

1 meet on October 31st at a virtual meeting to consider
2 public comment. You can find information on that
3 meeting posted on our website in the next several days.
4 And then the final report is issued -- is anticipated to
5 be released in November for Commissioner consideration
6 on November 17th, for submission on December 1st. That's
7 our game plan at the moment, although things may change
8 as the Energy Commission supports the Blue Ribbon
9 Commission.

10 Next slide please.

11 Which brings us back to today. We will be
12 breaking into groups for facilitated discussions. And
13 given the depth and length of a report, we've created
14 workshop workbooks which we passed out earlier. If you
15 haven't received one or need one raise your hand, and
16 perhaps Silvia can bring one to you. These workbooks
17 are focused on the report recommendations, and we're
18 offering them to solicit your input on the report.
19 Again, we're not -- you're welcome to provide input on
20 any aspects of the report. But our thought was that the
21 community focus on the recommendations.

22 And with that, I would like to introduce Lisa
23 Ballin, who is an independent facilitator we brought on
24 board with the Consensus and Collaboration Program.

25 Lisa?

1 MS. BALLIN: Thank you Deanna. As Deanna
2 said, my name is Lisa Ballin. I'm with Sacramento
3 State's Consensus and Collaboration Program. And I'll
4 be facilitating this part of the workshop this evening,
5 along with my colleague, Julia Csernanski, who's
6 standing over there.

7 So, in order to maximize the time for your
8 feedback, we'd like to divide everybody into two groups.
9 This way each person will have more time to give
10 feedback. I'm going to facilitate a group at the front
11 of this -- we've got two really long tables, one in the
12 front and one in the back. And once we divide into
13 groups, we'll give a little more instructions.

14 But I want you to let I want to let you know
15 the opportunity for feedback at both groups will be the
16 same. If somebody is interested in having the
17 opportunity to give their feedback in Spanish, Julia is
18 bilingual so I suggest that you maybe go to the back
19 group if that's of interest to you.

20 Silvia Palma-Rojas and Erica Loza will help us
21 take some notes during these sessions so that we can
22 prepare a summary that will be considered by the
23 Commission. I also want to ask your permission to
24 record just the audio when we're in groups to make sure
25 we capture all your comments correctly for the summary

1 that we're preparing. So, let me know if anybody
2 doesn't want that to be recorded.

3 Once we get into our groups, we'll have about
4 an hour for your feedback, and then around 7:25 we'll
5 come back together as a full group, and Julia and myself
6 and our note takers will give a little summary of what
7 we heard. This way, each of you can hear some of the
8 comments that were mentioned in the other groups, and
9 our court reporter will be capturing that part of the
10 evening.

11 So, with that what I'm thinking -- I would
12 like to divide equally. So perhaps the people who are
13 sitting at these kind of first two tables -- actually I
14 guess it's technically the third and the fourth. If you
15 could come to this one long table. And then the people
16 who are at the back two tables, if you can all go to
17 that long table. And I'll meet the table up front,
18 Julia will meet the folks back there and we'll give you
19 a little more instructions before we begin.

20 Any questions about how the session is going
21 to go before we divide up? Okay, great. Super, see you
22 at the table.

23 (Small Group Discussion Began, 6:21 P.M.)

24 (Small Group Discussion End 7:30 P.M.)

25 MS. CARRILLO: Okay everybody, we're going to

1 bring it back, just for a few minutes. Thank you.
2 Thank you, thank you. I want to thank you again for
3 taking time out of your busy days to engage on this.
4 And this is not in the script, but who learned something
5 new today? Doesn't that feel good? Lifelong learners.

6 Before we move on with just our wrap up, I
7 wanted -- we've had a lot of discussion about a docket,
8 and where to docket information. So, this is a real-
9 world example of how to find the docket. Erica, if you
10 could raise your hand? Erica's going to pretend that
11 she's at her desk. She has her favorite search engine
12 up that rhymes with doodle. There's doodles everywhere.
13 And you're going put in California -- you can put
14 Lithium Valley Commission. You know what, it's your
15 search, your brain works the way it does. Let's see
16 what pops up. There it is, you know it's safe because
17 it says energy.ca.gov.

18 Hold on. Okay. That's the docket. When you
19 click that, all the information that's been provided
20 under the efforts of the Blue Ribbon Commission will be
21 at your fingertips. Presentations, draft reports,
22 public comments. Now if you want to provide a public
23 comment, you would hit the submit the e-comment button.
24 So, I did say it was in tiny print, but it is at the
25 top. And so that's how we use --

1 (Laughter)

2 I appreciate that. So that's how you find the
3 docket.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Excuse me?

5 MS. CARRILLO: Yes?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you repeat the
7 deadline to submit?

8 MS. CARRILLO: October 28th.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks.

10 MS. CARRILLO: Okay. So, with that, we're
11 just going to pull together, and I want to thank our
12 facilitators today. They're going to provide a summary
13 of what they heard in our group discussions, and then
14 we'll go over the timeline again and next step. Lisa?

15 MS. BALLIN: I'm going to ask Erica to help me
16 out. I'm gonna do my best to summarize what we've
17 heard, let's see if I can read some of my scribble.
18 This isn't --

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Lisa, into the mic,
20 please.

21 MS. BALLIN: Oh. Is the mic not on?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's on, just --

23 MS. BALLIN: I need to -- okay --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You've got to get
25 personal with it.

1 MS. BALLIN: -- get close with it, okay.

2 Just want to let you know this isn't meant to
3 be a comprehensive summary of every comment. We're
4 going to look through our notes and our recordings and
5 develop a summary. But we just wanted to give overall
6 feedback so you can hear what was going on at the
7 different tables.

8 I have to get even closer? Thank you. Is
9 this better? Okay.

10 Sorry about that. Okay, so we had a great
11 conversation at our table. We had a lot of diversity in
12 the participants. Thank you, everybody, for being at
13 the table. We had community members, we had industry
14 representatives, the water district, different community
15 officials, so really appreciate the diverse perspectives
16 that we had.

17 So, some of the issues that came up and
18 questions that came up at our table was that there was
19 definitely a recognition about all the opportunities
20 that this lithium development can bring to the community
21 in terms of labor, workforce development, addressing
22 climate issues. But also, concerns about the impacts on
23 the environment, the impacts of the facilities, the
24 transportation impacts, and just a need to address those
25 concerns along with taking advantage of the

1 opportunities that come along with it.

2 We heard concerns about the responsibility
3 given for the IID to identify water, specific water need
4 levels. We heard there is really a need for
5 infrastructure upgrades in the valley. We have some
6 comments about the percentage of the tax rate that the
7 companies will pay, and there was a comment that that
8 should be higher. We heard some differing opinions that
9 that's also already pretty high based on the margins
10 that are going to be received by the industries.

11 I had some questions about who's going to
12 administer and oversight some of the programs called for
13 in the report. Those programs had to do with oversight
14 about the whole industry. Questions about how the
15 economic feasibility study that was called for will be
16 used once that study is done. Also a question about how
17 the 30 percent of the tax funds that are going back to
18 Imperial County are going to be distributed amongst the
19 communities within the county.

20 We heard there's a need to monitor seismic
21 activities and provide emergency infrastructure. We
22 need to make sure there's proper disposal of waste from
23 the facilities and the transportation. Recognition that
24 this project won't solve all of the valley's problems,
25 but it will do the best -- we'll do the best we can with

1 addressing some of the issues in the valleys, but just a
2 recognition of how much it really can help.

3 Let's see. There was comments about making
4 sure that there's a partnership between the private
5 corporations and the public to really deal with
6 challenges and maximize the opportunities that are
7 present. A focus on -- in terms of you know, what the
8 benefits -- we should really focus on, where this
9 industry is happening, and who is impacted.

10 There was questions about the definition of
11 Lithium Valley, its geographic extent, what it means to
12 be in the valley or not. We had some discussions about
13 that. Some questions raised about whether that should
14 include more than Imperial County or not.

15 Let's see. As you can tell, we had a lot of
16 comments. Yeah, making sure the benefits stay in the
17 community. Let's see if there's anything else. We had
18 a question about -- yeah, workforce development was a
19 big issue. And there was a lot of discussion about
20 providing adequate education to ensure that workforce
21 development happens within the community. And some of
22 the needs around those educations -- around that
23 education, is that we need to meet the community where
24 they're at in terms of the current literacy and
25 educational levels, as well as their availability to

1 participate in educational programs in terms of their
2 scheduling and availability.

3 And we heard a real need for not only
4 educating the public to provide workforce development,
5 but also having some education to create public
6 awareness around what's happening in the community, you
7 know, for the community's sake. Questions about what
8 happens when the resource is fully depleted after about
9 60 years? That those questions should be addressed.

10 Let's see. Had some comments that had to do
11 with the state tax, and a comment that instead of
12 Imperial Valley getting 80 percent and 20 percent going
13 to Salton Sea, Imperial should get 100 percent, and that
14 Salton Sea should be -- the Salton Sea restoration
15 should be funded from additional funds.

16 And I think that's about -- that's about what
17 I had. I'm going to turn to Erica and see if she can
18 help me out, is there anything I missed?

19 MS. LOZA: I think you took the majority of
20 it. I think I basically got everything that you have.
21 Really a concern was the designated map for the Lithium
22 Valley. Where is it, exactly? If it's just in Imperial
23 County, or if it's -- like why is it in Riverside County
24 -- or Riverside County being included with this? So
25 that was a major concern I saw.

1 An economic boom. So, like great opportunity.
2 For another comment, another question was the amount of
3 lithium extraction in the report, which I think you
4 said? But I'm not sure. And then, concerns about the
5 bureaucratic system for the industry if it's not -- and
6 it's not an identified oversight for agencies, and what
7 agency is going to be taxing? It's not clear in that
8 report.

9 Let's see. Monitoring the seismic zones.
10 Again, no boundary on the valley. Will Imperial County
11 be always a disadvantaged community? Or, will the
12 Lithium Valley industry improve it? Those are all of
13 the major comments I saw.

14 MS. BALLIN: Thank you so much. So, I'm going
15 to turn it over to Julia and Silvia so you can hear what
16 happened in the other group.

17 MS. CSERNANSKY: Hi, everybody. Thank you so
18 much to my group for your participation. There was
19 quite a bit of overlap in terms of the concerns that we
20 saw expressed between groups.

21 In relation to Section F, our group also had a
22 lot of concerns about workforce development. Especially
23 kind of this issue of defining the Lithium Valley and
24 the Salton Sea area. What, you know, how is that going
25 to impact the definition of local residents and local

1 schools that will be receiving those benefits?

2 Programs -- those programs outlined in Section
3 F should focus on the fence line or frontline
4 communities. And those programs should reflect equal
5 access in terms of you know being able to actually get
6 there and physically access those programs, and an equal
7 quality of programming.

8 In terms of economic concerns, we had a
9 comment wanting to include water benefits for
10 disadvantaged communities as well. So, looking to
11 include changes in the water systems that would provide
12 more affordable water for disadvantaged communities in
13 addition to the electricity grid benefits that were
14 outlined there.

15 For the environmental impact section, we had a
16 lot of concern here about the funding that goes to
17 research, research on environmental impact, and that
18 funding should be allocated perhaps, or capped, to you
19 know provide money for research but not at the expense
20 of programming. That's really important to those
21 communities.

22 We also had quite a few comments on Section G.
23 With recommendation number four, we had a comment that
24 infrastructure development be made in preparation of,
25 and in advance of, industry development. And there was

1 also a comment on recommendation number three as it
2 relates to that business center, that there would need
3 to be more locations. Again, so that all the impacted
4 communities were able to have meaningful access to that
5 resource.

6 We also had some comments on Section E, that
7 the report as it stands kind of leaves out existing
8 research related to geothermal energy. And that could
9 help better inform the report as a whole, but also it
10 goes specifically to the environmental impact sections.
11 So those studies and information should be included.

12 We also had a lot of concern kind of wrapping
13 into multiple of the recommendations when they used
14 language like schools or local communities. Of, you
15 know, better finding the Salton Sea and the Lithium
16 Valley area, and that that definition should be based on
17 the impact on the community. So, the most impacted
18 communities should be included in that definition, as
19 opposed to kind of far off, you know, less frontline
20 communities.

21 And that there was a suggestion of a glossary
22 section be amended as it stands -- as it defines the
23 Salton Sea section, and the executive summary as it
24 defined the Salton Sea. Oh, and then we also had a
25 request to include in the report the existing interest

1 of the auto industry, especially given recent federal
2 legislation. Like what has the auto industry's interest
3 been in, you know, these lithium projects as they stand?
4 Concerns about kind of like the actual feasibility of
5 these projects.

6 MS. PALMA-ROJAS: So, I just have like a --
7 this is Silvia. So, I just have two more specific
8 recommendations, but I think you included all of them.
9 So, this is an economic impact recommendation, I think
10 F-1. I mean, economic impact that is Recommendation F,
11 Item 1. Like a re-use water rates, because that
12 recommendation has like a IID, like they reused the
13 electricity rates. So, the recommendation is also
14 include water rates as well.

15 So also, the same Recommendation, but Item 2,
16 define better what is "substantial" definition. So,
17 it's part of that recommendation so that people don't
18 kind of confused what that means that definition. Let's
19 see, what else here? I think you covered everything.
20 So yeah. Thank you.

21 MS. CARRILLO: Great. Thank you. So that was
22 a summary of the oral feedback that we received today,
23 which was one of our goals today, be able to provide
24 oral feedback as well as written feedback. I am going
25 to move to next -- our next step slide in just a minute.

1 We're just gonna go our -- go to our schedule.
2 While we've collected oral feedback today, I did hear
3 some -- a summary of, you know, put specific reports to
4 reference, or others specific items. We will summarize
5 these comments and provide them to the Commission so it
6 can consider it with the draft report and consider
7 modifications to the report.

8 But no one knows your words better than you.
9 So, I will also strongly recommend you put your own
10 personal comments within the docket. We might not have
11 heard it right. We might put a different spin on it.
12 And while we've worked very hard to be unbiased and just
13 collect comments, that will be a way that you can make
14 sure that your voice is heard and we'll bring that to
15 the Blue Ribbon Commission.

16 So, next steps -- we are going to have two
17 additional community workshops this week in Salton City
18 and in North Shore, as well as a webinar next Monday.
19 The public comment period ends October 28th, and you can
20 provide comments into the docket. And we're expecting
21 to get direction from the Blue Ribbon Commission on
22 October 31st at a virtual meeting. And then we'll be
23 providing the final report for the Commission to
24 consider.

25 So that brings us to an end. I do, before we

1 conclude, I want to do a big thank you to the
2 superintendent for opening up the schools. Thank you,
3 you have just helped us be out in the community. To
4 Comite Civico, for all of their help for the meetings.
5 As well as Alianza, so than you. It wouldn't have been
6 possible without you.

7 This next slide shows you how to e-comment,
8 but we did that a little earlier in real time.

9 And now we can adjourn. Thank you so much for
10 your time.

11 (Whereupon the meeting was adjourned at 7:48
12 P.M)

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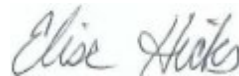
25

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were reported by me, a certified electronic court reporter and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 4th day of November, 2022.



ELISE HICKS, IAPRT
CERT**2176

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were transcribed by me, a certified transcriber and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript, to the best of my ability, from the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter.



MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367

November 4, 2022