

James Pedri and Jim Rohrbach
California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region
415 Knollcrest Drive Suite 100
Redding CA. 96002

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03-RPS-1078	
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Matthew Lehman
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California Energy Commission
Docket No 03-RPS-1078
Docket Unit MS-4
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5504

Dear Mr. Pedri, Mr, Rohrbach, Mr. Lehman, and members of the Energy Commission,

I am writing you in regard to Calpine Corporation's push for a geothermal power plant at Medicine Lake. This issue is located at a complex intersection of racial, economic, and environmental politics and implicitly political ecological philosophies. I urge you all to center the experiences of Native American people and to take heed the wisdom of Native environmental philosophy in considering potential impacts of geothermal power in the Medicine Lake highlands.

The colonization of California was not only an imposition of Euro-American material culture onto those colonized, but also an imposition of Euro-American knowledge systems. To evaluate these projects solely through the lens of Euro-American knowledge systems is to assert the supremacy of Euro-American knowledge and the irrelevance of Native American knowledge. Undoing the physical and psychic wounds of colonization means adopting a non-hierarchical approach to systems of knowledge, wherein both are culturally and historically situated.

Medicine Lake is sacred to the Pit River, Modoc, and Shasta tribes. For them the energy that Calpine seeks to harness and commodify is a healing energy best left in the ground. Jerald Jackson, a Modoc spiritual leader, says "That water out there, Medicine Lake, is sacred because it's the life blood of Mother Earth. It's also the life blood of the people." I urge you all to understand that Modoc thought helps to maintain ecological health and biodiversity. Conversely reductionist profit-driven scientific paradigms that forego the precautionary principle and lay the burden of proof on those who are skeptical of industry facilitate environmental devastation.

Geothermal development taps into underground beads of hot brine. Brine contains mercury, arsenic, boron, cadmium and other hazardous compounds. Countless Native American tribes have suffered the effects of toxic chemicals on their lands, from PCB's in Mohawk women's breast milk, to nuclear testing on Western Shoshone land to the devastation Dine people face at the hands of Peabody Coal. Time after time when industry enters Native land the health and viability of Native people suffers. Risking the release of mercury and arsenic into sacred and pristine waters is not "green energy." Putting Native Americans disproportionately at risk of these toxins is environmental racism. Desecrating their sacred sites is cultural genocide. Devaluing their environmental philosophies is epistemological colonization.

I urge you to do all that is in your power to see that Calpine Corporation does not put Native American people at risk of exposure to toxic chemicals or desecrate sites that are vital to cultural retention. Likewise I urge you to see to it that the environmental impacts of actions taken at Medicine Lake are understood not only in terms of Western science but also in terms of Pit River, Modoc, and Shasta ecological philosophy and spirituality. Ultimately the outcome of these decisions will carry great ecological and racial significance. I hope that it can depart from the colonial history of this country and mark a victory for the health, cultural retention, and wisdom of Native people and for ecological health and biodiversity. Please respond regarding your involvement with this issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Isaac Higgins