



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

February 15, 2011

California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Re: Docket No. 02-REN-1038
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5504

DOCKET

02-REN-1038

DATE Feb15 2011

RECD. Feb28 2011

Re: Docket No. 02-REN-1038. Comments on the Proposed Renewable Planning and Permitting Program Grants (RP3 Grant)

Dear California Energy Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed renewable planning and permitting program grants. Listed below your questions are our comments:

- What are the key challenges with planning, permitting and environmental issues in your local jurisdiction related to renewable energy development?

The county has many sensitive biological resources, land use constraints, and other permitting challenges for renewable energy development. The county does not have a renewable energy guidance document for processing these renewable projects above and beyond very small scale distributed generation.

- What steps, information, tools, resources, etc. are necessary to revise the current land use plans and/or General Plans of your local jurisdiction to expedite the permitting process for renewable energy projects?

The county has an interest in developing a renewable energy master plan to assist in streamlining the permitting process for renewable projects.

- Does your local jurisdiction currently have best practices in place for permitting renewable energy projects?

The county has an educational guide for very small scale distributed generation permits.

- What additional funds, resources, or tools would be required to develop new plans, policies or ordinances to expedite renewable energy development in your local jurisdiction?

The county would seek funds to assist in the development of a renewable energy master plan and the environmental review process associated with that.

- Will your local jurisdiction be able to contribute match funds for an RP3 grant to develop the needed new plans, policies, or ordinances to expedite renewable energy development? If so, how much?

The county would be able to contribute in-kind staff time as a match to a maximum of 15 percent.

- Has your local jurisdiction already begun the process to develop such plans, policies, or ordinances?

The county was awarded a Renewable Energy Secure Communities (RESCO) grant to help determine the renewable resources in the county. This project will allow the county to have a comprehensive understanding of the renewable resources available. The county would like to leverage this data into the basis for the renewable energy master plan.

- Does your current local jurisdiction's renewable energy development plan integrate with regional or statewide energy plans such as; Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative, a Natural Community Conservation Plan, or a Habitat Conservation Plan?

The county has just begun a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in the northern portion of the county. We have begun looking at the data from the RESCO project for solar opportunities in that region. It is in the early stage but the county envisions any HCP to be integrated into our renewable energy master plan.

- How will your local jurisdiction's planning effort help it reach state renewable energy procurement goals (Renewables Portfolio Standard – 33 percent by 2020), and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (AB 32)?

By developing a renewable energy master plan, the county would be able to assist in streamlining the permitting process for various renewable energy projects located in the least constrained areas. In addition, depending on the environmental review process on the renewable energy master plan, subsequent environmental review could be tiered off the master plan. Overall, with a renewable energy master plan, future renewable projects could have a better understanding of the permit process, defined mitigation requirements, and easier process with other agency permits. By developing a renewable energy master plan, the county could assist in expediting renewable energy projects in better locations to help the state reach its renewable energy procurement goals.

If you have questions about the county's comments on your proposed renewable planning and permitting program grants, please contact me at (805) 781-1431 or e-mail at tkeith@co.slo.ca.us. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Trevor Keith
Energy Program Coordinator