

Energy - Docket Optical System

From: Pamela Birge <birgep@att.net>
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2015 1:41 PM
To: Energy - Docket Optical System
Attachments: Map_01_Mines_in_DRECP.pdf; Table_01_Mines_in_DRECP.pdf; Map_02__Mines_in_DRECP_on_BLM_or_USFS.pdf; Table_02__Mines_on_BLM_or_USFS_in_DRECP.pdf

California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512



Re: DRECP NEPA/CEQA

To Whom It May Concern:

I am commenting on DRECP as a concerned citizen who spends many hours recreating in our California Deserts. I collect rocks and minerals for my personal use.

Facts:

- There are 6,382 mines and mineral collecting localities in the DRECP. See Map 01 and Table 01
 - There are 3,528 mines and mineral collecting localities on BLM and USFS lands in the DRECP. See Map 02 and Table 02
 - The DRECP proposes closing all these, mostly locatable mineral mines, from the Mining Laws.
1. The DRECP does not address the cumulative effects on non-mineral land management prescriptions in the DRECP on the mineral resource. The establishment of military reservations, and national parks and monuments, have removed (3,528/6,382) over 55% of the mine sites from exploration or development. Wilderness designations, and other land use restrictions have further reduced the number of mines and mineral collecting localities available for exploration or development. The cumulative effects are significant, but were not evaluated in the DRECP.
 2. The DRECP allows for salable and solid leasable mineral exploration and development, but not for locatable minerals.
 3. Locatable mineral exploration and development has similar or inferior (less) impacts to biological and other non-mineral resources than do exploration and development of salable (e.g. sand and gravel), and solid leasable (e.g. salt) resources because locatable minerals are produced by underground mining methods.
 4. The DRECP is arbitrary and capricious because it does not treat minerals uniformly, and does not address the less impactful nature of locatable mineral exploration and development. Specifically, the DRECP does not include analysis of California State Law SD 22 which limited metallic mineral development by

requiring backfill and limits on overburden volume. This law allows for open pit mining of non-metallic minerals. That restriction already effectively forces locatable mineral producers to produce those minerals by underground mining methods.

5. Many of the mines and mineral collecting areas in the DRECP have already been removed from mineral entry by wilderness designations, wilderness in character designations, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Visual Resource Management Plans, and other administrative classifications. These cumulative effects were not addressed in any alternatives of the DRECP. Hence the DRECP is a violation of both NEPA and the Multiple Use Act, as well as BLM and USFS policies for mineral exploration and development.
6. There is no alternative that seeks to increase access to locatable minerals in the DRECP.
7. The prescriptions in the DRECP are discriminatory to persons with disabilities because they require vehicular access to mines and mineral localities. Hence the access restrictions and prescriptions in the alternatives are a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
8. In establishing the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) within the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 Congress found that: ‘the California desert contains historical, scenic, archeological, environmental, biological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational, and economic resources that are uniquely located adjacent to an area of large population.’ ‘Recreation’ needs to be added to the array of values to be emphasized in the future travel management planning.
9. The prescriptions against access to locatable minerals in the DRECP interfere with geologic research into locatable mineral deposits. Access for researchers and students is already greatly curtailed within the DRECP, the proposed restrictions will make it even more difficult for researchers to perform geologic mapping and mineral specimen collection than it is already.
10. The closure of the DRECP to locatable mineral entry is unnecessary to achieve the goals listed in the DRECP.
11. There are many special places in our deserts that the DRECP does not adequately protect from renewable energy development. Specifically, there are several rock collecting sites that are within Development Focus Areas, and some very special collecting places that are not within Special Recreation Management Areas, that should be included:
 - a. **Afton Canyon:** Afton Canyon is Located off I-15 at the Afton Turnoff about 32 miles east of Barstow and 25 miles west of Baker. This area has long been a rockhound area with many types of agate, sagenite, jasper and opalite. We ask that this area, along with the roads and trails be considered for Special Recreation Management Area.
 - b. **Blythe:** The Blythe collecting area is located at T4S, R20E (Blythe DAG). It is north of the Palen McCoy Wilderness and south of the Little Maria Mountains. A Development Focus Area (DFA) appears to cover at least a portion of this psilomelane collecting area. I ask the BLM to redefine or redraw the DFA so that it does not cover this area, with at least a 1,000-foot radius around it that includes any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.
 - c. **Boron:** The Boron collecting area is located between Saddleback Mountain and California City Boulevard, north of Highway 58 and south of Twenty Mule Team Parkway (Cuddeback Lake DAG). This collecting area, which contains petrified wood, chapenite, jasper and agate, is within a DFA. I ask the BLM to redefine the DFA so that it does not cover the Boron collecting area, with at least a 1,000-foot radius buffer around it that includes any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.
 - d. **Brown Butte** (aka Lonely Butte): The Brown Butte collecting area is located at T10N, R11W, Sections 2, 3, 10 & 11 (Lancaster DAG). This collecting area, which is good for petrified reeds, agate, jasper, and

jasp-agate, is within a DFA. I ask the BLM to redefine the DFA so that it does not cover this area, with at least a 1,000-foot radius buffer around it that includes any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

e. **Chambless:** The Chambless fossil collecting site is adjacent to the Trilobite Wilderness/Marble Mountain area. It is off the National Trails Hiway, about 2 miles west of Amboy. The current roads to the collecting sites are outside the Wilderness and are used as a staging area to walk into the collecting sites. We ask that the roads in this area be left open so we can access the fossil sites.

f. **Cinco:** The Cinco collecting area is located at T31S, R11W, south/southwest of Jawbone Station (Tehachapi DAG). A DFA appears to cover some or all of this collecting area for quartz and feldspar crystals. I ask the BLM to redefine the DFA so that it does not cover this area, with at least a 1,000-foot radius buffer around it that includes any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

g. **Gem Hill:** The Gem Hill collecting area is located at T10N, R13W, Sections 26, 27, 34, and 35 (Lancaster DAG). This collecting area, which is good for agate, jasper, rhyolite, common opal, and petrified wood, is within a DFA. I ask the BLM to refine the DFA so that it does not cover this area, and at least a 1,000 foot radius around it, and any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

h. **Hector Hills:** There is a very small DFA near this collecting area, located at T8N, R5E, Sections 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, 21 and 22 (Newberry Springs DAG). This DFA is only a problem if it would block or deny access to Pisgah Crater Road. If it would, I ask that it be redefined so that it does not deny access.

h. **Hauser Beds:** The Hauser Beds collecting area is located at T 8 ½ S, R 19 E, Sections 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, and 28; T 8 ½ S, R 19 E, Section 16; T 8 ½ S, R 20 E, Sections 6, 7, and 18 (Trigo DAG). Not only is this area one of the best collecting areas in our deserts, it is covered by a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. The MOU was signed on February 22, 2000, and has never been terminated by either party. The MOU recognizes the importance of the Hauser Geode Beds area as a major recreation area for dispersed rockhounding recreation. It appears as though the Mule Mountain LTVA SRMA partially covers this collecting area. I ask the BLM to expand this SRMA to fully include the entire Hauser Beds area, as described above. I also ask the BLM to acknowledge the MOU at the District and State Office levels and expressly state in the SRMA

that this MOU shall continue.

i. **Kramer Junction:** I understand that certain groups are lobbying to have certain DFAs “relocated” to the Kramer Junction area (Victorville DAG). I am opposed to any DFA being placed on the southeast corner of Kramer Junction (south of Highway 58 and east of Highway 395), as this is a collecting area for dendritic agate, common opal, and obsidian.

j. **Lavic and Jasper Hill:** The Lavic and Jasper Hill collecting areas located at T8N, R5E, Sections 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, 36 and T8N, R6E, Sections 18, 19, 20, 30, 29, 31, 32, and T9N, R4E, Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32 (Newberry Springs DAG). These jasper collecting areas are located within the Route 66 viewshed, between Ludlow and Newberry Springs. I appreciate that the BLM is proposing the National Trails Viewshed SRMA, which protects various recreational activities along Route 66. I especially appreciate the fact that the BLM has specifically recognized the importance of collecting in the Trilobite and Ship Mountains, and has created a Recreation Management Zone to protect collecting in those areas. However, this SRMA does encompass some very special collecting places along Route 66. I ask the BLM to increase the size of the National Trails Viewshed SRMA, so that it includes the Lavic and Jasper Hill collecting areas, and specifically allows collecting in these areas.

k. **Newbury:** The Newbury collecting area is located at T8N, R3E (Newbury Springs DAG). It is north of Newberry Mountains Wilderness and south of Route 66. A DFA appears to cover and/or surround this collecting area for nodules and agate. I ask the BLM to redraw the DFA boundary so that it does not cover this area, with at least a 1,000-foot radius around it, and any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

l. **Sperry Wash:** The Sperry Wash collecting area is located in the Dublin Hills, west of Shoshone (Owlshead DAG). Given this area's close proximity to the Amargosa River Valley/Grimshaw SRMA, and given that rock collecting is a legitimate use within this SRMA, I ask that this SRMA be expanded to include the Sperry Wash collecting area, protecting this important recreational activity.

m. **Stoddard Well:** The Stoddard Well collecting area is located at T11N to the 15 Freeway, R1W to R3W, up to the southern boundary of Stoddard OHV Area (Victorville DAG). The area includes Black Mountain and Sidewinder Mountain. A DFA appears to cover or come very close to this marble collecting area. This area is frequented by rockhounds and I ask the BLM to recognize this area as a new Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) under the DRECP. This should protect the important rock collecting recreational activity that takes place here. If the BLM is unwilling to create a new SRMA, I ask that this DFA be redefined so that it does not cover this area and any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

n. **Yermo:** The Yermo collecting area is located at T10N to T11N, R1E to R2E (Newberry Springs DAG), in the Calico Mountains between the two Superior Cronese ACECs. The collecting area overlaps approximately six sections of the western edge of the eastern Superior Cronese ACEC. A DFA appears to cover some of this excellent collecting area, where we collect agate, petrified palm root, jasper, and chert. I ask the BLM to recognize this area that is frequented by rockhounds as a new SRMA under the DRECP, and to protect the important rock collecting activities in this area. If the BLM is unwilling to create a new Special Recreation Management Area, I ask that the Superior/Rainbow SRMA be expanded to include this area, and to specify that rock collecting is an allowable use in this area. Alternatively, I ask that this DFA be redefined so that it does not cover this area and any designated routes that allow access to this collecting area.

o. **Yuha Basin:** The South side of I-8 between Hiway 98 and Dunaway Road has giant fossilized oyster shells that have been collected by rockhounds since the 1950s. We ask that this area be considered under SRMA. It is currently listed under overlapping ACEC and NLC lands. We ask that rockhounding be continued and all roads into the area be left open.

I do not support any additional land for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) or National Conservation Land (NCL) designations. The Bureau of Land Management must carefully consider whether land qualifies for the above designations because of significant criteria of relevance or importance. We believe the hard work exhibited in the Draft DRECP document show that in-depth investigation has been undertaken to find those special areas that warrant increased protection. After careful examination no other or additional areas that warrant inclusion to ACEC or NCL designations.

Thank you for your time and interest in the future of rockhounds in the desert.

Pamela Birge
17615 Valeport avenue
Lake Los Angeles, CA 93535