

Energy - Docket Optical System

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To: Energy - Docket Optical System
Subject: DRECP NEPA/CEQA

California Energy Commission

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To whom it may concern,

I would like to share several concerns regarding the DRECP.

Geographic siting of solar and wind projects

The plan would site large-scale energy and wind projects in desert areas far from population centers where most of the energy is needed resulting in a requirement for much new infrastructure including transmission lines. I favor siting projects on already disturbed lands closer to population areas where the energy will be needed and a greater emphasis on both commercial and residential rooftop solar.

Air Quality

I am against large-scale solar and wind development on undeveloped desert lands. When the desert pavement or crust is disturbed, fine particulates will become air-borne. New studies from soil scientists at UNLV are finding these particulates are hazardous for humans to breathe and may cause lung problems similar to diseases associated with asbestos. Blowing dust and sand will impair the experience of visitors to Joshua Tree NP, Mojave NP, and other area public lands, as well as creating a need for additional water to clean solar panels and for ongoing dust abatement. Desert lands are carbon sinks. Development of pristine desert lands will actually release carbon into the atmosphere increasing the problem of greenhouse gases.

Water Usage

Industrial scale wind and solar project use precious water when the land is graded during installation. Solar projects have on-going water needs that use vast amounts of precious water that will be needed by desert residents. These needs have been under-reported by developers during the permitting process.

View-shed

Tourism is a vital part of the desert economy and the beautiful desert vistas are an important reason for many people to settle in the desert. The siting of large scale solar and wind farms in the desert lowers property values and permanently alters the wild character of views in and around the public lands that draw visitors from all over the world.

Flora and Fauna

The southern California desert has the richest flora and fauna in the lower 48 states. Many of the plants, though not as flashy and charismatic as sequoias or redwoods, are exceedingly old and support complex webs of life, and include many species not yet described. The lost via grading of vast sections of the desert flora and fauna to large-scale development will create incalculable losses. The DRECP must provide enough undeveloped land for our plants and animals to survive as the climate changes.

The DRECP allows too much unnecessary development to create energy that could be generated on already disturbed lands and on commercial and residential rooftop solar.

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