

February 22, 2015

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



via email to : docket@energy.ca.gov

RE: DRECP NEPA/CEQA

The DRECP is a very encompassing plan and therefore a complex document. Despite my best efforts to determine how this plan will affect my hobby and community, I am not at all confident I fully understand what the final impact of the plan will be. As someone who spends most of my recreational time in the deserts and lives in the Antelope Valley, the DRECP is poised to affect my lifestyle significantly. To say I have found the document overwhelming would be a complete understatement. Even if I had equivalent of a full time job to devote to trying to understand and evaluate the entire plan, I doubt I could have done so in the time allotted. That having been said and being out of time, I offer the following comments.

I enjoy our public desert lands. I enjoy the solitude, the scenic beauty, the wild flowers, the critters and the rocks. My children spent a significant amount of time in the desert. We camped, rode dirt bikes/atv's, explored, collected and rocks with family and friends. My children learned respect for nature and about the plants, history, animals and minerals of the desert. I recommend the Final Plan focus energy on private lands rather than public lands so future generations can recreate in California Deserts as well.

ERMA:

The effort that went into coming up with the Preferred Alternative is apparent. I support the proposed Extensive Recreational Management Areas (ERMA) in the Preferred Alternate Plan. However, ERMAS do not appear in any of the alternate plans. I request the ERMAS in the preferred alternative be included in the Final EIR/EIS plan.

RECREATION MITIGATION:

I applaud developers for proposing mitigation requirements for impacts to recreation. The recreational activity I enjoy is collecting rocks and minerals. This activity requires access collecting areas which exist where they are. This recreation, Rockhounding, is not widely recognized, although thousands of people enjoy it. I recommend Rockhounds be consulted for ideas on how to specifically mitigate loss of our recreation for the Final Plan. Although I am no expert, as mitigation I would suggest re-opening roads that have been closed to our collecting areas, such a the road in the attached photo. This is a popular collecting area off Mule Canyon Road in the Calico Mountains. Many in our group the day this photo was taken, including myself due to a recently broken ankle, could not walk up and/or down the closed road to the collecting area and therefore were unable to participate.

NCLS:

I find the National Landscape Conservation System Lands most difficult to analyze. There are many rock collecting areas on lands labeled as NLCS lands. I can't determine what will happen to them under the plan. The plan is vague and ambiguous as to how these lands will be managed, what restrictions may be imposed if private lands are acquired under the plans. I am most concerned by the wording "Future travel management planning will emphasize travel on routes that provide for the enjoyment and enhancement of the ecological, cultural and scientific values for which individual units are designated or necessary administrative access to conserve, protect and restore area values." Recreation was completely omitted. I recommend recreation be added to this language in the Final Plan. Additionally, I request the language "more restrictive shall apply" be removed from the CMA's for the NCLS lands as this language essentially obliterates any protection of recreations routes.

CPA:

Some rockhounding sites and/or roads to them appear to be located on private property within Conservation Planning Areas. As I understand it, these lands may be purchased with fees paid by developers and then could be closed by the agencies that administer the CPA's. I request that if and when private land is acquired in CPA areas, the existing OHV routes that lead into routes on public lands, campsites, staging areas, trailheads remain open and that any rock/mineral sites remain accessible.

ACEC

Recreational rockhounding has been negatively affected by ACEC designations in the past. I applaud the language in many of the ACEC worksheets which includes Rockhounding as a allowed recreational use. However, I am not confident the CMA's for the new ACEC's will not negatively affect rockhounding even in those that allow Rockhounding as an value, by closing roads to collecting sites. Of specific concern is the language in the worksheets will provides for "limited off-highway vehicle use", but does not state ON DESIGNATED TRAILS. I recommend adding ON DESIGNATED TRAILS to the language in the ACEC worksheets in the Final Plan.

I also recommend including Rockhounding as an allowable use the in the Indian Pass ACEC.

SRMA

I support the use of SRMAs in the Preferred Alternative to protect public lands with recreational value from renewable energy. However, several known rock / mineral collecting sites are not located within a proposed SRMA or ERMA. Some lie within ACECs and/or NCLS designations. The CMA's for these ACEC and/or NCLS lands may restrict or preclude activities and may negatively affect rockhounding as a recreational activity by closing or limiting routes. Accordingly, in an effort to protect Rockhounding as a recreational activity, I support additional SRMAs in the Anton Canyon, Yuha Basin, Kramer Junction and Surlian Valley areas

Additionally, I recommend the following SRMA expansions:

Hauser Geode Beds - expand the Mule Mountain SRMA/ERMA to encompass the entire area covered under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BLM and CFMS.

Lavic and Jasper Hill: Please expand the National Trails Viewshed SRMA to include this collecting area.

Yermo- see below

DFA

The following rock collecting areas are located within a DFA. These areas have been a favorite for over 50 years. The close proximity to urban areas and easy access has makes these 3 spots a favorite field trip for Gem and Mineral Clubs. One club from Santa Clarita brings girls scouts to these areas where they collect material they use to earn several badges. I request they be removed from a DFA in the Final Plan and the DFAs be redesigned with a 1000' buffer that includes access roads to these sites. (also see attached maps)

Gem Hill-Township 10 N, Range 13 W, Sections 26, 27, 34 & 35

Lonely Butte-Township 10 N, Range 11 W, Sections 2, 3, 10, & 11.

Born dry lakes and vicinity- one club holds a valid claim for travertine on public land in this area. There is collecting at numerous spots throughout this area and yet more to be found without doubt. Please remove any and all of the area East of California City Boulevard, West of the 395, North of the 58 Frwy and South of Twenty Mule Team Road from the DFA in this area. NOTE: There are also lands designated as "Study Areas" within this plot. I request that those two study areas be removed from consideration for anything but recreation.

Stoddard Wells- T11N to the 15 freeway, R1W to R3W up to the southern boundary of the Stoddard OHV area. Please remove this area from the DFA from this collecting area.

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.

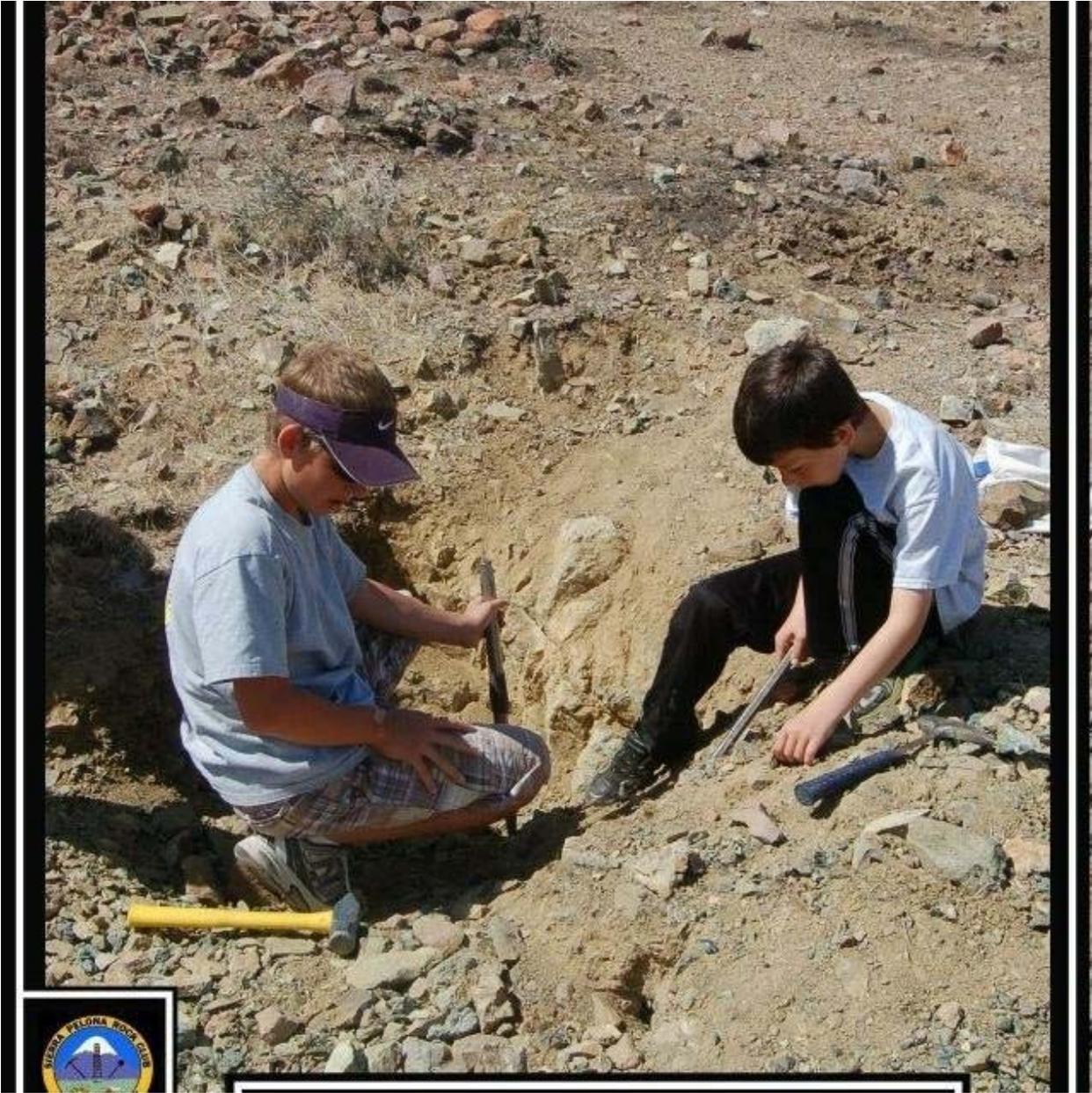
Submitted by: Ruth Hidalgo
Member Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Club
Member: Tehachapi Gem & Mineral Club
Member: Sierra Pelona Rock Club
Member: Corva
Member: American Lands Access Association (ALAA)
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Closed road to Silver Lace Onyx
collecting spot many older and disabled rockhounds cannot access. Opening roads like this may
serve as a mitigation measure for lost recreation.



Gem Hill / Brown Butte 05.19.2012



Photos from one of our many club field trips to Gem Hill & Brown Butte which are in a focus area of the Preferred Alternate of the DRECP Plan.

