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<th><strong>Docket Number:</strong></th>
<th>20-LITHIUM-01</th>
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<td><strong>Project Title:</strong></td>
<td>Lithium Valley Commission</td>
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<td><strong>TN #:</strong></td>
<td>240766</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Document Title:</strong></td>
<td>Transcript for 11-17-21 Lithium Valley Commission Community Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong></td>
<td>Transcript of Lithium Valley Commission Community Forum held on November 17, 2021.</td>
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<td><strong>Filer:</strong></td>
<td>Erica Loza</td>
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<td><strong>Organization:</strong></td>
<td>California Energy Commission</td>
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<td><strong>Submitter Role:</strong></td>
<td>Commission Staff</td>
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<td><strong>Submission Date:</strong></td>
<td>12/2/2021 9:16:10 AM</td>
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CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION

In the matter of:
Forum Presentation
_________________________

LITHIUM VALLEY COMMISSION

REMOTE VIA ZOOM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2021
6:00 P.M.

Reported by:
Martha Nelson

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Martha Guzman-Aceves
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Stephanie White
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Ronald Spears
Ivette Torres
Maria Nava-Froelich, Calipatria City Council
Luis Lopez
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CHAIR PAZ: Welcome everyone. We’re going to give it a few minutes, as people log into the webinar. Okay.

Hi everyone. Welcome to the Lithium Valley Commission community forum. The intent of the forum really grew out of conversations with community leaders wanting to learn more about the Lithium Valley Commission, what our purpose was, and address general questions around lithium and the lithium opportunity at the Salton Sea.

So the intention of this meeting is to provide the opportunity to learn about opportunities and challenges to lithium development from geothermal brine in the Salton Sea region, for the community to share their thoughts and ask questions about what matters most to them and their communities, and to connect with the State’s Lithium Valley Commission and Assembly Member Eduardo Garcia, and the California Energy Commission staff.

Next slide, please.

As you’ll notice, we are offering
interpretation services in Spanish and Purepecha for today’s forum. The CEC’s Public Advisor will now speak in Spanish to inform our Spanish-speaking audience about the need to select the Spanish channel if they prefer to listen to this meeting in Spanish. There is an interpreter in the Spanish channel interpreting everything said in English into Spanish. There is also an interpreter in the Purepecha channel interpreting everything said in English into Purepecha.

And at this point I will invite our CEC Public Advisor.

PUBLIC ADVISOR GALLARDO: Hello. This is Noemi Gallardo. Can you hear me clearly?

CHAIR PAZ: Yes, Noemi. Thank you.

PUBLIC ADVISOR GALLARDO: All right. I will begin.

[Translating instructions from English into Spanish]

PUBLIC ADVISOR GALLARDO: All right. I have concluded the instructions.

MS. DE JONG: Pardon me, Chair Paz. You’re on mute.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

If you’re joining us today via smartphone
or tablet, you may need to find the three dots or more button to navigate to the interpretation options. Again, all attendees should select a channel, either English, Spanish, or Purepecha. All members of the public in the English, Spanish, and Purepecha channels will be given the same opportunity to engage in the question and answer session, and in public comment at the end of the agenda.

The interpreter will provide instructions to those in the Spanish and Purepecha channels to be sure that all attendees can use the raise-hand feature and be called on to speak. The interpreter will assist and translate the questions or public comment into English for the benefit of the Commissioners and attendees in the English channel.

Unfortunately, the Zoom interpretation function does not work for attendees who are only joining by phone, so our attendees on the phone will hear the English channel of this meeting. The Spanish and Purepecha channels are intended to provide members of the public the ability to hear the entire dialogue of the Lithium Commission meeting in Spanish or
Purepecha in real time. To ensure that all
members of the public have access to the meeting
under Bagley-Keene, we ask that all of the
Lithium Valley Commissioners select and remain on
the English channel for the entirety of the
meeting, preferably with cameras on.

All attendees who wish to join the
English channel, please look for the small glove
icon on the bottom of your Zoom application and
select the English channel. Do not select mute
original audio.

Also, please note that the slides include
some text in Spanish which is highlighted in
light gray. However, we do not have the
PowerPoint slides translated into Purepecha, so
we do apologize for that.

I will now hand it over to Elisabeth from
the CEC who will go over some administrative
items.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you so much, Chair
Paz. Would you like to go through the physical
locations --

CHAIR PAZ: Oh.

MS. DE JONG: -- for the sites?

CHAIR PAZ: Yes. Perfect. Yeah. Thank
you.

So we do have four physical locations that are joining the Zoom meeting. The physical sites were offered by Assemblymember Garcia, Imperial County, Comite Civico Del Valle, and Alianza Coachella Valley. The locations are available for in-person attendance. And, again, they are the Imperial County Administration Center, the Calipatria Community Center, the North Shore Beach and Yacht Club, the City of Coachella Corporate Yard. Thank you for everyone who’s helping host these in-person meetings.

There will be Spanish interpretation services at each of the locations. Attendees at the locations will be able to participate during the Q&A and public comment by following instructions from the in-room host. For those attendees who want Purepecha interpreting, please join the Zoom on an electronic device, either like a computer or a tablet, so that you can hear the interpreter.

Please be patient with us today. This is the first hybrid meeting that the Lithium Commission has.

And now, I will transfer it over to
Elisabeth for some administrative guidance.

MS. DE JONG: They, Chair Paz.

This meeting is being conducted remotely via Zoom and, as mentioned by Chair Paz, there are also the physical location sites. This means that we’re in separate locations and communicating via Zoom. Attendees of the physical locations will be able to participate over Zoom with guidance from the in-room hosts.

We are meeting in this fashion, consistent with Assembly Bill 36 -- sorry, 361 to improve and enhance public access to state agency meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to allow broader access through teleconferencing options.

This meeting is being recorded, as well as transcribed by a court reporter. The transcript will be posted to the electronic docket. The recording of the meeting will be available on the Lithium Valley Commission webpage. Neither the Spanish or Purepecha interpretations will be recorded or transcribed.

Members of the public will be muted during the presentation. But there will be an opportunity for a question and answer discussion with the Lithium Valley Commissioners and a
public comment period. To participate in the
question and answer discussion or provide public
comment, please use the raise-hand feature in
your Zoom application to be called on to speak.
When you speak, please provide your name and
affiliation.

If you’ve called in by phone, you will
need to dial star nine to raise your hand and
then star six to un-mute yourself. Before
speaking, please say and spell your name for the
court reporter.

There is also a Q&A window in the Zoom
application which you may use to type your
questions. If you want to provide public comment
but are unable to raise your hand in the Zoom
application or by phone, then during the public
comment portion of the meeting, you may type your
comment into the Q&A window so we can relay your
comments.

We’ll go over these instructions again
during the time for question and answer and
public comment. Please remember to stay muted
until you’ve been called on to speak.

We also have a chat function available
for any IT support. We ask that the Lithium
Valley Commissioners use the chat only for IT support. As well, any other comments are considered substantive to the conversation and should be made publicly and orally for Bagley-Keene compliance.

Meeting materials, including the notice, presentation slide, and any other meetings documents are posted online and in the Lithium Valley Commission docket.

I’ll turn it back to you, Chair Paz.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Elisabeth.

Next slide, please.

The agenda today will be as follows. We will start with a welcome and opening remarks by Assemblymember Garcia. We will do an introduction of the Lithium Valley Commissioners. Then there will be presentations and a conversation. We have two presentations, one giving an overview on the Lithium Valley Commission, another one giving an overview of lithium recovery from geothermal brine, and then a conversation around the potential regional and community benefits and impacts from the development of lithium.

That will be followed by a Q&A session.
with the Lithium Valley Commissioners. The Q&A
session is slightly different from the public
comment period. During the Q&A session we are
going to be inviting people to ask a question,
and there will be time, unlike during public
comment period, there will be time for the
Commissioners to be able to answer and address
some of those questions.

Then there will be a general public
comment period before we close the forum today.

Thank you. Next slide, please.

So now it is my pleasure to introduce our
Assemblymember, who not only has been a champion
for, you know, the Salton Sea region and its
needs, also on the climate front, and is the
author of the bill that established the Lithium
Valley Commission.

So Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia,
welcome, and I’ll hand it over to you.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GARCIA: Hello. Buenos
noches. Good evening, everyone. It’s great to
be with you this evening to engage, not just the
folks that that we typically get to talk to. At
the Lithium Valley Commission hearings, as you
all know, our team has been intimately involved
at every one of those meetings, starting this past February. It’s hard to imagine that we’re almost at the one-year mark that this Commission has gotten together and the work that, I hope everyone feels, is coming together.

I’ll just say that it’s so important that we’re having this conversation given that, at every single meeting since February to present time, we’ve seen greater and greater interest and participation from members of our community who want to be directly engaged on this issue of lithium and the possibility of development. And clearly understanding, how does it benefit them? How does it benefit the direct residents and communities surrounding the Salton Sea? And how does it improve opportunities for Salton Sea mitigation and restoration? All great questions that I would imagine are going to come up today.

And with those who are here with us today, whether they be from specific agencies of the state, private-sector investors who are developing the geothermal energy and then shifting into the lithium recovery component, along with our community-based organizations, both outside of the Lithium Valley Commission and
those inside of the Lithium Valley Commission, which is the uniqueness of this body.

Given that this bill and the purpose of it was to empower our community to have a seat at the table and not just be at the table but clearly have decision-making authority to give recommendations to the state legislature on what direction to take if, in fact, we come to the conclusion that this opportunity could benefit the community.

I see this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the community to drive what could be one of the most important decisions to be made as it relates to the Salton Sea, as it relates to the economy and the circumstances of Easter Riverside County, and the entire area of Imperial County.

And I don’t think it was by accident that the makeup of the Commission has a diverse group of folks, again, from private sector to those who are involved in the economics of it, our state agency representatives, and for me, more important, tribal members, community membership from our NGOs who are experts, in my opinion, in community advocacy and outreach. And at the same
time, we have organizations that represent local
environmental and environmental justice interests
in our communities.

I’m excited for today’s conversation.

I’ve also been following the discussions going
back to February when the Commission first
convened and had a number of conversations about
the role of the Commission, the CEC staff that
will provide the technical assistance. In March,
we talked about the structure of the Commission
and the topics that could potentially come up.
In April, you all broke into some subcommittees
to look at various areas of these questions. And
in there, I know, there was conversations about
the environmental impacts

And in all of those discussions we’ve
seen more and more interest from our community
residents saying, hey, we want to be involved.
Although we may not be on the Commission, we want
to be engaged to better understand what is going
to happen.

In May, we had a presentation from the
Commissioner of this Commission, as well as the
CEC, to talk about the roles of the subcommittees
and the work moving forward.
In June, we talked to industry and heard from them in terms of the opportunities to not only recover lithium but develop and entire A through Z supply chain that could really transform the economic and job opportunities for our region, including our educational institutions.

In July, you went over the methods of what this recovery of lithium looks like that is very different than what we know happens in Chile, that happens in Australia, that happens in China.

I know that in August, you focused on the issue of geothermal and the permitting process, the land use aspects of it, energy resource infrastructure planning.

In September you focused on other opportunities for the Commission.

And this past October the Commissioner invited some outside environmental stakeholders to talk about how this could or could not be of benefit to the region. And although I have some opinions on how that conversation went I’ll, for now, just say that I believe that if the presentation of this being not a good thing for
the community, that the Lithium Valley Commission
explore those comments and statements and either
address them with data-driven facts or, for that
matter, agree with them and say, hey, then we are
spinning our wheels and this isn’t something that
we want to see happen in our community.

I have my opinion. I will reserve that
for later in the conversation if it happens to
present itself. But I can tell you this, is that
I believe that we are at a critical point.

And this conversation was brought up in
Glasgow, Scotland at the Climate Change
Conference as the entire world is looking to
transition into a clearer and greener economy,
and at the forefront it happens to be our
transportation system. And all eyes are on
California, and not just looking at our climate
change policies but our electric vehicles
policies that will help transform that will help
transform how we do things in California and
improve the environment

But, furthermore, all eyes are on what’s
being referred to as Lithium Valley, our
community, our homes where we grew up, where
we’ve seen a tremendous amount of challenges
historically, and that many of us have decided to
take on this task to try to change for the
better, for our kids, our great grandkids, and
for many, many generations to come.

Those of you who are on the Lithium
Valley Commission have been appointed and
empowered to help us make this decision, to make
some recommendations on how this may or may not
work in the interests of those who live in and
around the Salton Sea, the Imperial County,
Eastern Riverside County, the state of California
and, quite candidly, for our country and the
entire world.

All eyes are on us in terms of what we
decide to do here. And what’s important to me is
that the Commission use its power to engage the
community every step of the way. We are in the
early stages of determining how this all plays
out. And so the community, who has been involved
since February to present time, should know that
they are part of this decision-making endeavor
that we are all participating in.

And with that, I’ll just say thank you to
everyone responsible for bringing us together
logistically. I know that it wasn’t easy, the
selected sites, the technical expertise to be able to make sure that things run smooth, that we can see you, you can hear us. And that we’re also, at the same time, adhering to the safety, you know, measures that remain in place to keep everyone safe from COVID-19.

And so I’m going to be here until the last minute of this meeting. I’m looking forward to this conversation.

And just want to remind, you know, everyone that’s here with us today that the Lithium Valley Commission was set up as an avenue for our community and community members to be able to help make some determinations and make some clear decisions on where we want to go. We don’t want Sacramento, San Francisco, and other parts of the state telling us how we should develop opportunities in our own back yard.

Quite on the contrary.

I think we’re in a unique opportunity to tell the state and the country, this is how we can do this, do it right, and make sure that the people who live and around the Salton Sea, the shareholders that I call, the shareholders benefit directly from this opportunity
With that, I’ll yield my time. And it’s good to see some of you that I can see in the images but I look forward to this conversation and, certainly, many, many more.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Assemblymember Garcia.

And I also want to recognize and acknowledge the support that the Lithium Valley Commission receives from the CEC staff. And they are present both in the background and with Elisabeth helping at the forefront. And we will also have some Commissioners from the CEC joining us later. So, again, I want to acknowledge and thank them for their support.

Next slide, please. Oh, I think that’s where we are.

At this point, we’re moving to the introductions of the Lithium Valley Commissioners. And as Assemblymember Garcia mentioned about the Commissioners, the criteria for the selections of the Commissioners was set forth in the bill that Assemblymember authored. The Lithium Valley Commission is comprised of 14 members, representing a wide range of expertise and interests. The Energy Commission appointed
nine members with the remaining appointments made the California Public Utilities Commission, the Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, the Senate Committee on Rules, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Governor.

We will now be moving to Lithium Valley Commissioner introductions, along with the Chair and Vice Chair introductions. And on the screen, you’re able to see the list of the members who will be introducing themselves.

I do, also, want to make mention that some Commissioners may not be able to join us today, and others might just be getting here a little bit late.

But for the purposes of the introduction, I would like to invite the Commissioners, as they are introducing themselves and, you know, the agencies or organizations that they represent, if they can also briefly speak to either the interest or the expertise that they’re bringing into the Lithium Valley Commission, just for the purpose of the community members to get to know us a little bit more.

So I’ll start. My name is Silvia Paz. I am -- I was elected the Chair of the Lithium
Valley Commission, but I work full-time. I’m the Founder and Executive Director of Alianza Coachella Valley. We are a nonprofit advocacy coalition working with various community members on issues of environments justice and the Salton Sea, as well as education and youth leadership.

I was appointed by the Governor. And my interest in Lithium Valley really comes at the juncture of, you know, the ability to develop lithium, this resource, in an environmentally friendly way, as well as the opportunity to be able to leverage the benefits of this resource to stay within the community, so in the form of better jobs, and being able to see more economic opportunities for the community surrounding the Salton Sea.

Thank you. If Vice Chair Ryan Kelley has joined us, I would like to invite him to introduce himself.

Okay, I do not see him, so I will move to Commissioner Castaneda.

COMMISSIONER CASTANEDA: Well, thank you very much, Chair Paz and Assemblymember. Thank you very much for your foresight and your leadership in terms of establishing a community-
based group that will look at this important issue. And you know, as you said, I think, and very, very eloquently, all eyes are on us. Since I’ve been involved in the Commission for the last several months, there have been news articles and various press segments from all over this country and I’m sure the rest of the world is watching our work. And it is an awesome and a humbling opportunity to serve.

I want to talk a little bit about myself. I don’t live in the Imperial or Coachella Valleys. I live in Chula Vista, California. But my family owned a business, a family business, in Brawley for many years. And we have a lot of friends, a lot of associates that still live there. But even before that, as a young child, my grandfather used to take me to the Salton Sea fishing. And it was quite a vibrant area. We always got a lot of good fish and always had a great time. But over the years we saw the systematic degradation of that beautiful resource.

And so when the opportunity came before me to apply for this Commission, it really struck
a heart chord for me to have an opportunity to be
on a panel that could have a significant and
influential opportunity and a place to rejuvenate
and to renovate and so just sort of bring this
sea back to its original luster, and I take that
very, very seriously.

I have served in many political
capacities in the County of San Diego. At the
City of San Diego, I was a Transportation and
Land Use Committee consultant for a number of
years to the city council and to the mayor. I
was a two-term city councilmember in my own city
of Chula Vista. And now I serve as a director on
our water district, the Sweetwater Authority.

And in each and every one of those
responsibilities, I’ve had to look at issues like
this. And as you said, Assemblymember, weigh the
positives versus those impacts that may not bear
fruit for the community. And I clearly have a
very keen eye on that.

And so I appreciate you establishing this
Commission. I appreciate the opportunity. And I
appreciate the opportunity to listen to our
community and to understand, what are the goals,
and what are the priorities, and what is
important, and look forward to completing our work.

Thank you, Chair Paz.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Steve.

Rod? Commissioner Colwell?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Yeah. Thank you, Chair Paz, for the opportunity. And it certainly is a privilege to speak on behalf of Controlled Thermal Resources. And a special thank you to Assemblymember Garcia, you know, for his efforts and hard work to pull this together, but really, you know, Steve just touched on this wonderfully.

So speaking on behalf of a developer, we’re developing the Hell’s Kitchen Lithium Power Project at the moment in Imperial Valley. And you know, I think just walking through the sort of steps of where we’re heading, I mean, 2011 is when I first arrived at the Salton Sea and, clearly, from Australia as you’ve probably figured out. I’ve spent of my time in Imperial Valley which is great. And like my wife says, I travel halfway around the world to go to a place where I grew up. You know, it’s much the same, agriculture and the whole bit.

So 2011 is, you know, those of you have
been down to Red Hill Bay, you could launch a
boat at that point down there. And you know,
since then the sea has receded probably another
mile or so. We’ve seen that side of things.

We’ve also seen the development of this
lithium brine opportunity as really an extension
of existing geothermal, which existing
geothermal, I believe, has been in operation now
successfully for 39 years, you know, very, very
clean electricity. It’s the same process. You
know, the lithium process is in a closed-loop
system. There’s no evaporation ponds. There’s
no emissions to the air. There’s no toxic nature
with this. It is, truly, the cleanest lithium, I
believe, on the planet, really.

And I think the opportunities the
Assemblymember was alluding to is connecting the
supply chain, you know, to Imperial Valley. It’s
not just the opportunity -- the opportunity is
not just about trying to produce a clean green
lithium product and then move it to Asia for
processing or moving it somewhere else. The
opportunity is actually about how many links can
we remove from the supply chain.

For those of you who don’t know, there
was a recent public announcement by General Motors with their arrangement and deal and investment in our business. And the reason Mary Barra made that decision on behalf of General Motors and their exceptional team is because of their acclaimed energy credentials and how they are looking for clean sustainable sourcing instead of hard rock mining or evaporation ponds out of Chile that you may all read about. This is the cleanest way to do it.

Now the opportunity really is, beyond my job on the Commission, is trying to relay the opportunity to it, not only as a developer but, also, how can we attract a cathode or battery cell manufacture to collocate in the state of California instead of going to Georgia or, rose, heading over to, you know, Southern Asia or China.

So I think GM has really been a testament to that. You know, they thoroughly looked at the technology and understood how clean and green it is. And really sort of thinking about this as an extension of existing geothermal, again, it’s visually no difference. There’s definitely no -- it’s benign when it comes to any environments
impacts whatsoever. And you know, I’m truly
excited to be and privileged to part of this
Commission to do the best I can to in an open
manner to deal with everything from community,
local government, state, federal, and global
interests. As Assemblymember touched on from COP
26, this is real.

And I’ll just close in saying the
opportunity window closes in 2024. That’s what
we have, we have this opportunity to deliver now
because Detroit and big auto are basically at a
point where they need to make decisions now and
they need to get on with it. Otherwise, they’ll
basically go to other locations.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner
Colwell.

Commission Dolega?

COMMISSIONER DOLEGA: Yeah. Hi
everybody. And I sit in one of the OEMs that Rod
was talking about, so I’ve been at Ford for ten
years in our Purchasing Group, and I work with
our cell -- Global Cell Purchasing Team, and I
look at the raw materials, including lithium. So
this is, obviously, an interesting topic.
As we talk about localization or bringing different parts of the value chain to the U.S. away from Asian to collocate here with all the cell factories that are going up, the raw material portion is important. So very interested in the Salton Sea area and the developments for U.S.-based lithium.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Flores?

COMMISSIONER FLORES: Yes. Good evening, everyone. I’m Miranda Flores here. And I was appointed by the Secretary of Natural Resources Agency where I am currently, also, the Legislative Deputy Secretary. And really, you know, the Natural Resources Agency has been mitigating -- having efforts to mitigate areas of the Salton Sea for, gosh, a very long time. And really, we’re here to make sure and protect the interest of, you know, the ecology and all of that, and the communities that are a part of the Lithium Valley.

So thanks so much.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Guzman-Acevas?
COMMISSIONER GUZMAN-ACEVAS: Thank you, Chair Paz. And good evening to everybody. My name is Martha Guzman-Acevas. I’m one of the Commissioners, also another Commissioner at the California Public Utilities Commission. And our role here is, really, twofold.

The most important role is that we direct what types of energy generation utilities, private utilities, should procure, should buy. And we recently did order the utilities to buy, essentially, 1,000 megawatts of geothermal statewide. And so some of our mandates for procuring energy to get us to 100 percent clean energy will require greater geothermal production. And this region of the state is one of those opportunity areas, not the only one but a very important one. So that’s one of my most critical roles here.

And, of course, the other piece of what the Commission, the PUC Commission does, is we also direct the procurement of a lot of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and a lot of electric storage. And both of those require a lot of lithium.

So we’re very excited about the prospect
of our orders requiring greater electricity storage and electric vehicle charging infrastructure which, ultimately, requires more electric vehicles, but particularly the electric storage dependency on lithium coming from the valley.

So I look forward to all the dialogue and the questions and I’m glad to be here today.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Hanks?

COMMISSIONER HANKS: Yes. This is Jim Hanks. I represent the IID, currently the Board President, and selected by CEC to serve as a representative for a utility district.

My interests in the known geothermal area began years ago. I am a valley native, lived in Imperial Valley 76 years, served as the Superintendent of Schools in the Calipatria Unified District, which includes Niland and Bombay Beach, for 20 years. During that time I was -- had the opportunity to negotiate a tax break for the local geothermal.

When the first mineral extraction came in, which was a zinc project, it was very valuable to the school district. We had always
been a state agency. At the time, our assessed valuation of our homes average was $21,000, this was in the mid-1980s, which made it very difficult to pass a bond with sufficient funds to take care of the school facilities that were in dire shape.

And with the addition of the zinc coming in, it moved us to a Basic A district. And to try to promote as much growth as possible, we negotiated a tax break with the geothermal industry in the hopes that mineral extraction would continue. But the markets went south and that was put on hold.

Upon retiring from the Calipatria School District, I carried with me to the IID a knowledge and an understanding of the potential of the known geothermal resource, particularly the minerals that were available. And it’s been a struggle for 15 years to push that to the forefront but never gave up hope, made numerous trips to Washington D.C., to Sacramento, in trying to bring attention to the value of the area.

So I’m excited and honored to be a part of this Commission. I know that we have a task
placed on our shoulders to carry back what the possibility is for California, also let our -- any negative impacts that may have to be mitigated, and also the benefits shared of a knowledge of the benefits that come to the area.

We passed a bond without any resistance from the geothermal industry. At that time, they represented 70 percent of our tax base and we were able to rebuild the Calipatria Unified School District and maintain excellent facilities for our children there.

So I’m looking forward to not only the electrical generation potential out there, and the minerals, but also the ancillary services that will be developed, come about, that will give good paying jobs to our people, restore our middle class, and also provide a future for our many students who have, over the years, have had to leave our community to pursue their interests or their education and their training in other communities.

So I’ll leave it at that and thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner Hanks.
Commissioner Arthur Lopez is not able to
join us today, so I will call on Commissioner
Luis Olmedo.

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: Well, thank you,
Madam Chair. This is Luis Olmedo. I am both a
Commissioner under the assignment of representing
disadvantaged communities, but I’m also -- and my
day job is the Executive Director of Comite
Civico del Valle, a native-based organization.

I, first of all, want to issue some
thanks to the Assemblymember Garcia for his
vision in bringing together other stakeholders,
as he well and very eloquently presented it, and
for once in our lifetime being able to put
together a Commission where there is
participation and representation of multiple
stakeholders, in particular, to the community and
the disadvantaged representation, and the
environmental justice.

I also want to thank Cesar Chavez for her
Sylvia Chavez for her role helping set up the
logistics here at the Calipatria location where –
it’s where I’m at now. So I want to thank my
Noemi Gallardo again for her technical
assistance, for her continued support in helping
assure that the community is participating and engaged in this phenomenal opportunity that is before us, so thank you, Noemi. And you see her name on it. I’m actually borrowing her computer, so thank you for that, as well.

I also want to recognize Huston Hisel, the Mayor. Thank you for being here and, as well, Maria Froelich for being here, both Councilmembers and Mayor. And, as well, Sylvia Chavez, who is also a Councilmember here in Calipatria.

And I want to thank all the community here in the North End of Imperial Valley, but also all those who came from throughout the Imperial County. One of my goals and my purpose here is to make sure that I bring a meaningful voice and, at every opportunity, assure that the community participates in a meaningful way, and that they are helping guide and elevate the issues of priorities to the community.

We have seen many large-scale projects, especially around the renewables, that have sort of been fly-by-night, create a lot of enthusiasm but very shortly the enthusiasm where jobs are created in a very short term.
I’d also like to see that -- make sure that the community has a voice when it comes to the economic benefits that could come from this new industry, but also the industry that has been here for many decades which is the geothermal. I think that industry gets a second opportunity to restructure, perhaps even rebuild, in how they invest in the communities.

Also recognizing the fenceline communities that are closest to the known resource area, but also to elevate the reality that a lot of these resources currently sought out are in the hands of the public’s interests.

So I am very grateful to the fact that this table was created. And I, again, I’m here in my role as a Commissioner, not to necessarily just speak my mind but to be a messenger and to be able to create more participation from our community.

I want to thank all those who participated, including Madam Chair Paz, for -- and the Assemblymember’s Office, as well, for putting together the venues in both Imperial and the Coachella area and creating these spaces for the community.
But with that said, I want to, again, thanks to the entire California Energy Commission Staff for helping us, again, put these community meetings, and I hope it’s the first of many to come.

One last thank you, and I know I’m utilizing more of my time to issue thank yous, well deserved thank yous, because I think that we need to bring in a positive, enthusiastic environment, but I want to thank all of those who are participating because you are an important voice in this process.

And we hope that as we get into the meat of the conversation that we’re able to hear you, but also at the same time is to be able to break down those conversations that perhaps may not necessarily be the day-to-talk, right, but we can do everything that we can to make sure that we are helping bridge that communication between the technical, the scientific, but also the opportunities both on assuring there is a safe process of moving forward in these industries, and as well as the economic opportunities are there.

But, finally, thank you to my team. I’m
only one person. I want to thank all, each and 
every one of my colleagues, my partners. I don’t 
often use staff, but just for a reference point, 
for all the work that they put in to making sure 
that we had a good facility and logistics. And 
thank you to the City of Calipatria and their 
staff.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Ruiz?

COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Hi everyone. My name 
is Frank Ruiz. I am the Salton Sea Program 
Director for the Audubon Society. Some of you 
may not know or may not be familiar with the 
Audubon Society. We are the bird people.

First of all, I want to thank the 
California Energy Commission and everyone that 
decided to take the time to be informed, to 
participate in this important discussion.

I was appointed to represent the 
environmental groups. And my role is to provide 
the questions and elevated concerns of possible 
environmental impacts as a result of the lithium 
recovery. We already live in an area that is 
highly stressed with high levels of pollutants.
And ecosystems, like the Salton Sea that is on the brink of major ecological collapse.

In California, we’ve lost over 97 percent of the wetlands. And the Salton Sea is one of the last standing habitat that’s along the Pacific Flyway, used by millions of birds in their migratory journey from Alaska all the way to Argentina.

If all is done well, this is a unique opportunity to bring benefits to the local communities, provide much needed clean energy in geothermal, lithium, and bring direct and indirect benefits to the Salton Sea, so I want to thank everyone for taking the time.

And thank you, Chairman Pass.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Scott? I do not see him.

Commissioner Soto?

MS. DE JONG: Not in attendance.

CHAIR PAZ: Okay. thank you.

So Commissioner Weisgall?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Good evening.

thank you, Chair.

My name is Jonathan Weisgall. I’m Vice President for Government Relations at Berkshire
Hathaway Energy. I was appointed by the Energy Commission to serve on the Commission.

I want to join the others in thanking Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia for his leadership in seeing the need for this Commission and his leadership on these issues affecting the community.

My company, Berkshire Hathaway, started about 35-plus years ago called Cal Energy. We still identify as Cal Energy. We’ve got ten geothermal plants we’ve been running in Imperial County, Calipatria for the last 35 years. We started as a small company. I’ve been part of the company for 29 years, I guess. My training background is as a lawyer.

Jim Hanks talked about the school district. Our company, we’re very proud members of the Imperial Valley community. We’ve got a workforce of more than 200 employees, all with very good paying jobs. And we’ve paid $45 million in property taxes over the last eight years which have gone exclusively for local development.

Can we produce battery-grade lithium from the geothermal at the Salton Sea known geothermal
resource? Yes, we can. But there are two big challenges. Can we do it in an environmentally responsible and commercially viable way? Those are the challenges.

The benefits, we all know the demographics of Imperial County, the second highest unemployment rate historically of any county in the entire United States, low educational achievement, many of the jobs in the agricultural sector. The benefit, the opportunity here, is really for, I guess I would just say, for upward mobility. It starts with a good education, and then a good job, a job that you want to go to every morning. And we hope that we can offer more of those with lithium development.

We are already funding schools, not just through taxes but through donations, schools in Imperial County for young kids and students at Imperial Valley College. We want to encourage them to take STEM courses and prepare for good paying jobs in clean energy in Imperial County. So that’s the benefit.

And I guess, Sylvia, you wanted -- Chair Paz, you wanted to know our areas of expertise.
We’re developers. But my passion is workforce development and economic opportunities in the clean energy sector.

Thanks very much.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you for that. Thank you to all the Commissioners for introducing yourselves. I think it’s important. You know, the public has been asking about hearing from the Commission. And I think it’s important for them to know who we are, what we represent, and the uniqueness of this Commission as we all bring different perspectives to this conversation.

I do want to acknowledge that there are several comments regarding making sure that we get to public comment. We will get to public comment as delineated in the agenda.

So now we will move on to some of the presentations briefly. I have one of them, the first one. I’ll move through it as quickly as possible so we can get to the Q&A and the public comment.

So here is a little bit about how the Lithium Valley Commission has structured ourselves so that we can address the various topics that were delineated in AB 1657. So we
have topics, I will not read them all, they’re on
the screen, but each of those topics is being led
by two Commissioners. And the Commissioners
prepare workshops that are then discussed in the
public meetings.

Let’s see. Assemblymember. A little bit
about Assemblymember -- Assembly Bill 1657, as I
mentioned, was authored by Assemblymember Eduardo
Garcia. And it was approved by the Governor, by
Governor Newsom, in 2020. It charges the Lithium
Valley Commission with reviewing, investigating,
and analyzing certain issues and potential
incentives regarding lithium extraction and use
in California.

The Lithium Valley Commission, as was
mentioned earlier, convened in February of 2021.
It holds monthly public meetings. And Ab 1657
requires the Lithium Valley Commission to submit
on or before October 1st, 2022 a report to the
legislature documenting its findings and
recommendations.

Again, there were some comments on the
chat about, you know, we cannot move forward
without knowing the implications of lithium and
lithium extraction. That is precisely what this
Commission has been tasked to do, to look at various -- it’s really an exploration in looking at the possibilities and the impacts of lithium extraction from the Salton Sea region.

The Lithium Valley Commission, in March of 2021, had a discussion around our vision. And during that discussion we, you know, recognized that there is potential from geothermal brine from the Salton Sea region and it could address a critical need for growth in the supply of lithium and renewable energy.

It’s also important for this Commission that we can leverage, if this resource is going to be available and, you know, we can get it to market, that we leverage the opportunities in the communities where the resource is coming from; right? So the potential of establishing a geothermal and lithium battery manufacturing hub in Imperial County could be a possibility, the focus of creating high-quality long-term employment and career opportunities for the local community, to ensuring that we have the right trainings, that the workforce is ready, that we’re, you know, breaking any barriers that have traditionally kept our communities out of good
paying jobs.

And most importantly, that we are ensuring that strategies and recommendations from the Lithium Valley Commission are informed by and responsive to the local context and the conditions of the Salton Sea region.

Thank you.

The Lithium Valley Commission public meetings typically occur on the last Thursday of each month. The meetings are public and have been conducted entirely via Zoom. During each meeting there are opportunities for public comment. We encourage all of you to follow those conversations. As I said, many of us are exploring one or all of the topics for the first time in the Commission. And it’s a great opportunity to do so with the public. During each meeting there are opportunities for public comment.

There is a link to the past meetings and recordings and materials on the presentation that’s posted in our website. And there’s also a link to future meetings over Zoom. The slides will be posted to the Lithium Valley Commission docket in the Lithium Valley Commission meeting’s
During the public meetings, we have been reviewing specific topic areas through guest participant participations, moderated discussions, and Q&A periods. These are followed by public comment so the community can give input on each topic that is being discussed.

Upcoming meetings will review topics, including economic impacts, incentives, workforce development, benefits to and of geothermal, overcoming challenges to lithium extraction, and legislative and regulatory recommendations.

In July of this year, we began including a Spanish interpreter in these public meetings, as well as a Spanish translated meeting notice that is released and docketed ten days before the public meeting commences.

The December agenda is currently being developed. And it is anticipated that items previously proposed for the December meeting might be deferred to subsequent meetings. The December meeting notice and agenda will be posted as least ten days before the meeting in compliance with the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.
We were polling, because we had a conflict for the original December 9th meeting, we were polling Commissioners again to ensure that we could have quorum for our next meeting. So far eight Commissioners have responded to the email request to identify a new December date.

So this is to my colleagues on the Lithium Valley Commission, please be sure to respond to that email by the end of this week so that we can proceed with scheduling the December meeting.

And now on the screen you have the reports schedule. The Lithium Valley Commission has conducted, already, several public workshops to this point that are organized by the sub bodies on the topics that are outlined in AB 1657. A working draft outline of the report is docketed and available for public review and comment.

CEC Staff are working with the Lithium Valley Commission sub bodies to synthesize information provided during public meetings to build a draft of the report. The draft report will be published and made available for public review and comment and will be discussed at a
public Lithium Valley Commission in December of 2022. Public input on the outline and draft report can be provided through the docket for the Lithium Valley Commission and during public meetings.

The final AB 1657 report will be submitted to the legislature and published publicly by October 1st of 2022.

So now, for this next part of the presentation focusing on lithium recovery from geothermal brine, I’m going to invite Elisabeth de Jong to provide the presentation.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you, Chair Paz.

Hello everyone. My name is Elisabeth de Jong. I work for the California Energy Commission’s Geothermal Grant and Loan Program. And I’m currently serving as the Project Manager supporting the Lithium Valley Commission. I will be sharing this presentation on lithium recovery from geothermal brine.

Next slide, please.

Senate Bill 100 established a landmark policy requiring that renewable energy and zero-carbon resources supply 100 percent of electric retail sales to end-use customers by 2045.
Today, approximately two-thirds of California’s electricity comes from carbon-free sources, being solar, wind, and geothermal, the three main eligible renewable resources.

Geothermal power provides constant renewable power, this means 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, known as baseload energy, which is not subject to intermittency or variability related to weather or climate conditions, such as solar and wind energy.

As identified in SB 100 report released earlier this year, geothermal energy plays a role in meeting the state’s energy goals. Energy sector planning models project the need for additional geothermal development in the state’s known geothermal resource areas, including the Salton Sea region. The CPUC authorized procurement of at least 1,000 megawatts of baseload energy resources, such as geothermal, to meet midterm reliability needs.

According to the NREL report called Technoeconomic Analysis of Lithium Extraction from Geothermal Brines, lithium extraction from geothermal brines offers the potential to provide the United States with a secure domestic supply
of lithium to meet the increasing demands of electric vehicles, grid energy storage, portable electronics, and other end-use applications.

Today, California is approaching 1 million electric vehicles on the road. And developers expect to process the lithium extracted from geothermal brine for use in lithium-ion batteries, the type of battery that is used in electric vehicles.

Additionally, according to some estimates, as detailed in the New Energy Nexus report called Building Lithium Valley, which is available on the Lithium Valley Commission docket, development of the lithium extraction industry could support over 4,000 construction and long-term jobs.

Next slide, please.

The demand for lithium has surged in recent years, mainly due to transportation electrification. Electric vehicles had a global market growth of 1.7 million in 2020. That number is expected to swell to 60 million vehicles by 2040, according to an analysis by Bloomberg NEF. The graph on the screen, also from Bloomberg NEF, shows estimated battery
demand growth increasing exponentially by 2030 for all vehicles, from passenger to commercial vehicles.

As previously mentioned, SB 100 aims to achieve 100 percent clean energy. And the SB 100 report found that California will require significant increases in battery storage to achieve this goal.

Next slide, please.

So first, let’s briefly review the geothermal generation processes currently used in the Salton Sea region.

Power plants near the Salton Sea use geothermal flash technology. Hot water flows up from the well from the geothermal reservoir thousands of feet below the surface. A percentage of the geothermal fluid, called brine, is flashed into steam and is piped to a power plant where it turns the steam -- a steam turbine that is connected to a generator to generate electricity that is then connected to the electrical transmission system.

The unused brine and steam condensate from the power plant process is then reinjected.

Water is sometimes needed to dilute the brine for
reinjection. However, the water source is not
the Salton Sea but is actually provided by
Imperial Irrigation District that has been set
aside for industrial usage.

Next slide, please.

The Salton Sea known geothermal resource
area is a reservoir approximately 1.2 miles below
the Salton Sea. It is worth emphasizing that the
geothermal reservoir is distinct and separate
from the Salton Sea itself. In other words, the
projects are located along the Salton Sea
shoreline but are not using the water from the
Salton Sea. There are already about a dozen
geothermal power plants operating in the area
that circulate this brine to produce electricity.

The idea is that developers would be able
to recover or extract lithium from the geothermal
brine when it is pumped up and then reinject the
remaining brine back into the reservoir through
the already existing pumping process.

Research conducted by members of the
Salton Sea Task Force at the University of
California, Riverside indicate that geothermal
brine from the area has a high concentration of
about 200 milligrams per kilogram of lithium.
However, the process is still in that testing and verification phase, so lithium production at the Salton Sea region will not occur until 2024.

The CEC is also supporting research in this area and, to date, has funded more than $16 million in research projects exploring lithium recovery from in the Salton Sea region. As mentioned in AB 1657, the Salton Sea resource could produce as much as one-third of today’s global lithium demand, a demand that is expected to drastically increase in the coming years.

Next slide, please.

Currently, two forms of lithium extraction dominate the global market. These methods are not being proposed for use at the Salton Sea but it is helpful to understand what these methods are and how they significantly differ environmental and otherwise from the geothermal brine direct lithium extraction technology I just described.

Over half of all lithium produced comes from hard rock mining, the largest operation in the world at Green Bushes Mine in Western Australia. Almost all of the lithium produced comes from large evaporation ponds in arid desert.
climates, particularly in the lithium triangle. Those are the countries of Argentina, Bolivia, and Chile. These methods have significant environmental impacts, particularly land use and water use.

Using geothermal brine to produce lithium has a much lower environmental footprint than mining or evaporation ponds. It reduces the time to produce lithium and appears to be cost competitive with current practices.

As shown in the images created by the CEC staff and using Miniviro data on screen, this graphic provides an example of greenhouse gas emissions, water use, and land use from three different lithium extraction methods.

This example uses information on the technology for direct lithium extraction from geothermal brines used by Vulcan Energy Resources in Germany. Although details vary across technology for extracting lithium from geothermal brine, in general, the greenhouse gas emission impact, water use, and land use of extraction lithium from geothermal brine is expected to be much less than other forms of lithium extraction because it is an additive process to the
geothermal energy generation.

Next slide, please.

Lithium recovery from geothermal brine is currently being pursued in Imperial County by three developers, including EnergySource, BHE Renewables, and Controlled Thermal Resources.

In addition, the CEC has provided funding and support from two different funding programs, the Geothermal Grant and Loan Program and the Electric Program Investment Charge, known as EPIC, which is a research program focused on innovation to help meet energy and climate goals.

The Geothermal Grant and Loan Program Project was with EnergySource Minerals at the John L. Featherstone Geothermal Power Plant in the Salton Sea region. The project was successfully completed in September 2020. The purpose was to develop an integrated engineering design, reducing the risks and costs associated with a commercial lithium plant using geothermal brines.

The EPIC Grant projects include BHE Renewables, which aims to design, build, and demonstrate an integrated one-tenth commercial scale geothermal brine pretreatment and lithium
recovery system at an existing geothermal power plant. Controlled Thermal Resources’ Hell’s Kitchen Geothermal Project aims to integrate multiple brine pretreatment processes to demonstrate a system for completely preparing geothermal brine for lithium extraction.

And additionally, the Materials Research Project is demonstrating a pilot-scale integrated process for the recovery of lithium from geothermal brines using a high-capacity, selective solid sorbent for the extraction of lithium, and a carbon-negative sorbent regeneration process for the direct formation of high-parity lithium carbonate.

Next slide, please.

Assembly Bill 1657 outlines the rationale for creating the Lithium Valley Commission as having the potential to create a domestic supply of lithium to support the exponential growth of demand for lithium to become a competitive source of supply that could satisfy more than one-third of today’s worldwide lithium demand. But no mining companies will invest in this resource until the technology to recovery lithium from geothermal brine on a commercial scale is proven.
and can occur without certain risks and uncertainties.

Additionally, a 2021 presidential executive order includes securing and urgently developing a domestic lithium-battery supply chain. The U.S. Department of Interior considers lithium one of 35 critical minerals that are vital to the nation’s security and economic prosperity. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, the United States of America are safer when important technology and essentially products are produced domestically. And finally, the opportunity for lithium production in California has the potential to unleash billions of dollars of new economic infrastructure development.

With that, I will turn back to you, Chair Paz, for the next agenda item. Chair Paz, you’re on mute.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Now to the discussion with Commissioners. We have heard several questions, and you’re probably seeing them on the chat, right, around both the impacts of the benefit of lithium extraction from a geothermal known resource area
in the Salton Sea.

So the first question is: What are the potential regional and community benefits? And what needs to be done to leverage those benefits in the local areas?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Chair Paz, I guess I can weigh in on this one initially.

Look, I think the benefits have been mapped out over the months. It’s really jobs, education, and a tax base or an expanded tax base off the existing geothermal plants. You know, our numbers alone were around about 480 construction jobs and 220 direct jobs with Stage 1. Additional stages will take it up to 1,400. IVEDC have suggested a further two-and-a-half thousand auxiliary jobs. I mean, the cathode battery opportunity but, you know, direct jobs alone is quite significant.

So -- and Jonathan, I think, will summarize the benefits to the tax base and, also, Commissioner Hanks where the direct -- yeah, Calipatria School District went, and this is basically an extension of that.

But you know, what’s needed, just on that, would be, you know, we need a clear and
efficient path to permitting at the state and county level straight through. And I think it’s worth to note that the recent CUP that went through with EnergySource was, you know, a very detailed 1,500-page EIR with no impacts. It sort of, actually, summarizes the no impact to development at all, and no relationship to Salton Sea.

Yeah, that’s probably my couple comments.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

And this -- both of these questions allow us to hear from different perspectives. We heard from the industry sector. I would also like to invite some of the government sector to answer and participate in this conversation, as well as some of the NGOs that we have.

So I will call on Commissioner Weisgall.

This is, again, another industry perspective on the matter of benefits.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Just very quickly. I made my comments earlier. But you asked, what’s needed to leverage? What’s needed is to get the young generation educated about these opportunities and
to get the young generation, the new generation, educated on the skills need for this opportunity, which really means emphasizing the STEM curriculum. And we’re not just talking in colleges, we’re talking at Imperial Valley College, and we’re talking at high schools and the like.

But, no, I’ve summarized, you’ve heard me before, to me the single greatest benefit is that economic opportunity.

Thanks very much.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Okay, can I call on some of the NGOs, maybe Commissioner Ruiz?

COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Hi. I think, you know, there are so many different potentials that this industry can bring along if it is unwell (phonetic). I call it the three big Ws, the three big ones.

One is that it can definitely improve the much needed jobs, you know, in the communities. And it is important to, for this industry, to bring not just well-paid jobs but, also, create the ability for young people to participate in these opportunities.
Second, I think lithium can very much benefit geothermal energy by making it a byproduct, increasing the -- not just the amount, but I think it will also increase the value of geothermal energy.

And the last one, I think, is so important because the Salton Sea is -- can benefit -- can be benefitted directly or indirectly through, perhaps, you know, mitigation programs, perhaps, you know, many other different resources that can -- that this industry can provide.

So I think, you know, there is a lot to gain, you know, from this endeavor if it is done well. And so I think, you know, this is important for us as Commissioners to pay attention to these factors from the beginning and making sure that the industry provides and becomes the hope that everyone is waiting for, especially in communities and especially in an area that is dealing with, already, a lot of economic, environmental, and many other issues.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner Ruiz. I will now -- let’s see if we can get some government perspective here.
Commissioner Guzman-Acevas, do you want to weigh in on this question?

COMMISSIONER GUZMAN-ACEVAS: I’m not -- I’m really sorry, but could you repeat the question?

CHAIR PAZ: Yes, of course. Yes.

So what are the potential regional and community benefits? And what needs to be done so we can leverage these benefits?

COMMISSIONER GUZMAN-ACEVAS: Oh, that’s a great question. You know, I think that I would say, honestly, one of the things that I have seen more recently in some of the -- not even some of the just generation projects but the transmission projects in the energy space, is some of the shared ownership models. And what I mean by that is that there could be public-private partnerships in everything from, you know, the raw material generation to the processing, and everything in the value chain.

And of course, I think, was already somewhat mentioned, but the other creative opportunity is to ensure, you know, the wealth sharing of the different enterprises is also shared with the community. And everything in the
dialogue that we have heard thus far is really	on open to that opportunity, so I think that’s been
really positive.

But I think those are really the
opportunities, is to really see some of the
economic wealth being shared with the community
and putting those pieces in place.

And of course, coming from kind of, also,
the environmental side of things, making sure
that all of the production practices are as
environmentally sound as possible.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner
Guzman-Acevas.

I believe Commissioner Olmedo had his
hand up.

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: Thank you, Madam
Chair. Am I on?

CHAIR PAZ: Yes, we can hear you.

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: So, again, I
appreciate all the perspectives. And that’s,
again, that’s the beauty about this Commission,
being of multiple stakeholders and learning from
each other.

You know, as in regards to the work that
I’ve done, both in my day job and working on
socioeconomic and environmental justice and
disadvantaged issues, one of the things that I
would hope that occur is that, first, make sure
that we have good environmental compliance.

Anytime that we circumvent the law, or
that we have sort of a short-term vision, a
desperate approach to creating jobs, we tend to
miss a lot, and all those are actually jobs, job
opportunities. There are many job opportunities
that go in to assuring that our water, that our
air, that our land, and that the public health is
protected. Because when we don’t protect all
those areas, and many more that I’m certainly not
mentioning, that’s where, you know, we create a
lack of balance.

Some of the things that, as I talk to
more people who certainly experience and
understand and, you know, have been a part of
similar types of opportunities, you know, they
talk about the models that are there, such as
creating community benefits agreements; right?
And the importance of engaging the community in a
transparent negotiation as to what is the vision,
both regionally but, very important, you know,
fenceline communities, you know, I think there’s
enough that has been done across California, across this nation, that we realize that fenceline communities are going to face the greatest impact.

But also, you know, in the spirit of the regionalization, you know, what are those important opportunities there to make sure that we are building in a way that makes logistical sense and in a way that we can maximize the efficiency and the many business, direct or indirect, business opportunities that are there?

We have seen that, historically, the decisions have been made by very few; right? That’s why the movements begin, you know, even before we saw a lot of the other movements build on, you know, the one percent, the one percent; right? And it’s true. I mean it’s usually a very small percentage of people who position themselves, either because of their status or because of their role, and often they’ll bring the community along.

So I really am very appreciative of the fact that we have spaces, like those today, to make sure that the community are actually pretty eager for the community to participate, because
that’s the voice we need to hear? What does the community want? What is their vision, you know?

You know, I’ve -- no secret, you know, more and more, I’m acknowledging and learning. And one of the things I learn is, wow, you know, the realization that a lot of the known resource area is in public domain; right? So what does that mean, you know? That’s going to be really important for the community to tell us, what does that mean to you? I mean, you know, the land out there, whether it’s IID, whether it’s state and federal, these are the public -- these are public lands.

So, to me, that immediately translates into, well, the public has to have something to say about that. If there’s opportunities for a win-win, that’s what we’re trying to aim for, and making sure that we create a sustainable business infrastructure. And if that’s going to come from subsidies, that’s great, you know, support that. But at the same time, we want to make sure that these business opportunities, again, are investing back in our communities, again, with community benefits agreements, through wherever there are royalty revenue opportunities,
and be clear and transparent. Where are all
those royalties going? Are they returning back
into our communities and making sure that we are
investing in those areas and in those
opportunities that have received the least amount
of investment?

And I can’t help but just, you know, come
to the realization, particularly, you know,
because I’m actually out here in the Calipatria
community, but the entire North End was very well
known as being an area that has received very
little, you know, very similar, like the East
Coachella Valley, you know, areas that have
received the least amount of resources. And we
want to make sure that these areas, you know, get
their fair share because, ultimately, they are in
close proximity.

But I think there are a couple of values,
you know, the different business models, the
energy, and then the secondary business which is,
you know, the extraction business, and then
others that are first about extraction but then
have the energy. So that really creates a much
broader, a much larger dialogue that I think
could be very beneficial in terms of seeing a
more larger, a more complete picture in terms of what are the economic opportunities for our community?

You know, certainly, there’s a lot of talk around investing in the Salton Sea, you know? And again, you know, we have to be very diligent. Where does the community want to put these dollars? You know, where does the responsibility lie?

You know, we don’t want to necessarily kind of go by the old playbook, right, just putting in the same sort of old things. And the same old things means that we still will continue to have blighted areas, disadvantaged communities. No. We want to actually, you know, tackle it from the bottom up to make sure we’re thinking about those things that have received the least amount of resources.

But again, creating a balance, making sure that environmental compliance, regulations, all of those things, they need to be taken care of. Those are not community benefits, you know? We need to make sure that gets done. And that’s going to be important for the sustainability of these industries. And I’m not speaking
specifically, necessarily, the geothermal or lithium extraction. I’m speaking just in the historical perspective that we’ve seen this time and time and time again; right?

The other is making sure that, again, that there are opportunities for dialogue. Maybe someone has even a better model, right, but at minimum is looking at that. Are there royalty opportunities? Are there, you know, investments in terms of profit sharing? You know, is that a conversation here? Is there a conversation in terms of -- again, and I mentioned earlier is, you know, on these royalties, you know?

So, yeah, certainly, that’s sort of the perspective that I bring. But more importantly, I’m eager to hear the community and see what they bring, because I think we’re going to learn a lot from them, things that we’re not even thinking about; right?

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you for --

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner Olmedo. And, yes, the community members are
chatting and they want to get to us their questions.

So just very briefly, because I know this is another question that has been submitted to us and asked multiple times regarding the impacts of lithium extraction.

As Elisabeth shared in the presentation, the method that is being used for removing lithium from the Salton Sea is very different from the most popular known methods that have been taking place in other regions. And I think that’s what’s been creating both, maybe, some of the question marks, but also some enthusiasm, the possibility that this could be done in a way that is reducing emissions and that can provide a cleaner source of energy from geothermal which is already in existence.

So I want to ask, what are the potential regional and community impacts; right? And what needs to be done to mitigate those impacts?

So there will still be some impacts. Do we know what those are? I know there’s been reference to the EIR. So again, addressing Commissioner Olmedo, I don’t think any of the developers, or that in California, it would fly
by to let developers surpass [sic] any of the environmental reviews that need to happen. There is an EIR that was submitted by one of the developers and that can start giving us answers. Now that is a very long and technical document.

So I would like to see if anyone from the Commissioners who has taken a look or understands more about the potential impacts, if you can name them and how we can -- how can we mitigate those? And I would like to -- again, just very briefly, so that we can get to public comment and have -- they might, probably, have more questions.

Commissioner Ruiz, is that your hand for this question around the impacts?

COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Sure. I mean, I can probably elaborate a little more.

I’m not an expert in what are the environmental impacts because I think a lot of this technology is rather new. And I think, you know, this is probably going to be a better question for some of the geothermal companies, the lithium industries.

But I think, you know, in the community, when I go around the community, people usually ask and they are concerned about, you know, the
water, the water tables, they’re concerned about the impact of how much water. Will water be contaminated? They have seen what this industry has done in many other places around the world. And I think, you know, that is a valid concern.

One thing, you know, that I’d like to address is that we don’t need to rush into finding, you know, the, probably, the right plan right now. I think, you know, one of the responsibilities of the Commission is to make sure that we look at everything, we become dialectic, and make sure that the benefits outweigh the negatives, and the environmental impacts, the public health impacts, are the bare minimum.

Every industry has -- you know, presents risks. But I think, you know, that it is important to make sure, you know, that we do a very thoughtful process in order to not only allowing the community to participate but being really thoughtful of minimizing any impacts and assuring the communities that the impacts are not going to be negative, that the impacts are going to be minimal, and that the benefits will outweigh the negative impacts.
CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

So I will -- this will be the last person that I call on before we go to the community.

So Commissioner Weisgall, I’m sure that you or your team have reviewed that EIR and maybe there are some very specific things that you can point out to us, anything that mitigated?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Well, in the interest of time, I think they’re really for -- especially for the public listening, what exactly does one of the analyses cover? You know, they’re pretty thorough. You want to look.

There’s obviously going to be an impact in so many areas. It could be very minimal but they all have to be studied. You’ve got to study air quality, biological resources, the cultural resources, the soils -- will there be greenhouse gas emissions? -- hydrology, noise, transportation, tribal cultural resources, things like that.

So an environmental impact report like this is designed to examine all of those areas and then determine which ones have significant effects, some maybe even irreversible, which do not, and that’s really what you’ll see in a
report like this.

Madam Chair, let me not take any more time. We could go into great detail but that’s --

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: -- that’s the overview.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner Weisgall.

So now we are going -- next slide.

This is the opportunity for members of the public to ask a question and, again, different from public comment. If you only have a comment, we can wait until the end. This is for people who have a question that they have been pondering, maybe hasn’t been answered up until right now, and we are going to invite you to ask that question.

In order -- you know, we want to try to be as flexible as we can and get to as many of you. And in order to try to be fair, we’re going to start by limiting them to one person per organization. So in the case that an organization is being represented, that we start with one person per organization. And then, if
there is more opportunity to get a second round, we’ll call on them again if they have additional questions.

And we will be starting with the locations that are watching us streamed, so the physical locations. I believe Patrick O’Dowd had submitted and requested to ask a question. So maybe -- I don’t know if he’s at one of the locations yet, but if he’s on?

And just, I’m also getting questions about the duration of the meeting. I can stay as long as we can if we need to extend it a little bit more so that we can get to many people. I know the challenge will be that some of the physical locations might have to close down. But if we can be a little bit flexible, I think we can stay a little bit past the 8:00 timeline if it’s okay with everyone.

MS. DE JONG: Chair Paz?

CHAIR PAZ: Yes?

MS. DE JONG: Oh, sorry. So Patrick O’Dowd is online, but he did just comment that he has no questions.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Okay. Thank you.
MS. DE JONG: (Indiscernible.)

CHAIR PAZ: Okay, so then we will go to the El Centro location and see if there are any questions coming from the participants at that location?

EL CENTRO MODERATOR: There are no questions on our end.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

CALIPATRIA MODERATOR: Yes, we have a participant.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

MR. REYES: Eric Reyes, Los Amigos de la Comitida (phonetic). I’ve been following all of these Lithium Valley Commission meetings, and also on the local Imperial County Lithium Ordinance Committee put together by Ryan Kelley, who invited CBOs and environmental groups to be participating, and we thank him for that.

One thing that I have seen, so I have this question, the question is, you talk about the potential for the economic: Has there been a comprehensive economic study that will give us the definitives based on solid economic methodologies of how much income will be produced
by lithium extraction with geothermal and
derivatives or supply-side chain reactions and
other investments that could be made? And what
is the window in that time of that development?
I know the industry, in our meetings, have stated
maybe 10, 15 years.

So, I think, is there such a
comprehensive economic study? Because the
community can ask, but if we don’t have a basis
of how to ask, it’s just a blind ask. We want to
make informed, educated, studied requests to
improve our community from the ground up. So
that’s my first question.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Is there any one of the Commissioners, and I’m looking for hands up, who can address
that question? And I believe it’s Eric.

Oh, okay, so I have Jonathan, and then
Rod.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Rod, go first.

Go ahead. Be my guest. I’ve been speaking too
much.

CHAIR PAZ: Okay. Rod?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Hi Eric. No, we
haven’t finished detailed studies yet. All I can
say is the numbers, which are union construction
numbers that we have, 408 on a rolling
construction program. The direct employment, you
know, as in operational jobs, for Stage 1 are
220.

But, Eric, I haven’t got the actual
breakdown study. That’s a good point. We
haven’t sort of got to that point but we do know
the numbers. And of the 220, there’s a further
breakdown, you know what I mean, electricians,
operators, you know, those sort of sway. So we
can share that information, probably, in the
coming months.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Jonathan?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Yeah, I’ll just
add very briefly.

Eric, we’re building at a one-tenth
commercial scale right now. We’re building a
demonstration plant to show ourselves, can we do
this? And, as I said earlier, can we do it in a
commercially viable way, and in an environmental
responsible way?

So we don’t have the numbers yet for
full-scale production. The best estimate I can give you is we’ve got a current workforce of, you know, 200 to 220 already the geothermal plants. We’re guessing we would need about that number for lithium at our existing plants. If we build more plants, obviously, more numbers. That doesn’t look at the ancillary jobs or the like.

I do know that our average job pays about, I think it’s 197 percent of the median income in Imperial County, but what does that mean? It means our average way is about twice the average wage in Imperial.

I think your question is a good one. And there’s no doubt that a detailed study needs to be done. We certainly will engage in that when we’re ready to go fully commercial, and we’re -- which we hope will occur when our demonstration plants prove successful.

Thanks.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

You are on mute, Eric. But just for a point of clarity here, if there are -- we’re going to start with one question per organization, Eric, so --

MR. REYES: If I could --
CHAIR PAZ: -- if there’s somebody else?

MR. REYES: -- follow up on that?

CHAIR PAZ: And then we can come back if -- we’ll make several rounds.

MR. REYES: All right.

CHAIR PAZ: But is there anybody else at the Calipatria site who has a question?

MR. FLORES: Hello. Good afternoon. This is Jose Flores. I’m a retired civics and econ teacher, currently with Comite Civico. My question is in regards to the talk about supply chain, the possibility of supply chain being part of the economic system here with the possible lithium production.

And my concern is with the companies, we currently have three companies here but others might arise if it’s feasible, and my concern comes from is there any conversation tied into possible incentives, subsidies, or tax breaks, that these companies kind of hold the line or tow the line of not starting here and then exporting jobs to (indiscernible) and Mexicali and pay somebody, you know, $10.00 a day, and then we end up losing here and still have to deal with our environmental burdens.
CHAIR PAZ: Rod?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Great question and a legitimate concern. Not that we’ve seen. I know that the (indiscernible), you know, we’re public with General Motors, and the discussions we’re having with cathode and battery are all, you know, based here onsite because it doesn’t make sense to sort of pick up raw material and move it, whether it’s 30 miles or 300 miles.

Really, the process itself has to be done onsite to sort of try to value add the supply chain. If anything, if the battery cell companies come here, that’s great. At this stage, I think if we can get the cathode or battery cell, then those materials would be sent to where the battery plants are, more than likely Georgia or places like that.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Are there other questions from Calipatria?

MS. MARQUEZ: I think with Calipatria, we should be given more opportunity because some people that are speaking that are not from Calipatria.
So my question to you is -- in researching some of the Lithium Valley, and in the South America lithium valley there, which is called the Triangle, in Chile and Bolivia, and also in other parts where they are doing the lithium, there are like -- some of the negative impacts have included contamination of soil, contamination of water affecting some of the cattle. I’m just wondering if/how we are going to be able to address that?

I know that there’s going to be an environmental impact study and we will have the opportunity for the scoping. But since this is completely new to us, we won’t really know like – or do you have an idea when we will start seeing some of those negative impacts in our community?

And my second question to you, to the Lithium Valley Commission, is maybe it’s a favor, but I feel like we should have a leverage percentage for the North End because we’ve seen some of these projects where many, many people in the grants, when they’re writing, they use a lot of our numbers for the North End, especially Niland. And we are a very disadvantaged
environmentally and economically disadvantaged community. And it’s kind of disheartening when big industries like this come. We welcome you. It’s a good thing. You know, we’re starving for economic development.

But my concern would be, like if a lot of it stays in the south end, it’s not really fair. And some people say, well, life is not fair. But at the same time it’s like we need to some benefits, economic development. We’re excited about all the industry and all the collaboration that’s going to happen, that’s already happening, because I have been participating in some of the workshops with lithium -- the lithium project.

I see a lot of good things happening behind the scenes, San Diego State University and Imperial Valley College, a lot of things going on. So I just want to make sure that the North End gets our fair share.

And if you could address the item in regards to the contamination of soil and water?

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Who can take that question?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: I’ll go very
quickly, just on the water issue. Maybe Rod wants to talk soil.

Again, this is preliminary, but we know that in South America the evaporation ponds there use upwards of 500,000 gallons of water to produce one ton of lithium. At our company the goal is to reduce that by 90 percent. The you have to do the math and translate that into acre feet per year. It’s a modest amount. But the goal is to reduce by at least 90 percent the use of water that is used in the South American process.

As far as soil, I’ll leave it to Rod. We don’t really see major soil issues because we’re not -- we’re going to be extracting that lithium within existing valves and pipes in the geothermal plants themselves, but perhaps Rod can talk more on that point if he wants to.

CHAIR PAZ: And Rod, before you answer the soil question, if that’s what you were going to answer, but if you can more specifically -- Jonathan talked about water use, but the question is around water contamination. And I know some of the presentations that we’ve received in this Commission have always focused and emphasized the
difference between this direct lithium extraction process.

So can you tell us, what are the risks of water contamination, if any, so that you can more directly address that question? Thank you.

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Thank you, Chair Paz. And thanks for the previous, another great question.

Firstly, just weighing in on Jonathan’s comments, I mean, maybe a simple way to explain this is the Atacama that was referred to where you, basically, bring up a brine, it’s a very cold brine that comes up, and they put it into evaporation ponds and they evaporate the water. And that leaves contaminants in the soil and wastes and uses a lot of water that, you know, as Jonathan mentioned, half a million gallons per metric ton of lithium produced.

Brine in the Salton Sea comes up but it’s superheated, it’s 600 degrees. So, basically, we run that through a -- the steam through a turbine. It’s in a completely closed loop. And then we selectively extract lithium from the brine. That brine does not engage at all in the atmosphere or on the ground, or it doesn’t need
to go to an evaporation pond.

So, basically, we’re using the heat, if you like, very similar to the Atacama in South America except the heat itself concentrates the lithium in real time. And, basically, then it’s injected back into the formation, so there’s no contact with the soil whatsoever, no reagent contact with the soil, and there’s no, you know, water contamination. We’re using the brine. There’s no connectivity or contact at all with the Salton Sea.

The second part of the question is just or even more important. You know, on one side, the social side, like Calipatria, you know, we -- one of the issues we’re all going to have is, okay, where do we house and how do we accommodate, you know, all of these workers we’re talking about? And I can say that Controlled Thermal Resources have purchased, it’s not announced yet, but land in Calipatria and developing residential accommodations to try to deal with that. So we’re trying to, you know, balance this out where we wind up with somewhere there’s nowhere to live but, also, how that, you know, weighs in.
So thank you for the great question.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

And I think I saw Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia. Do you want to weigh in on this question?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GARCIA: I think you rephrasing the question, I think, answers or addresses what I wanted to say.

I think if there’s anything that there’s a takeaway with, and I know that in Sacramento we, any and every time we are having this conversation, we start at the top with the differentiation of lithium recovery here and lithium extraction in other parts of the world.

And I guess if tonight there’s any takeaway -- and I hope that we’re able to go past 8:00, maybe 8:30 or so, so folks can ask all the questions that they’d like, I’m happy to stay here until 9:00 -- I’m hoping that the takeaway is that there’s a huge difference in the process and the technology that’s being utilized, minimizing all of the concerns that we all read about when we Google about lithium recover or lithium extraction that comes up when we read about Chile or other South American countries, or
for that matter Australia, or certainly our
biggest source that comes from China. So if
there’s one takeaway is that there is a huge
difference between the process and the
environmental impacts that occurs.

And in Sacramento, it’s something that we
start with, our conversations, consistently so
that my colleagues understand that there is a
huge, huge difference in terms of what is being
proposed to be done here.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

We have somebody else from the Calipatria
site.

MS. GARCIA: Yes. My name is Anna
Garcia. I’m part of the North End Alliance 111,
representing Calipatria, Niland, and Bombay
Beach. We are the North End. I like to be a
voice for those underserved communities. And my
question is very simple. This is all new to me,
the terminology is over my head, but I have some
simple questions.

When you’re talking about bringing jobs
into our area, is that STEM education being
offered now? Will we be able to catch up to the
point when you’re ready to hire that people will be ready to compete for those jobs? What can we do in our area? What can you do to help us to prepare our locals to take those jobs?

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

I will call on Commissioner Ryan Kelley.

VICE CHAIR KELLEY: Thank you,

Chairperson Paz.

To Ms. Garcia’s question, we have started those conversations with industry, our workforce development, and local education to identify the gaps. Industry has provided training levels, job descriptions for the geothermal and lithium extraction. And our workforce development has already put together a group with the Office of Education and local school districts about developing STEM education, all the way and including middle school.

So we are trying to address it as fast as we can. We know that IVC has already adopted some changes into their curriculum to address some of those needs. SDSU is pivoting to offer additional engineering students courses in Imperial Valley. And I think we’re learning more and more that we have made the move in the right
CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Commissioner Weisgall?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: And just, really, one point to add on this which is we also need to go down a level below that. We need to be in the high schools. We need to encourage sophomores and juniors to take STEM courses. By the time you’re a senior, if you want to go into the workforce, that can be a little late. We need and we intend to be in the high schools. We want to sponsor career days. We want to do job fairs. We want to educate the community that there are these local jobs.

We don’t want to bring in a workforce from outside of Imperial County if we don’t have to. That’s just not going to be. That just doesn’t work. You bring in workers from San Diego, they’re not -- it’s a different culture, it’s a different community.

So I know from our company’s perspective, it is very much in our interest to hire locally as much as we can. And to do that, we have to work on the education, not just at the four-year
college SDSU level, not just at IVC with community college, but even in high school, and we have every intention of doing that, and welcome input from the community at any time as to how make that happen.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Yeah. I want to add to that question, as well, because I am planning the -- an upcoming workshop that we will be discussing workforce development at one of our early meetings next year. And the question that you are asking, it’s at the forefront of that workshop, is that, first, we need to understand what are the types of jobs, right, that come at the diff phases of the development of lithium and making sure that we know that as soon as possible.

Because, as you’re saying, we want to make sure that we are getting at the forefront and we’re not chasing the jobs, right, that our communities are ready to participate in the job market. And that we’re thinking ahead of time of what are the barriers? Because it’s great to engage the youth, and it’s great to, you know, start them early.
But we have high unemployment rates in Imperial, and in the Coachella Valley, Eastern Coachella Valley. And we have a population of adults already who could be retrained. And the ability for them to get a better paying job is going to impact their kids; right? So not just focusing on the youth, focusing on the people that are employable now and that have faced barriers, whether it’s language, whether it’s transportation, infrastructure, different barriers to accessing these jobs, that we’re addressing them as early as we can.

And also, to that point, I wanted to mention, Assemblymember Garcia did introduce a bill around workforce for getting agreement that is also leading with that sentiment and value at the forefront, right, that our community is benefitting from these jobs.

So Assemblymember Garcia, you know more about your bill because I’m blanking out right now.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GARCIA: I’ll just, I’ll be short. It’s a bill that will get up and going for conversation again in January that really prioritizes community workforce agreements to
ensure that the locals have first prioritization
in taking on these jobs. And that will require
partnerships with workforce development centers,
educational institutions, our labor friends who
traditionally build these facilities and train
folks to take on these jobs. So that
conversation will get off the ground in January
again.

And that idea came directly from locals
as it relates to hearing this same sediment.

So I’ll stop there.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

And we will go, maybe, to another
question, if there are any in Calipatria, or I
want to see if I can move on to North Shore Yacht
Club.

MS. GARCIA: That’s fine. I do want to
thank you but I do want to ask one question, just
to piggyback on that.

Is there any internship or apprenticeship
programs going on now for what’s coming to our
valley?

CHAIR PAZ: Jonathan?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: I had my hand up
to make that very point. You are reading my
mind.

We do. We have internships now for our geothermal program. We need to strengthen them. And we do need to develop an internship program for lithium. I’ve actually had three meetings now already with Imperial Valley College to talk about that.

The idea would be to work collaboratively with IVC where students would spend a certain amount of time in the classroom but the rest of the semester, if you will, at a site like ours or the other two developers where, number one, they could get paid for internship, number two, get credit, and number three, really get that kind of really on-the-job training. And I guess the fourth benefit is they would have the advantage of really seeing what a job at a facility like ours would be like, and vice versa. We would be able to see what they’re like.

So internships are absolutely critical and it is something that we will be focusing on. Again, we’re still in the early stages. But, as Commissioner Kelley said, we’ve got to get these programs going and we’ve got to get the curriculum developed. But internships are a very
important part of that. I really appreciate the question.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

So I will move on to the North Shore Yacht Club and see if there are any questions coming from that site.

CONCHITA: (Speaking Spanish.)

CHAIR PAZ: We will wait for one of the interpreters to repeat the question in English.

Yes.

(Spanish interpretation given off mike.)

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Conchita, for your questions. Gracias. This is Silvia Paz. And I’ll start, maybe by addressing some of your points.

So in terms of somebody who lives in the area, I live about nine miles away. I live in Thermal. I live very close. I live in the communities and I completely understand the concerns, the concerns that you have for your children, that I have for my children, right, who sometimes get bloody noses, too, because it’s windy and dusty.

What I can tell you is that everything that I have seen about the process for -- by
which lithium is going to be developed in the Salton Sea, and I’m just talking at this point of the development of lithium, everything that I have seen is completely different and not relevant to the examples that we have from other places in the world.

So when I -- when you ask about this question about the risk and the impacts from the development itself, what I keep hearing, and I’m just going to repeat because I’m not an expert, but what I keep hearing, not just from the developers but from researchers, is that when you’re extracting lithium directly in this closed-loop process that you are not adding contaminants to anything else. Now if I hear something else, I’ll be the first one, as many other questions, probably, right, to say -- to raise a red flag; right?

The other point that I want to address is that you’re right. If once lithium is developed and if there is a buildup of other businesses, right, they do come with an impact. They come with the impact that any other building, if we’re building houses, if we’re building a park, if we’re building anything, there is an impact.
because you’re moving dust. And all those things are going to be reviewed in the environmental processes that the state has, and they’re going to be mitigated, just like any other project.

And again, right now, I do not know what those businesses or what that impact is, and I don’t know if there’s anybody who knows that, but that is my -- when I’m attending these meetings, I’m not only facilitating the meeting, I’m also looking out for these concerns that are your concerns and that are my concerns, the other -- the Salton Sea and the community in which we live.

And I’m saying this more for the context, maybe, of the rest of the Commissioners and the CEC staff is that our community has been dealing with the impacts of a deteriorating Salton Sea for far too long. Our communities have seen the state not live up to its promise to addressing these environmental concerns around the Salton Sea. And these things are naturally a backdrop to this conversation that we’re having in lithium, and it’s going to keep coming up because we need to see solutions at the Salton Sea, and we need to see our communities improve.
And maybe on a more optimistic role for me is what I’m seeing. Some of the infrastructure that our communities need are infrastructure that the development of lithium is going to rely on, broadband, roads. You know, so those could be some added benefits, too, that we can improve our streets, that we can have access to the internet in some of our more rural communities.

So I know I answered in many, many ways, but I’m trying to hold all different angles of this topic and, also, ask that -- and I don’t even know what I’m -- if it’s reassurance that you need, but know that when I join these meetings, I’m trying to hold all of those perspectives.

And at the end it’s not going to be this Commissioners role to approve or not approve. That’s not what we’re here for. We’re here to do an investigation, try to answer those same questions that you’re asking, and submit that report to the legislature. So this Commission does not have the authority to approve lithium or to stop lithium.

So I will end with that. And I see
ASSEMBLYMEMBER GARCIA: Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words. And you’ve addressed some of the things that I will align my comments with.

But I’ll say this, I think the starting point to looking at the public health implications of this would be to take a look at the current geothermal development that’s generating clean baseload energy as we speak and has the Public Health Departments of Imperial County, has the Water Boards, Regional Water Boards of Imperial County have any other relevant regulatory agencies received and have been able to confirm that there are public health regulatory issues not in compliance with the expectations, whether it be of the local or the state ordinance that are in place?

That, I think, would lead us to a conversation about, so what are the additional things to take a look at as it relates to public health?

Let’s be very clear. The geothermal, as far as we know, isn’t what’s contributing to air quality issues around the Salton Sea.
development has been occurring there for several decades now. What’s happening here with the lithium conversation is taking that process one step forward and capturing a mineral that is a byproduct of the development of geothermal.

So I think if we’re going to pinpoint what the environmental problems at the Salton Sea area, it should be pointed to a dying sea, a lack of expedited urgency to develop projects in and around the sea.

And that really is something that, for me, if this opportunity moves forward, clearly, there has to be a direct benefit to addressing Salton Sea mitigation restoration issues, operation and maintenance issues, ten-year management plan development. Someone will need to help with the operation and maintenance of a project in North Shore as the North Shore Pilot Project gets off the ground, or the projects in Desert Shores, or for that matter the current 4,000-acre habitat restoration project on the southeast end of the Salton Sea which is the first of its kind as it relates to the state living up to its responsibility.

So I appreciate the conversation about
public health. I don’t think we need to go very far to determine if the current geothermal operations in the south end of the sea have contributed to any public health issues, given that they’ve been out there in operation for 30 years. The public health agencies, the local water regulatory agencies could potentially help us understand that a bit better. And as I understand today, those have not been issues that could be pinpointed as responsible for the environmental problems that we have out at the sea. If I’m wrong I will stand corrected.

But we certainly need to start there. It’s not as simple as saying that right there is the problem, therefore we do not want our community to see any progress, any benefit that could address environmental problems that are before us, and I think we all believe and agree with, need to be addressed.

CHAIR PAZ: Are there other questions from the North Shore Yacht Club?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: (Speaking Spanish.)

CHAIR PAZ: Gracias. We will invite the interpreter to translate that question.

(Spanish interpretation given off mike.)
CHAIR PAZ: Okay. I don’t know if there was a question imbedded in that but is there, maybe, a response from any of the Commissioners? We can move on to the next question then.

Is there another question from the North Shore Yacht Club?

MS. LOERA: Yes. This is Mariela Loera from Leadership Counsel. And I (indiscernible) a question, I think, for all of us. The majority of this meeting should not have been you all talking to us about you listening but, instead, you were listening from (indiscernible). Having a public meeting on a more consistent, on a monthly basis, as you all have had up until now, the Lithium Valley Commission is what I’m talking about, even if it is translated, that is not sufficient to the Public Information Act. This needs to be a public engagement when -- even if they’re held at a monthly meeting, or however the community chooses to have them. They need to be more accessible to community. And when they are provided, like in this space, they should be led primarily by community.

I understand that at this point there is
a need to answer a lot of questions, like the
ones that we, the Leadership Counsel, submitted
to the Lithium Valley Commission. But in order
to answer those questions and have that
cornerstone with the community, we need to have
more community meetings and public meetings like
this. And this should not have been done right
now. They should have been done eight months
ago, nine months ago. This is not acceptable at
all.

And even in your responses to our
questions are these are minimal public health
impacts, these are minimal environmental
public -- environmental impacts, you haven’t even
given us information as to what exactly that
means. And that’s why we still have the similar
and same questions.

Another problem that I have is that all
of the conversations that are happening,
including comments from community representatives
of the Lithium Valley Commission, are suggestive
of lithium extraction happening and being, much
like the previous commenter said, being such a
great thing without, until this point, any sort
of communication happening, and that’s really
problematic, including things like using the term lithium recovery before even having any conversations until now. And this meeting is the first meeting where I hear that term be used. I don’t know if it was purposefully used in this meeting for the community to give us some sort of positive perspective about. That’s not okay either.

So with that and all of this, my question is: How will community be made a central part of the conversation in the decision-making process moving forward?

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Can you repeat your question a little slower? Because I don’t think I got everything you asked.

MS. LOERA: The question is: How will community be made a central part of the conversation in the decision-making process moving forward?

CHAIR PAZ: Yeah. I think I will start, again, by repeating myself maybe a little bit, that this Commission is not going to be making any decision on whether lithium moves forward or it stops. That is not the role of this
What this Commission is going to be doing is researching, analyzing these topics. And the topics that you’re mentioning about impacts, we are going to be, in the report that we submit to the legislature, we are going to be talking about those. And believe me, I’m not going to be complacent with a report that states it’s minimal. We are probably not there yet. We are still doing this research. And you will see those answers as we are finding them ourselves.

So that is my commitment as a Commissioner.

Are there any other of my colleagues who have a response? Okay.

So seeing none, are there other questions from the North Shore Yacht Club?

And just I want to point out that the Coachella site did not have any questions and they are already closing.

But if there are still questions from the North Shore Yacht Club, we would like to hear them now. Okay.

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: Yeah. I just wanted to say, I lost my mike and computer access, so I wanted to raise my hand. So you
call on me whenever. You know, I’ll stay in the queue.

CHAIR PAZ: Okay. Thank you. Do you -- well, I don’t see any questions, Commissioner Olmedo, right now. So if you have an answer to one of the questions that has been asked, go ahead.

COMMISSIONER OLMEDO: Yes. I just wanted to just make a general comment. And it’s going to be really important to -- you know, I think we owe it to the community. You know, a lot of good questions were raised. And every one of these questions, we need to be able to back it up by science, research, unbiased, right, independent science and research.

I feel uncomfortable, you know, answering a lot of these questions, again, because, I mean, are we the right respondents to them? Or is it that, you know, we’re just so enthusiastic about this opportunity we don’t want to destabilize or discourage? But, ultimately, I mean, public health isn’t a negotiable chip. You know, that’s not something as to whether, you know, where’s the cost benefit? You know, where’s the benefit in terms of the health and, you know,
(indiscernible) not know? Of course, it never does, you know?

And that is something that, as a Commissioner, I’m going to be continually persistent. You never negotiate a public’s health because what is the cost of human life if they are persistently exposed to something that is creating -- either lowering the quality of life or causing some type of, you know, health impact or so on, or something that is irreversible.

Also, you know, there is the -- and I’m glad the way that Assemblymember Garcia, you know, called it out, there are these regulations that need to be followed. Those aren’t negotiable. That needs to happen.

So again, there’s a lot of opportunity here to be able to build an industry that is sustainable, responds to the community’s concerns. But again, it’s going to be very important that we are responding to the community with facts and not necessarily just with enthusiasm or with concerns that, you know -- and we have seen this historically. But we don’t want to push too hard or, you know, we’re afraid
that this opportunity is going to be missed. And so, yeah, that’s the way industry always shows up; right? Our duty is to be able to do the best we can, put it on paper. Why? Because even just right here, the New River, I still remember 20 years ago, oh, so and so came out here, shook my hand and promised me, you know? So and so from Washington, we took a trip all the way to Washington, and they promised us.

You know, it’s going to be very important that we -- that the community gets the facts, gets the information, gets the signature on the paper, and that we do our due diligence as Commissioners and not necessarily react to threat or fear that this opportunity is going to, you know, get past us. There is policies. There is a movement to distance ourself from more destructive fuel sources.

So, yes, the opportunity is here. The resource is in the public domain for the majority of its part. Let’s, you know, make sure the community is engaged in getting a fair opportunity in this, but let’s not instill fear, concern. I think that’s our responsibility as Commissioners that we don’t get ahead of
ourselves and try to respond because some of the responses and questions, I think they deserve a much more profound, deeper, accurate responses.

Conchita was one of those that really -- you know, her questions, I feel, do deserve some real facts behind them.

So thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Commissioner Ruiz?

COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yeah. I just want to respond to one of the questions that -- I think it was Mariela from Leadership Counsel, how can the community participate? I think, you know, this is probably one of the venues, and I appreciate the CEC for putting this platform. It is important for the community to come and voice all their concerns that is fear, and understandably so. I think these communities have been dealing with a lot, a lot of issue environmentally, public health-wise for many -- for many years.

But I think, you know, this is a unique opportunity. And we need to be dialect to here. We need -- it is important to see both sides. And I think the opportunity here is that lithium can definitely present new opportunities,
especially in a climate change crisis, to provide better and cleaner sources of energy. I think, you know, the opportunity is here. It is important to see that the impacts are minimum and that the benefits totally outweigh the negatives. So I think, you know, that everyone -- and I think it is a long answer to the question, but I think it’s important for community members to participate, to understand the process or the processes, and be part of, you know, these conversations that will allow everyone to have a better understanding of this industry and how can this industry bring the resources to the communities, jobs, you know, and -- but overall, I think, contribute to the really daunting tasks. You know, in California, if California is going to electrify every single vehicle by 2035, we’re going to need a lot of clean energy sources. And lithium can, I think, you know, potentially, can bring, you know, those answers.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Commissioner Ruiz. Elisabeth, I think at this point, I don’t see any other questions from North Shore. There were none in Coachella. I think it’s to go to the phone and see if there are any questions from
those participating via phone.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you, Chair Paz.

So as we turn to the Zoom application --
(clears throat) I’m so sorry -- if you could
please use the raise-hand feature if you’d like
to be called on to speak. And if you’ve called
in, please dial star nine to raise your hand, and
then star six to un-mute your phone line. So
first, we’ll go to those hands raised in the Zoom
application, then the phones, and then to reading
comments.

So Art Gertz, you should be able to speak
or un-mute yourself. Okay. I will come back to
Art to see if he’s still there.

But Consuelo, you should be able to un-
mute yourself.

MR. GERTZ: Can you hear me now?

CONSUELA: Yeah. Hi.

CHAIR PAZ: Oh.

MR. GERTZ: Can you hear me now?

CHAIR PAZ: So sorry about that,
Consuela. We will come to right away.

But, Art, if you wouldn’t mind, just go
ahead and give your comment?

MR. GERTZ: Yes. For the record, Art
Gertz, A-R-T G-E-R-T-Z, resident of West Shores.

I have a question for the Commission.

We’ve been assured that the water within Salton Sea is no way connected to lithium extraction. My question is: Will the Commission oppose privately or publicly the possibility of ocean water import? That is my question.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Is there an answer from any of the Commissioners?

Jonathan?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: I think it’s a legitimate question. It needs to be studied. There will be need for water resources if the drought in the west continues the way it is. Importing water from elsewhere and desalinating it may be necessary. I think it’s premature but I think it’s the kind of a question that should be on the table.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Next question.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

Consuela, you should be able to un-mute.

CONSEULA: Oh, yeah. Hi everyone. So my comment is this, I don’t want to the extraction
to happen, period. Say whatever you want,
extraction is extraction, especially in a land
that has already been severely damaged by state
and federal neglect (indiscernible) and
pesticides. And you’ve made it very clear that
kind of the only, quote unquote, “benefit” or
motivation that’s behind this project is
financial gain.

So my question is: when we say that we do
not want the extraction to occur, is this
something that you guys will actually support
when we say this, whether if it’s when you report
this to the higher ups to the state or is this
just lip service? Because lithium is not a
renewable energy source. And I actually want to
ask that, if this is like -- if you guys will
actually listen to us?

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Consuela, for your
question.

These meetings are recorded. The report
will reflect the comments that we received from
all of our public engagement meetings. So to the
extent, if you’re asking what you are saying and
the comments that we have heard today, will be
reflected on the report.

Next question.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

So we have a hand raised from Tom Sephton.

MR. SEPHTON: Thank you for the opportunity. I’d like to direct my question to the industry representatives, Rod Colwell and Jonathan Weisgall.

And the question of water supply has been raised and that’s a relevant one. And I think you responded to something tangentially related to that. But I understand from earlier that you’re going to be using the IID interim water supply. And while you have a 90 percent reduction in water use, you still need some.

That water supply was set aside to be 25,000 acre feet per year. I think about 5,000 has already been purchased by EnergySource. Is that going to -- is the remainder of that going to be enough for full lithium development?

A related question. We’ve heard from many local residents the concern about dust. And that dust is relevant, both to what’s coming off the desert but, very significantly, fine
particles and toxic materials coming off the drying Salton Sea. The geothermal companies are not responsible for that. That’s because we’re selling off water supply to other regions, but it’s a legitimate question.

And we’re -- and I’m a board member of the EcoMedia Compass, a nonprofit located in the West Shores. And we’re hearing from the people we talk to in the community that they’re worried about the thought that because of the plan for developing lithium resources, that officials and industry want to shrink the Salton Sea down even more than it already is. We know that there’s about half of the available Salton Sea KGRA (phonetic) is still underwater.

I personally don’t believe it’s necessary to shrink the sea to get at the resource, but could you comment on whether, as industry representatives, you think it’s necessary to shrink the sea in order to drill for the resource?

And then a final question related to that is what can industry and development do to help the restoration of the Salton Sea? How can you be part of the solution?
Thanks.

CHAIR PAZ: All right. Thank you.

And, Sergio Rodriguez?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Oh, do you want to respond? Oh, I’m sorry. I thought you wanted a response.

MS. DE JONG: Oh, I’m so sorry.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Real quick, again, very limited time. All very good questions.

Number one, question one, I don’t know the exact amount of acre feet per year, Tom. But, again, when we get closer to commercial we should know.

Number two, my company has absolutely no interest in the continued shrinking of the Salton Sea. We have no lease rights in any lands on the Salton Sea. And I thin your point is well taken about, you know, the ongoing deterioration.

And I’m already forgetting the third point, but it’s 11:30 p.m. back here in D.C. I apologize.

MS. DE JONG: All right. Thank you.

So I think we do have a hand raised from Rod Colwell.
COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Yeah, just real quick. Great questions, Tom. Thank you.

So water supply, I’d probably refer to the whole -- everyone on this call to the recent EnergySource EIR, a 1,500-page document that covers most of these concerns, specifically water at 4,000 -- 3,456 acre feet is probably a good gage. And improving that is, you know, is certainly beneficial.

The dust and playa, I mean, there’s no connection whatsoever between the proposed developments, current and future, to the Salton Sea at all. The Salton Sea is, unfortunately, shrinking. Definitely haven’t heard the connection between wanting to accelerate the recession of the sea. That’s sort of news to me. I could be missing something there.

And, yes, localization of dust, like any industrial development, if there’s trucks, you know, on the road the roads need to be blacktopped, or we’ve got to be careful on that. I think the approval process is very, very arduous. And I would refer you, Tom, to the EnergySource EIR that covers most of those issues scientifically.
Thank you.

MS. DE JONG: All right. Thank you.

The next public commenter is Sergio Rodriguez.

I’m not hearing anything, so I will go to the next commenter, Pati Leal-Gutierrez.

MS. LEAL-GUTIERREZ: Yes. Hi everyone.

Good evening. My name is Patricia Leal-Gutierrez.

And my question is the one on the chat, so I’ll just go ahead and elaborate a little bit more. But it’s in regards to the public health and local air and water agencies, more of a question, if the Commission can share any reports or studies or if you’ve seen any reports or studies that look into the public health impacts associated with geothermal, specifically the ones located out here in Imperial County, specifically in the southern end of the Salton Sea? I’m unsure if this information is actually available.

I think that without really studying and really understanding the health impacts of what the current geothermals may be adding to the public health conversation, it’s not as easy to say that geothermal or geothermal practices, you
know, can be easily dismissed, that they’re not causing any health issues in this area.

So as stated before, I think that the California Department of Public Health should be in these conversations, again, to provide input, data, and guidance as this Commission is really looking at providing a report. This component of public health has often been a lens that hasn’t been included, even as we think about Salton Sea and the Salton Sea impacts, but more so in this case.

I think we’re trying to jump the line here where, yes, geothermals have been out here for more than 20 years but I’m not sure if it has been studied through a public health lens in regards to what impacts we’ve seen or not. We know that asthma rates are higher, much, much higher in the southern end than in the northern end. We do have the Salton Sea in common but I think there is underlying layers, intersectional layers that may contribute to that.

So I think, for me, it’s just a question of really looking into reports or studies that further look into the public health component as it relates to the current geothermals as, you
know, this Commission is looking at the further impacts or added impacts when it comes to lithium.

So again, the request is really to bring into the conversations and be a part to bring California Department of Public Health. Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Rod, you have your hand up for this question?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Yeah. Again, I would refer this question, as previously mentioned, to the EnergySource EIR. There is a current study, it’s less than 30 days old, that covers air quality, energy, greenhouse gases, hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, noise, transportation, and all of those. So that document that you’re asking for, you know, very good question, is available to you. And I believe in the chat there is a link to access that document for anyone who wants to look at that.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you. And is there anyone -- I know during the presentation earlier there was mention about the various research, maybe, projects that the CEC or Department of
Energy have funded. Are any of those available, completed? I don’t know if anybody from the CEC can answer that question.

MS. DE JONG: If I could defer, possibly, to someone from the CEC to answer that question, if we’re able to?

CHAIR PAZ: Yeah. Please.

MS. LEE: Hello. This is Natalie Lee from the CEC.

I would point to some of the summaries that have been provided on our public website. I’m not able to provide a thorough and current summary of all of our -- the status of all of our current research projects, however, we do make the reports of those projects available through our website. And this is an area that we can follow up with the Lithium Valley Commission to be sure that you have links to all of those resources available through the Lithium Valley Commission docket, as well.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Natalie. And I think what I’m hearing, too, there’s been a lot of reference to the EIR report that is long and technical. And I think some support around summarizing or having someone presented to us and
the community, so that we can all have access to that information, would be very helpful, especially because the community groups not have attorneys or resources who may have the time to look through such a lengthy report.

Next question, please.

MS. DE JONG: All right. Michael Dea, you should be able to un-mute yourself.

MR. DEA: Yeah. This is -- good evening. I don’t know if it’s more of a comment than a question, if that’s appropriate now? I know we’re getting late on time.

So you know, my name is Mike Dea. I’m with the Laborers’ International Union Local 1184 here in Imperial County out of El Centro. And we’ve got probably, approximately, 1,000 to 1,200 members that live and work in the Imperial County. And we are well behind these projects. I mean, these jobs create -- these jobs that these developers are going to create not only benefit the community but the surrounding communities with longevity jobs.

And you know, I’m hearing a lot of comments about the environmental impacts. And as someone who reviews those impacts, the EIRs, and
makes sure that developers and contractors build
correctly and securely and safely, not only for
the workers but for the surrounding communities,
these developers that are looking into the
lithium industry -- and I’ve been a 26-year
resident of eastern Riverside County and driving
down the Highway 6 corridor and heading down, and
they’re building solar fields with our members --
look out for them and their safety.

I think that these community workforce
agreements that congressman -- or Assemblymember
Eduardo Garcia is looking to do are great for the
community and ensures local hire, local
apprenticeship progs are contributed to, you
know, for our members and their grandchildren and
their nephews and aunts and uncles, the people
that live in these communities that need these
jobs to buy homes and to buy food. And not only
those -- for those reasons, the benefits that
these jobs provide to the membership. I mean,
they get full health and welfare, and dental and
vision, prescription.

And I can go on and on about how
crucially important jobs are. There’s nothing
more important to residents in the Imperial
Valley than a job and to be able to provide for
their families. And these developers come into
this area to put all the risk, all the money,
all, everything that’s required to build these
projects, so we need to support them.

I agree, we need to make sure that
they’re built safe and sound as possible as far
as the environmental impacts. I look at EIRs
constantly to make sure that they’re doing these
things.

So again, I apologize if I’m at the wrong
particular moment in time. I’ve been listening
to this for, now, two-and-a-half to three, almost
three hours, and these are all great questions.
And we are stakeholders and we should have these
forums. And I appreciate the Committee and what
you guys are doing to make sure these things
happen.

So again, if there’s anything LIONA
(phonetic) could do to help or be assistive of
anything, we’re here to help and to make sure
these things are built correctly.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Next question.
MS. DE JONG: Yes. Thank you.
Stephanie White, you should be able to
un-mute.

MS. WHITE: Hi. Good evening, everybody.
Thank you for hosting this and inviting the
community, such as myself.

I was just wondering if the geothermal
people here today could speak on exactly where
the brine of the so-called injected, as it’s
usually called in the media, back into -- where
does that go exactly? Does that eventually end
up in the Salton Sea or does that go on --
somewhere on their parcel of property? Is there
anywhere that we can maybe, as independent
researchers, take a look at those impacts
ourselves? Because that’s kind of hard to find.

The other kind of comment I have is that,
with all due respect to the maybe last commenter
who made a comment, jobs don’t fix the health
issue. And the health issue is the real
pressing, immediate priority here. And jobs are
great but jobs don’t save lives immediately in
the way that they need to be saved down there at
the Salton Sea today.

And so that’s what a lot of people are
pressing upon, the health issues and the
environment, because if we ignore and keep on
ignoring this environment, we say, oh, we’ve been
down there for 30 years, but you can just say the
same that, as the other person said, that the
asthma rates are high, you could just as easily
say that those extraction processes may have
accelerated the issues that we are seeing today.

So I’m just mainly wondering, where
exactly can we kind of look where the brine is
going physically?

Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIR PAZ: Jonathan?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: We have 23
production wells. They go about, roughly, a
mile-and-a-half deep under the earth’s surface.
And we have about the same number of what are
called injection wells. So the reason geothermal
is renewable and sustainable is that we want that
geothermal resource to go on forever. So in the
35 years we’ve been operating there’s been no
decrease in the pressure of the reservoir because
the brine goes right back into the reservoir.

You did hear Elisabeth make a
presentation at the beginning about lithium.
There are 250 parts per million of lithium in that brine, so that will not go back into the geothermal reservoir. But pretty much the rest of it is designed to go right back into the geothermal reservoir so that geothermal can continue to be sustainable. There are -- I mean, that’s a general comment.

Again, it’s a good question, and things like this need a written answer. But I hope that at least gives you a rough idea of how all that works.

The injection wells are also a mile to a mile-and-a-half deep, probably a little bit more shallow than the production wells but not by much.

CHAIR PAZ: Martha?

COMMISSIONER GUZMAN-ACEVAS: Well, I was just going to elaborate on the suggestion and see if Jonathan, or maybe a couple of the others, Rod or others, because I’ve seen it work very constructively in other settings, which is, you know, particularly with COVID, maybe there’s an opportunity for a virtual tour, just to -- it just helps sometimes for people to have the visual opportunity.
You know, having had the privilege of visiting some of these facilities, I think it helps, you know, just helps to make it tangible, make it, in some ways, less scary, and also maybe identify things that we’re not looking at from a lens that we see. You know, as from the energy side, we see so much value from this resource, but it is a good thing. And perhaps, some sort of a virtual tour that we could have, that the community could have access to clicking on and seeing what this looks like, and maybe demystifying some of what we are talking about when we talk about what you just described, Jonathan.

And so if we could be helpful in that process, please let us know. But I know that, certainly, you have the more relevant players here as part of the Commission that could offer that.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Martha.

Next question.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

Margaret Slattery?

MS. SLATTERY: Yeah. Am I un-muted?

MS. DE JONG: Yes.
MS. SLATTERY: Okay. Great. Thank you so much. And thank you to everyone for staying up late and hosting this event. This is Mag Slattery, S-L-A-T-T-E-R-Y. I’m a PhD student studying lithium battery materials at UC Davis. And I’m also an affiliate of the Lithium Resource Research and Innovation Center at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab.

We have been fairly closely following the Commission meetings and have created a survey based on topics that are frequently mentioned by Commissioners, presenters, and members of the public. The purpose is to understand what potential positive and negative impacts are the most important to people who will be involved in or effected by lithium extraction.

And then we will use that information to make sure our research is useful to the Committee and to local community members. Because, in answer to some of the questions that have come up before, the research really is an early development phase in terms of the environments impacts just because the technology is so new.

And, for example, I think it’s clear to me that any analysis of environmental impacts...
needs to explicitly connect them to public health, and then clearly explain why or why not they’re significant. And really, through this survey, we’re hoping to get more feedback like that about what kind of information people would like to see studies in academic literature. The survey is available in Spanish and English and should take no more than ten minutes to complete. So we really encourage folks, if you’re able, to consider sharing your perspective, and also sharing the survey with your networks, if possible. And earlier I shared links to the survey in the chat, as well as my email address in case anyone has questions. So thank you, again, for the time to speak. And thanks to everybody who participated in one of the livestream events.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.
Next question.

MS. DE JONG: Ronald Spears, you should be able to un-mute yourself.

MR. SPEARS: Okay. Hi. Sorry. And I know it’s late, so I’ll try to make it as quick as possible. Ron Spears, S-P-E-A-R-S, President of the Bahia Del Mar Property Owners Association
at Desert Shores. And I just have a real simple
question. I’m a pretty simple guy.

I’m confused at how you’re extracting the
lithium from the Salton Sea but you’re not using
water from the Salton Sea. If you can explain to
me how -- what this reservoir is and what its
relationship is to the Salton Sea, I’d be a
little more clear in how you’re using water
sources but you’re extracting lithium from the
Salton Sea. So if someone could explain that to
me, I’d appreciate it.

CHAIR PAZ: Rod?

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Yeah. Thanks Ron.

Good question. And that’s probably the most
important question to try to clear up.

There’s no connection whatsoever to the
Salton Sea at all. We do not extract lithium
from the Salton Sea. We don’t use water from the
Salton Sea. We’re located, probably, a couple of
miles from the Salton Sea, so it’s just a
geographical reference, and I understand why it
would cause some confusion.

The reservoir itself is approximately
7,000 to 8,000 feet below, you know, off the
Salton Sea on the southeast corner, and it runs
in about three miles from the shoreline. So that brine is brought up, superheated brine, again, flash the steam. We extract the lithium from the brine in a closed loop. Then, as Jonathan mentioned, it’s reinjected back into the formation.

I hope that helps.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: I just had one quick point, which is the Salton Sea’s maximum depth is 43 feet. And our wells are a mile-and-a-half deep, so there’s really no relation.

There is no brine taken from the Salton Sea, no water taken from the Salton Sea.

We need to get this clear, Madam Chair, in writing. You know, it’s a good question.

Clearly, everybody talks about Salton Sea geothermal brine, so a question like this is a perfectly logical one to ask, and it needs a full explanation.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you. Yes.

You know, it is almost 9:00. My intention is for us to be done by 9:00. So I see two more questions, hands up, aside from Ron’s. And then we will read the comments and see if there are any other public comments left. But
we’re going to try to do this all in the last ten minutes. Thank you, everyone, for staying with us.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

If we could turn to Ivette Torres? You should be able to speak.

MS. TORRES: Yeah. Good evening. I also left a comment but it wasn’t sent to everyone, so wasn’t sure if I could -- I just wanted to ask here.

I just wanted to echo what community has been asking for, a public health Commissioner or someone to also guide and give that perspective, as well, as that should be a concern for the community and has been mentioned multiple times tonight. So I really wanted to stand in solidarity with that.

But I also have a question in regards to what research is being done with like community benefit agreements? And as the recovery process would continue and more developers would want to invest, what would be the maximum; right? Like where does the stop? Like how many acres around the Salton Sea and the Imperial Valley and Coachella Valley will be taken up by this
industry in the future? And I think that’s
important to know, right, because a lot of the
issues that we have now were because things
weren’t projected and looked at in a wholistic
view.

So I think that’s something that’s really
important for this Committee, these Commissioners
to look at, like what is the maximum? When is
enough?

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Jonathan?

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Real comment.

Another very good question.

It’s a little premature on our part but I
think that, give or take, 30 acres would be about
the most we would use for lithium production, and
probably a lot less. So I would put 30 acres at
the absolute tops. And it would be in lands
immediately adjacent to our existing geothermal
plants.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Elisabeth, I think that concludes the
last -- that was our last question from the
phone, if you want to go ahead and read the
comments and questions?
And again, I think some of those might be repeated, so my -- what I want to mention is that all of these questions are questions that are going to be influencing, right, the types of questions that we want to address in the report, so I just want to give you, again, that reassurance. Even if we do not answer right now, I mean, the report is not due until October. And so just want to ask for your understanding, even if you feel that some of your questions are not answered right now, it’s because we might not just have the answers right at this moment.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you, Chair Paz. So I will read questions from the question and answer box and, as you noted, one comment per person. So the first one that I’ll read is from James Silva.

“Development of lithium brine recovery technology represents competition for existing suppliers of lithium internationally, as mentioned. What is the opportunity for existing suppliers to pivot and undermine the ability of domestic production to become sufficiently competitive to secure long-term investment?”
I’m sorry. So I’ll continue or -- I do see a hand raised from Commissioner Colwell.

COMMISSIONER COLWELL: Sorry. Yeah, just a quick one.

I think the Salton Sea resources are competitive, probably, globally. There’s still a lot of work to be done. But compared to hard rock mining and processing offshore, I think we are in that first cortile of cost, so -- but again, a little bit more work to be done.

And again, the environmental credentials of this type of lithium is -- has a value, as well.

Thank you.

MS. DE JONG: Great. Thank you.

The next written comment is from Isabella Arezano Saltero (phonetic), and that is, “There is a lot of mention of job creation. Will the lithium extraction companies actually offer these jobs to community members that don’t have the required training and invest the money in training them, or will the companies import workers from other municipalities that already have the necessary training that’s not benefitting the
local community?"

I see a hand raised from Commissioner Weisgall.

COMMISSIONER WEISGALL: Yeah, we’ve covered this, and it’s a very good question.

There’s no benefit to bringing folks in from outside Imperial County. You lose those workers. We want to hire locally. We want to hire people who know what it’s like to live in Imperial County. Will we train folks? Of course we will. A lot of the folks we hire are young folks out of high school without even certificates from community college. Others are community college graduates.

So believe me, you know, it’s not going to be easy to recruit the numbers that we’re looking at. Look at what’s happening right now throughout the country, the great resignation. I mean, you’ve got folks leaving jobs. We have a -- we’re going to have a big task recruiting here. And we’re going to have every interest in training, in job fairs, in career days to explain what we’ve got to offer in internships and the likes.

So, absolutely, to the strongest interest
in local hires and would only bring in workers if
we can’t hire locally. Why would you not hire
locally? Of course you would. That’s what we
want to do.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

The next written comment says,

“I am encouraged by the rationale fact-based
discussion I have heard so far in today’s
meeting. I especially appreciate the
Commissioners support for improving local
economy and education.

“One of the biggest questions from local
residents is how do the Commissioners
anticipate that the lithium extraction
companies will support the restoration of the
badly degraded Salton Sea? The biggest
concern in this regard is controlling the
emissions of toxic dust from the contaminated
salt deposits of the playas/beaches of the
Salton Sea. Please provide actual
specifics.”

All right, I will move on.

There was a question submitted that said,

“Can Rod elaborate on the current project?”

Michael McKibben said,
“The evidence for a complete lack of connection between the sea and the geothermal reservoir is presented in Williams and McKibben 1989.”

And if I could ask the translator to help with translating the comment that came in from Sergio Rodriguez? There are three in the Q&A box.

(Spanish translation provided off mike.)

MS. DE JONG: Thank you.

And there is one more comment by Senator Ramirez, if you wouldn’t mind reading?

(Spanish translation provided off mike.)

MS. DE JONG: Great. Thank you.

Those are all of the questions submitted. Oh, I’m sorry, there is one more.

“What does Supervisor Kelley believe the positive benefits will be for his North End Energy Commission District?”

Okay. Those are all of the questions submitted that are from unique submitters. so comments that -- commenters that had already had an opportunity earlier -- or sorry, had not already had an opportunity earlier in the meeting.
So we’ll move to you, Chair Paz, for public comment. I do see that you have --

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

MS. DE JONG: -- a hand raised.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Elisabeth.

And, yeah, this is the opportunity for general public comment from anybody who’s still in the audience.

MS. DE JONG: Thank you. And Chair Paz, I do see a hand raised from Commissioner Kelley.

CHAIR PAZ: Okay. We’ll go to Commissioner Kelley after the public comment if that’s okay?

MS. DE JONG: All right. Thank you.

MARIA: Hello. Maria Nava-Froelich, Calipatria City Council.

I just want to thank the Lithium Valley Commission for all their hard work that’s been happening behind the scenes.

I want to thank Mr. Kelley and Mr. Hanks, Jose (phonetic) Olmedo and Eric Ruiz. There’s different people that have been really participating and advocating for the North End.

I want to thank the CalEnergy, the EnergySource, the Controlled Thermal Resources.
They’ve been really good partners to our Calipatria School District. They have contributed millions of dollars to our North End community.

I want to say that I have been a long-time activist and environmentalist, working really hard. What I could see is this is going to bring minimal negative impacts but I think it’s going to bring huge positive impacts to our community. I look forward to the continued work with the lithium workshops that have been taking place that I’ve had the privilege of participating in, really learning a lot.

We have members of the community that are here today from the Niland Chamber of Commerce, the Calipatria Chamber of Commerce, the Latin American Club, the North End Alliance, all here in support. Yes, we do have concerns. We want to be able to have some leverage in regards to some of the jobs that are coming to our community. We want to have some leverage in regards to some of the community benefits that we’re hoping to benefit from.

We are struggling economically. We are a disadvantaged community. There is some
environmental issues that are taking place.

There’s high asthma. And our Calipatria School District is very supportive, as well as the City of Calipatria.

There’s talk about needing some water, possibility of lithium project maybe using some water from the sanitation district. I think our city council will be open, yet, as to discuss and approve.

But I want to thank our city Mayor for being here, Huston Hisel, and Councilmember Chavez, as well.

Thank you very much for allowing us to speak today. And we look forward to the lithium project coming to fruition. Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

And Commissioner Kelley?

VICE CHAIR KELLEY: Thank you, Commissioner Paz -- or Chairperson Paz.

That question was, I think that Elisabeth read last, was where do I see or what am I looking forward to for the development --

CHAIR PAZ: What are some --

VICE CHAIR KELLEY: -- and the impacts?

CHAIR PAZ: Yeah. What are the benefits
VICE CHAIR KELLEY: The benefits I see?
And I know that Mr. Reyes and Ms. Nava have spoken about it, and Mr. Weisgall has talked about it, that we’ve been having these conversations.

The benefits that I see is that because of the action by the Public Utilities Commission on June 24th that made geothermal recognized and included in the Integrated Resource Plan for California, lithium became an -- it became, basically, a no-brainer for energy and mineral extraction to happen in Imperial County.

And what I see as the benefit is that our county has the opportunity to see an industry of energy, of resource production and, hopefully, manufacturing with that. And that would change the demographics of what you’ve heard about, being disadvantaged communities, underserved, distal, rural, agricultural. We could double our property tax value in the next eight years for the entire county based off of what is being proposed.

And there is more that needs to be understood about what the impacts are
financially, environmentally, but all the
benefits that have already been shared through --
with this Commission and this workshop lead us in
the direction that we will see an opportunity for
our children and our grandchildren to be able to
live and thrive in Imperial County.

That’s all.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you, Vice Chair Kelley.

Elisabeth, back to you for public
comments.

MS. DE JONG: Yeah. Thank you, Chair
Paz. So we do have a number of comments written
into the chat for public comment. Would you like
me to read through all of those?

CHAIR PAZ: There’s still one person in
Calipatria, so if we can recognize that person,
and then go through the written comments?

MR. LOPEZ: Good evening. My name is
Luis Lopez. And I want to thank everyone for
their hard work in making this community forum
happen.

And I want to thank the members of the
public who have come and joined us today, even
though the majority did leave because it is
pretty late, but this okay.
Lithium presents a unique opportunity for the residents of Imperial County and Coachella Valley. As you all may or may not know, Imperial County is the poorest county in California with one of the highest unemployment rates in not only California but in the United States. The recovery of lithium can provide jobs to many people here in the county who are in desperate need of providing for their families. This is why it is imperative that the residents of Imperial County and Eastern Coachella Valley are prioritized when assembling the workforce for lithium extraction.

Many of the lithium is found on public lands, so it is only fair that the public is taken into consideration. Taking the public into consideration does not only mean providing them with jobs, but it also means using some of the money generated from lithium recovery to directly benefit our disadvantaged communities.

For example, the revenue produced from the mineral recovery could provide much needed support of the IID’s restoration of the Salton Sea’s dry lakebed which is exposing our communities to toxic elements and damaging their
lungs.

This is a great and fortunate opportunity for Imperial County and Coachella Valley. We need to all make sure that lithium recovery benefits everyone and not a select few.

Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

And Elisabeth, I think that concludes our public comments. I have a suggestion, given the time, that the public comments that were submitted written are all maybe docketed for public record and made available to all the Commissioners, so on our own time we can review them at our own time, if that’s possible?

MS. DE JONG: Yes, I believe we can go ahead and docket what is submitted into the chat.

And I do just want to acknowledge, Calipatria Community Center did raise their hand.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

So is there another person in Calipatria? I believe that was the last one. Okay.

I think that was it, Elisabeth. Thank you for noticing that.

So we have a few comments. Next slide, please.
Closing remarks. And I will start with Vice Chair Kelley, see if you have any closing remarks?

VICE CHAIR KELLEY: No, nothing. Thank you.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Assemblymember Garcia, any closing remarks?

ASSEMBLYMEMBER GARCIA: Thank you all for participating. Looking forward to another conversation where we continue to engage the community, regardless of whether someone likes the format or not, you know, that’s not the issue at hand.

The issue at hand here is that there are numerous ways for the community to continue to stay engaged. And I’m hopeful that the Lithium Valley Commission will pursue other forms beyond just the regular meetings happening once a month or the meetings in between. Our office would be more than happy to participate in those conversations.

And look, there were not a lot of answers to some questions, clearly because we are still at the very beginning of doing our research to be
able to answer those questions substantively.

So with that being said, thank you to all who participated. Look forward to you remaining engaged and part of this process every step of the way.

Thank you and have a good night.

CHAIR PAZ: Thank you.

Thank you, everyone. I am taking a lot from all of the participation and discussion tonight. And as the Assemblymember mentioned, we are early in the process. And to, you know, to the extent that some of these questions, if we feel there are no answers, I think the Commission will have to, at that point in their recommendations, explore some of these, maybe a recommendation to the legislature pointing out, these are the areas where there is still additional research or -- research and/or resources needed; right?

So just, again, there’s a lot of food for thought and for us as Commissioners to consider as we explore the upcoming topics in the Commission.

So again, thank you, everybody, for participating and staying with us.
And next slide.

That concludes our forum, so everyone have a good night.

(The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.)
CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were reported by me, a certified electronic court reporter and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 1st day of December, 2021.

[Signature]

MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367
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witnesses were transcribed    by me, a certified transcriber and a
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of the proceedings in the above-entitled
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MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367

December 1, 2021