MEETING

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ENERGY COMMISSION

In the Matter of:	)
	)
Desert Renewable Energy	)
Conservation Plan	)

HILTON SAN DIEGO MISSION VALLEY

901 CAMINO DEL RIO SOUTH

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2014

6:30 P.M.

Reported by:

Troy Ray

APPEARANCES

AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES

Tom Zale, Bureau of Land Management, El Centro Office

Ed Pert, California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Mendel Stewart, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Carlsbad Ecological Services Offices

Scott Flint, California Energy Commission

STAFF

Chris Beale, DRECP Director

Kristy Chew, California Energy Commission

ALSO PRESENT

David Smith

Bill Powers

Kelly Fuller, Protect Our Communities

Ashley Richmond, California Wind Energy Association

Rick Benson

Carol Benson

Jim Peugh, San Diego Audubon Society

Ellen McKissick

Richard Gholson, Alliance for Desert Preservation

Erin D'Orio

Ron Rempel

Neil Nadler, Alliance for Desert Preservation

Sam Goldman, Conservation Lands Foundation

APPEARANCES (CONT.)

ALSO PRESENT
Rene Owens

AGENDA

P R O C E E D I N G S

6:38 p.m.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2014

MR. BEALE: Hello everyone. On behalf of the California Energy Commission, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I'd like to welcome you here tonight. And thank you for choosing us over the World Series. I know it's not easy to get here on a weeknight. I just want to stress that we really appreciate your taking the time to come here and hear about the Draft DRECP.

I'm joined here tonight by several folks who have worked for the agencies that have prepared this plan, and consulting team who prepared this plan. They're here to help answer some of your questions tonight. The purpose of the meeting tonight is to introduce you to the DRECP. It was just released about three weeks ago. It's a substantial document. And what we're trying to do here today is help you focus on what interests you most in the document to help you understand, you know, what the DRECP is, why we're preparing it, and where we are in the process.

If you have specific questions we're here to help you locate where information that's going to be relevant to your questions or concerns or interests are in the document. And we want to provide you an early opportunity for public

comment based on your first impressions. We know the document has only been out for three weeks. We do not expect you to have read the document. We know some of you may have started reading the document. So this is an early opportunity to comment. You can comment as often as you like on the Draft DRECP. We'll have opportunities today, but you can comment today, you can comment later, and several times if you like. The more comments the better. We're here to hear from you tonight. That's the -- that's why we're here.

I do want to stress that what we're talking about tonight is a planning document. It's a planning document that deals with renewable energy and conservation and other -- and land use planning on BLM land. We are not here to talk about any specific renewable energy projects. There are no individual specific projects proposed as part of the DRECP or transmission. We're here to talk about a plan, a draft plan.

Just a word or two about the format for the presentation for the meeting tonight. We're going to start with a brief presentation on the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan or DRECP as we call it. This presentation is in a slightly longer form. It is on our website, you'll hear about that, it's www.drecp.org. It's a video presentation that is very similar to this. It's a

little bit longer. But if you've seen that, tonight's presentation will seem very familiar.

Following the brief presentation we'll have a breakout session with our information stations. This will be kind of an open house. That will start at about seven o'clock. We'll have folks from the agencies and the consultants who have worked on the plan here to answer your questions, and that will be about 45 minutes to an hour.

And then following that -- and during that time, let me just say, you'll have your first opportunity to make formal comments on the record. We have a Court Reporter here.

Troy, could you raise your hand in the back?

Do you see Troy? If you like, during the breakout session, what we're talking about, you know, with the information stations, you can go make a formal comment on the record to Troy. He's a Court Reporter. He'll take -- he'll take your comments and they'll become written comments on the record.

Following the breakout session we'll have an opportunity for public comment. We'll ask you to come up here and speak to the group. Troy will be writing down those comments, as well, so they'll be formal comments on the record, anything you say during that period of time.

We have speaker cards in the back at the front

table; they're blue. We ask that you, if you would like to speak, fill out a speaker card. There's a lot of information on the card, but all we really need is your name. And the reason we have that is we want to know how many people are interested in speaking so we can allocate time accordingly. And also I'll let you know where you are in the lineup. I'll say who is first and second, third, so forth, so you're prepared to make your comments.

We also have -- we'll be sharing this meeting by WebEx. We have folks? I'm not sure.

Kristy, do we have folks who have called in?

MS. CHEW: Yes, there are a few.

MR. BEALE: Okay. And folks on the phone, if you want to make a comment on the record, we'll let you do that. I would ask you to -- if you are logged onto the WebEx please use the chat function to let Kristy know you'd like to make a comment. For those of you calling in, what we'll do after we have heard comments from folks here in the room and folks who have asked to make a comment through the chat function, we'll just open the lines so anyone else who would like to can make a public comment.

Just a quick housekeeping detail before we move on -- move on to the presentation. Bathrooms are out here and on to your left. And I know the -- I'm not sure how -- the temperature was really cool when we first came in.

We've asked for it to be a little warmer in here. If you -- if the temperature is not right, come let me know. We can ask them -- ask them to fix it. It feels like it's getting a little warmer in here now.

And with that I think we'll move on to the next part of our presentation. Scott Flint from the California Energy Commission will be making our PowerPoint presentation today.

MR. FLINT: Thanks, Chris.

Good evening, everyone. Again, on behalf of -- I'm Scott Flint. And on behalf of the California Energy Commission, the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, I'd like to welcome you to this public meeting and introductory -- introductory presentation on the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan or DRECP. So I will use that acronym tonight to keep things short.

This presentation is intended to explain generally what the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan is and to touch briefly on important elements of that draft plan. These are the topics we'll briefly touch on important elements of that draft plan.

These are the topics we'll briefly touch on. For a more detailed introduction to the DRECP, please look at the DRECP introductory video that Chris described at the

website, or the DRECP Executive Summary. And both of those are available on the DRECP website which is www.drecp.org.

The DRECP is the result of an intense collaboration interagency planning process. It's a comprehensive plan that contains a great deal of information. The DRECP is organized in a format similar to Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Impact Reports that you are used to seeing.

The DRECP contains six volumes and an additional volume of technical appendices. The volumes in the DRECP correspond to Chapters that you are used to seeing in other environmental documents.

Volume I contains the background of the DRECP, including the purpose and need. Volume II describes the alternatives. Volume III describes the environmental setting and existing conditions. Volume IV contains the draft environmental analysis and environmental consequences. Volume V describes scoping and public participation. And Volume VI includes details about implementation of mitigation measures.

There are 24 appendices, including appendices for covered species, biological goals and objectives, and climate change. There are also appendices that provide additional detail for the BLM Land Use Plan Amendment, the General Conservation Plan, and the Natural Community

Conservation Plan, which are all elements of the DRECP.

The four agencies that were principally responsible for preparing the document are the California Energy Commission, the Bureau of Land Management, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Many additional federal, state and local agencies, tribes, and private citizens provided helpful input into the development of the Draft DRECP.

The purpose and goals of the draft DRECP are to provide a long-term adaptable plan for renewable energy development and resource conservation for more than 22.5 million acres of land in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts of Southern California. The DRECP has a 25-year planning horizon and is intended to be implemented through the year 2040.

The plan includes monitoring and adaptive management program that is designed to facilitate improvements in the plan over time based on new information.

The draft DRECP is intended to streamline the environmental review and permitting process for renewable energy projects cited in appropriate areas. “Streamlined” under the DRECP means the review and permitting process will be more efficient and more predictable. Streamlined does not mean that the environmental analysis will be incomplete or steps skipped. The DRECP will not weaken requirements

for environmental review under state or federal law; it will make them more efficient and more predictable.

The DRECP will cover sensitive species and their habitat, including species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act.

On BLM administered lands the DRECP will also conserve other resources and values, including recreation, cultural, visual, and wilderness characteristics. A core element of the DRECP is the significant increase in conservation and recreation designations proposed in the BLM Land Use Plan Amendment that are designed to protect valuable resources and uses on BLM land.

Currently the siting of renewable energy projects and environmental mitigation are considered on an individual project-by-project basis. In contrast, with a large landscape level plan like the DRECP, natural resource values and other valuable resources and uses across the desert can be considered when identifying suitable locations for renewable energy projects and when identifying priority areas where natural resources can be conserved and managed. Consideration of renewable energy development and transmission, along with the conservation of a range of values and uses together in one planning process is considered smart from the start.

The DRECP identifies suitable areas for renewable energy development called development focus areas. And these areas are suitable because they have renewable energy resources; they are either windy, sunny or have geothermal resources, and also because they are compatible with the conservation of species and other resource values and uses in the desert. In most of the alternatives the DRECP's development focus areas are located where natural resource values are relatively low to minimize the conflicts between renewable energy development and resource conservation.

The DRECP is needed to improve the efficiency and predictability of the environmental review process and permitting processes for renewable energy projects. By streamlining review and permitting processes for renewable energy projects within development focus areas, the DRECP will create an incentive for projects to be sited there.

The DRECP would also help improve the coordination of federal, state, local, tribal, and private conservation efforts in the desert by identifying high priority landscape-scale goals that can be used to guide actions to achieve greater conservation outcomes.

The DRECP planning area encompasses approximately 22-and-a-half million acres across portions of seven counties in the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. It includes federal and non-federal lands. The plan area includes only

a small portion of some counties, like San Diego, and large -- a large portion or all of some counties such as San Bernardino County.

This map shows you the general ownership within the plan area. The largest land holdings are BLM lands shown in yellow, National Park Service lands shown in green, military lands shown in dark gray, and private lands shown in a light gray color.

The DRECP is a combination of three different types of plans, a BLM Land Use Plan Amendment referred to as the LUPA, L-U-P-A, a US Fish and Wildlife Service General Conservation Plan referred to as the GCP, and a California Department of Fish and Wildlife Natural Community Conservation Plan referred to as the NCCP. The three plans are integrated and work together to help achieve the DRECP's overall goals.

Each of the different plans applies to a different portion of the DRECP plan area. The BLM Land Use Plan Amendment applies only to BLM lands covering nearly 10 million acres of the plan area. The General Conservation Plan applies to 5.4 million acres of non-federal land; it does not apply to BLM lands or any other federal lands. And the Natural Community Conservation Plan applies to both federal and non-federal lands covering then entire plan area and nearly 19 million acres.

The DRECP's covered activities are the categories of actions for which the DRECP could provide a more efficient and predictable environmental review and permitting process. Renewable energy development projects that are sited within the DRECP's development focus areas are the largest category of covered activities and includes solar, wind, and geothermal projects. The transmission needed to support renewable energy generation is another category of covered activity. Transmission projects would be covered both within and outside of development focus areas in order to deliver energy to where it is needed.

Biological conservation and compensation actions in the conservation areas are also covered activities. On BLM lands, conservation and compensation actions for a variety of resources and uses are covered activities, including but not limited to biological, cultural, recreation, and visual.

Under the DRECP all phases of covered activities must be addressed. This includes preconstruction and construction activities, operation and maintenance activities over the long term, and then, finally, decommissioning of renewable energy projects when they've completed their operations.

The DRECP plans for up to 20,000 megawatts of new renewable energy generation and transmission in the plan

area through 2040. For the purposes of the DRECP the 20,000 megawatts of new generation is not -- is a planning tool, not a development goal or target. The DRECP is not intended to drive this level of development. The 20,000 megawatt estimate for renewable energy in the desert was used to develop an estimate of the amount of ground disturbance that might occur as a result of that level of development. The ground disturbance estimate is an average of approximately 177,000 acres in each of the 5 action alternatives but is dispersed and analyzed differently in each alternative. The actual amount of development in the plan area will be driven by energy demand, policy decisions, and market conditions.

The DRECP analyzes the effects of both constructing and operating new generation under a range of alternatives. One of the key differences amongst the DRECP alternatives is the size and location of the development focus areas where renewable energy projects would be sited.

The DRECP includes specific renewable energy designations. The most important of these are the development focus areas where renewable energy projects would -- would benefit from a more streamlined and efficient environmental review and permitting process. BLM would also be offering incentives to renewable energy projects sited in DFAs on BLM lands.

Study areas are the other type of renewable energy

designation. Study areas are lands that could be appropriate for development in the future, but require further analysis and are not currently regarded as development focus areas for the purposes of the DRECP, the Draft DRECP.

The DRECP also includes a biological conservation strategy. There are 37 covered species identified in the draft DRECP. The biological conservation strategy is designed to ensure the conservation of habitat, natural communities, and ecological processes for these 37 species. The conservation strategy includes an overarching set of biological goals and objectives, and specific conservation and management actions, or CMAs, to avoid, minimize or compensate for impacts to these species and their habitat in order to contribute to their recovery. The conservation strategy also includes a monitoring and adaptive management program to allow the DRECP to incorporate new information throughout the 25-year term of the plan.

Six alternatives are presented and analyzed in the Draft DRECP; five action alternatives and one no-action alternative. The agencies have identified a preferred alternative from the five action alternatives. The no-action alternative describes what is expected to happen if the DRECP is not completed or not approved.

The BLM Land Use Plan Amendment, the Natural

Community Conservation Plan and the General Conservation Plan are included in all five of the action alternatives. Other common elements of the alternatives include the conservation strategy, development focus areas, recreation designations, and the monitoring and adaptive management program.

One of the most important differences amongst the DRECP alternatives is the size and geographic distribution of development focus areas. This slide shows you a comparison of the DFAs in three of the five action alternatives. The DFAs are shown on these maps in hot pink or dark pink. Alternative 1, on the left, has the smallest extent of development focus areas. The preferred alternative in the middle has somewhat larger development focus areas and would provide moderate siting flexibility and moderately dispersed development impacts. Alternative 2, on the right, has the largest acreage of development focus areas and would provide the most siting flexibility and the most geographically dispersed impacts from renewable energy development.

The circled areas are provided to show you the primary areas where development focus areas are substantially different amongst the alternatives. It would be West Mojave between these alternatives, Eastern Riverside between these alternatives, Imperial between these

alternatives.

Remember, regardless of DFA size and distribution, we are estimating an average of 177,000 acres of impact in each of the five alternatives.

Another important difference among the -- amongst the DRECP alternatives is the extent of BLM lands proposed to be added to the National Landscape Conservation System. This slide is showing the same three alternatives as the previous slide, and the proposed National Conservation Lands are colored purple on these maps. Alternative 1 is on the left and has the least amount of new National Conservation land proposed. The preferred alternative in the middle has a moderate amount of proposed National Conservation Lands. And Alternative 2 has the most or largest amount or proposed National Conservation Lands.

The amount of proposed National Conservation Lands corresponds to the amount of development focus area in each alternative. The larger and more dispersed the DFAs, the more natural resources are at risk of being impacted. So larger Natural Conservation land designations are proposed to address the increased impact.

Here are some basic highlights about the preferred alternative. The overall biological conservation strategy for the preferred alternative covers approximately 15 million acres, including existing conservation. The BLM

conservation designations cover about 4 million acres, the development focus areas cover about 2 million acres, the study area lands cover about 183,000 acres, and the BLM recreation designations cover about 3.6 million acres.

This is a complete map of the preferred alternative. And here you see the development focus areas in relation to Conservation Lands. Development focus areas, different conservation land designations and other study areas, recreation lands, military bases, and legislatively and legally protected areas. This map gives you a full and general picture of the preferred alternative. And you'll be able to see this map better at the information stations.

A little bit about the environmental analysis, DRECP Volumes III and IV. Volume III is the environmental setting. And Volume IV is the environmental analysis, also known as the environmental consequences.

Twenty-three resource areas were considered in the environmental analysis. These resource areas were identified based on scoping meetings, preliminary analysis, and input from tribes, the public, and agency experts.

In the environmental analysis we compare the alternatives based on renewable energy development impacts, proposed conservation and management actions for the covered species, proposed conservation and management actions for recreation, visual, cultural and other resources on BLM

lands, and acreages and types of land allocations on BLM lands.

The draft analysis concluded that impacts for most of the 23 resource areas would be less than significant. For ten of the resource areas impacts would be significant in one more of the alternatives, including the no-action alternative. And here is a list of those ten resource areas.

This section describes how the DRECP will be implemented.

And first off, it is important to note that no new government entity will be created by the DRECP. All existing agencies will retain their current authority and responsibilities. The purpose of identifying an implementation structure for the DRECP is to improve agency coordination and communication. Implementation will also include tribal, local government, public, scientific participation and input. The DRECP also includes an estimated cost for the implementation of the DRECP's biological conservation strategy, and identifies sources of funding.

Local governments may use the DRECP to inform their land use planning decisions. The DRECP will not restrict or change local land use planning or permitting authority for renewable energy projects. Local governments

will have the option of applying for permits from the US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to cover renewable energy projects within their local jurisdictions.

This slide concludes our overview of the draft DRECP, Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

So now we're going to cover some information on public participation. And this section explains the options for public participation. The agencies have completed their work for this draft plan, and now we need your help and input to shape the final plan.

I want to let you know that all of the -- all the information on the following slides is available at the table out in the foyer, the fact sheet labeled DRECP Public Participation, and on a second fact sheet that came right out of the slide show. So you don't have to frantically copy it down. I know you can't all see it from where you're at.

We created a dedicated website for the DRECP. Again, it's www.drecp.org. The draft DRECP plan is available at this site. The draft plan is also available on Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service websites.

We have developed an innovative mapping tool called the DRECP Gateway, which we'll talk about more in a

minute. The DRECP is available for review at local libraries and agency offices throughout the plan area. And you can find the addresses of these local libraries -- specific libraries and agency offices on www.drecp.org. They're also on the handout. They're also on the handout. Also, DVDs are available upon request. If you would like a DVD please send your request to the email address listed, or call the toll free number that is listed. And this information is also available on www.drecp.org, so on the fact sheet and on the website.

Public comment and review is absolutely critical to developing the final DRECP. Your comments will be accepted by email, fax, physical delivery, and at these public meetings. We have listed here two guides that may be of help to you in putting together your comments, one for the National Environmental Policy Act, the one for the California Environmental Quality Act. We want your voice to be heard. Links to these guides can also be found on the DRECP website.

We want to assure you that all public comments are welcomed, valued, and will be considered in developing the final DRECP.

The public comment period opened on September 26th, 2014 and closes on January 9th, 2015. Here you see the email and US Mail and hand delivery locations where your

comments can be sent. These are also on -- available on the website and in the fact sheet.

We have some tips for you in preparing your comments. To help us develop a final plan, we need to know what you want us to change. Substantive comments will have the greatest effect on the final DRECP because they will tell us specifically what you want added, what you want removed or otherwise changed, and most importantly, why.

Some examples of specific types of comments that will have the greatest effect include comments that raise significant unaddressed environmental issues, issues that require clarification in the document or modification to one or more of the alternatives, inclusion of new or different alternatives, addition of new or missing information that could substantially change analysis or conclusions, or corrections in an analysis that could substantially change conclusions.

To help you understand the DRECP, we prepared a series of fact sheets, a list of frequently asked questions, and an informational video. They are all available, except for the video, at the table in the foyer, and at the DRECP website, www.drecp.org.

Public meetings are being held throughout the planning area and in surrounding population centers. Information on future meetings is also posted on the

website.

DRECP Gateway; this is our innovative online data and mapping tool. It is free and it's very user friendly. There is a sign-in function, but you only have to sign in and use that if you want to save you're information and come back later and use the same information again. In this tool you can view, edit and analyze maps and data. The Gateway contains data sets, so everyone with a computer, regardless of your experience with GIS, can use this data.

We encourage everyone to go in and explore the maps and data. You can create custom maps and put your comments right into those maps, and then save, print or export those maps for inclusion with your written comments. The website is there at the bottom of the slide. And this website is drecp.databasing.org. It is important to note that this site is an innovative tool, but is just a tool. It is not necessary to use this tool in order to review, understand or comment on the DRECP. It is an optional resource available for your use.

Here is a snapshot of the front page of the DRECP Gateway. The buttons across the top and those along the left side have drop-down menus or boxes with instructional videos, narratives on how to explore the site, details about the site, videos on how to create maps and how to insert comments, and many other functions. It's very easy to use,

and we encourage you to go in and play with it.

This concludes our presentation. We thank you for your interest in the DRECP and we look forward to talking with you and hearing your comments tonight. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you, Scott.

We're going to shift over to our open house information station session for this tonight.

I do realize, I think I may have left out some information at the very beginning, and that is who I am. I'm Chris Beale. I'm the Director of the DRECP.

So if you could, Scott, advance the slide to the -- yeah.

Just to orient you to our information stations --

MR. FLINT: We're in trouble now.

MR. BEALE: We may have to give the presentation again. I think it's at the end, yeah. Right there. There we go.

All right, so what we have are six stations for you to visit. And we have -- remember, we have Troy the Court Reporter at the back table. The reason we're having a court reporter during this session is if you don't want to make your comments in front of a group of people you can use this time to do that. If you do want to make a comment during the public comment period, just to remind you to please fill out one of the blue speaker cards at the front

table. You can give them either to Valerie who was there when you came in at the front table, Kristy at the back table in the green shirt, or you can just give them to me.

So the stations we have today, we have one station, Station 1, which is an overview station for the DRECP. If you just have a general question about what the DRECP is, why we're doing it, and so forth, you have a question about what the alternatives are that are being presented and how they are different, or if you have a question about the environmental analysis, please go to Station 1. And if Station 1 folks could raise your hand just so we -- it's our biggest station. We have more posterboards there than anywhere else. So that's for your general questions.

We have other stations in the back, to the rear of the room. We have a station on renewable energy where you can learn about the assumptions behind renewable energy planning that's part of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. Can you guys raise your hand? So if you have questions about renewable energy, that's our station there.

The next station over to my right is our station, the BLM's Land Use Planning Amendment. Can you guys raise your hand? If you have any questions about the LUPA, please go there.

And moving to the right we have a station on the Fish and Wildlife Service's General Conservation Plan. Thanks.

And to the right of that a station on the Natural Community Conservation Plan. Thank you, guys.

And then on the far right we have a station on the overarching kind of biological conservation strategy that was used plan-wide. Each of the planning components use that, you know, the Land Use Plan Amendment, the General Conservation Plan, and the Natural Community Conservation Plan all use the analysis, the approach proposed in the biological conservation strategy for their plan. So please go there if you have questions about that.

So what we'll do is we'll probably -- we're starting a little bit late. But I think we'll still try to start the public comment period at eight o'clock just to make sure we have plenty of time for that. So please feel free to go there, ask your questions, and we'll reconvene for public comment in about 45 minutes. Thank you.

(Off the record at 7:50 p.m.)

(Breakout Session Public Comment begins at 7:50 p.m.)

MS. D'ORIO: Okay. My name is Erin D'Orio. And one of my main comments is that we, the people that this is going to influence need a lot more time, not just to digest and interpret the material, but as the Committee has asked

us for, in order to provide alternative solutions we need more time to research, implement, and understand what those solutions might be. And so we think it's very unfair to try to come up with all of those sorts of ideas in a 90-day window when this has taken five years to come up with and research.

We need a significant amount of time beyond the January date in order to come up with some of our alternative ideas and solutions, because the people are being very affected, very stressed. And you know, we -- we would like to contribute to this process but we simply need more time. Thank you.

MR. RUE: I would just like to add that if -- can you hear me all right? Okay. Anyway, I'd just like to add that the private companies that are going to be putting in these solar panels and solar areas, what have you, that they take on the responsibility of educating the public, in addition, with their own PSAs or public service announcements that they're providing this energy, whether it be posted signs at the location or through their own media resources by telling the public that, as an example, that we've just saved you a whole bunch of money because we put up this plant, so that there's a sense of responsibility that the companies aren't profiting 100 percent and taking advantage of a program like this.

(On the record at 8:02 p.m.)

MR. BEALE: We might have another comment or two from the phone. So what I propose we do is have three minutes per speaker and go through all the folks who submitted comment cards in the room, and then go to the phones. And then at the end I'll just ask if anyone else wants to come up and speak. I think with the group we have tonight we can make sure that everybody that wants to talk can talk, and probably still let you go before nine o'clock.

So if I could ask all of our agency folks who are going to come join me on the podium to come join me on the podium, please, and we'll introduce them.

Our first speaker will be David Smith, followed by Bill Powers and Kelly Fuller.

And while our folks are coming up here and before we do introductions, I have a timer here. The way this works, if I can make it function correctly for speakers, is it will be yellow until you get down to one minute, and then it turns red. And this is just to help you keep track of your time as a speaker. Again, I think we have enough time that if you get through your three minutes and you still have something to say we can come back to you. I just want to make sure that everybody that wants to speak tonight has a change to do it.

So we have up here senior folks from each of the

agencies principally responsible for preparing the Draft DRECP. And I'll ask them to introduce themselves, and then we will get going on public comments.

MR. ZALE: My name is Tom Zale. I'm the Field Manager for BLM's El Centro Field Office.

MR. PERT: Good evening. My name is Ed Pert. I'm the Regional Manager for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

MR. STEWART: Good evening. My name is Mendel Stewart. I'm the Manager for the Carlsbad Ecological Services Office, and also the Palm Springs Ecological Services Office.

MR. FLINT: Any hello again. Scott Flint, California Energy Commission. I'm the Commission's lead on the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

MR. BEALE: All right. Thanks. So just a reminder to folks, this is really an opportunity for public comment. The last session was for Q and A. So we're just here to hear -- here to hear your comments.

Let's see, is -- is David Smith here? Ah, yes.

And a reminder of the -- all your comments will be recorded by our Court Reporter and made part of the public record.

So thank you, David. Please go ahead.

MR. SMITH: And I'm on? Microphone works?

MR. BEALE: Is the mike -- can you guys hear with the mike? Okay. Yeah, we're good.

MR. SMITH: Okay. Well, like you said, my name is David Smith. I am one of many people employed by Spreckels Sugar Company, formally known and still known to many people of the Imperial Valley as Holly Sugar. For those of you who have taken the trip out in the Imperial Valley from El Centro to Brawley you may have seen our sugar silos with the sea level sign about half way up the silos.

I've worked for this company for over 30 years and have seen not only the factory grow in efficiency, but have especially seen flourish the productivity of its growers. In fact, it's our growers who actually produce the natural sugar, we just extract it.

I might mention that many of -- all of you, of course, and many of you out there already heard most of my comments yesterday. I attended the meeting in El Centro. So they are -- most of them are already a matter of the public record. But I did want to say that I'm here in San Diego just illustrating our strong sense of need to have our interests heard by as many people as possible. And I do applaud the DRECP organization for making that such an important part of the process.

Spreckels Sugar does not support taking out of production any additional farmland for the purpose of

alternative renewable energy projects. With a finite number of available acres devoted to agriculture, even removing a small number of acres can create the economic tipping point that forces competitive efficient enterprises, such as ours, out of business. Fewer acres, less supply, higher cost for farmland, reduced competitiveness which translates into lower profitability. And of course, we all know if a company or a business or a farming operation is not making a profit, we know what happens. And we all know -- excuse me.

While we all support renewable energy, the impact on the future of agriculture in Imperial Valley is at stake, as are the economic futures of Imperial Valley workers and businesses. Many energy companies that supply power to areas outside of the valley have met or will soon meet their alternative energy percentage goals. And it is unfair and unnecessary to continue to sacrifice productive agricultural ground to the detriment of the Imperial Valley, its workers, and the businesses that support the agricultural community.

The unemployment rate in Imperial County is approximately 25 percent. And National Beef in Brawley just recently closed its doors, laying off 1,400 people. Such alternative renewable energy projects tend to reduce long-term employment by employing only temporary and many non-local or out-of-area workers during the construction phase,

and then employ very few workers long term.

Please preserve the farmland for agriculture and help protect this longstanding, food-producing, economic base of the Imperial Valley. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you, David.

Next we have Bill Powers, followed by Kelly Fuller and Ashley Richmond.

MR. POWERS: Thank you for coming to San Diego. I appreciate you coming within a mile of my house to put this on tonight.

I'm a local energy engineer. I get involved a lot in these transmission discussions and renewable energy, local gas turbine projects. And I'd like to just summarize quickly the history of this process as I know it.

We had the National Interests Electric Transmission Corridor process in about 2006-2007. It didn't prosper. It didn't result in much happening. We had the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) in 2010 or so and, again, it didn't really go anywhere, in part because they were very much top-down processes. And now we have DRECP and we'll see where it goes.

But there are other processes out there. For example, the California Public Utilities Commission put out a document in a formal proceeding called California Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan. And I guess to give a broader

picture of myself, I'm a big advocate of rooftop solar, parking lot solar, rooftop solar. We can definitely do most of it that way and we can do it cheaper that way.

But this plan that the Energy Commission or the Public Utilities Commission put out called for 50 percent of our commercial buildings to have rooftop solar by 2030, 25 percent of residences to have mostly -- they call it zero-net energy -- mostly zero-net energy by 2020. That's tens of thousands of megawatts if we do it. And this outstanding plan has been largely ignored by other agencies. And I don't expect the US Fish and Wildlife or BLM to really know about it. But the CEC knows about it and many of us know about it, and it's a great plan. And it would largely save the desert from this kind of tradeoff.

The -- there's a comment in the planning document that says and agrees that rooftop solar is excellent. No environmental impacts, we should definitely highlight it as strong on environment, but we can't get it done with rooftop. And I want to take a very close look at this document to understand why that statement is in there, because I don't understand it. We know we've got -- the average load here is about 2,000 megawatts. We've already documented 7,000 megawatts worth of solar potential in parking lots and roofs in San Diego. It's the same all over California.

The -- we have two major transmission lines coming to San Diego, 500-kV lines. We have the Sunrise Power Link, we have the Southwest Power Link; 4,000 megawatts of capacity. We rarely even get to 4,000 megawatts of demand in San Diego.

And you may have some up with the perfect way to unite republicans and democrats in San Diego which is you suggest running another 500-kV line to provide load to L.A. That's not going to fly because we are tapped out in terms of 500-kV capacity, totally saturated. And so I think politically in San Diego the idea of putting another 500-kV line through our precious backcountry to feed L.A. with renewable power is not going to get too far.

One other important comment, and then I'm done, which is the cost of solar has been dropping like a stone. And the cost delta between utility-scale solar out in the desert and putting it on a commercial building in San Diego, for example, may be a dollar a watt now based on a September 2014 DOE study, and it's getting tighter. The cost of the 500-kV transmission line, Sunrise Power Link, $2 billion. Officially it can -- it can move 1,000 megawatts, in fact, it can move 2,000; 2 billion over 2,000 megawatts, $1.00 a watt. That makes central station solar out in the desert no more -- no cheaper than a commercial building in San Diego, and that delta continues to shrink.

So not only does this impact negatively the desert, it's the highest cost form of solar you can build. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comments.

Next we have Kelly Fuller, Ashley Richmond, and Rick Benson.

MS. FULLER: Hi everyone. I'm Kelly Fuller. I am the Executive Director of Protect Our Communities which defends communities in nature from harmful energy development and advances better energy solutions through advocacy and law.

And I want to follow on what Bill just said. If you liked the Sunrise Power Link, you're going to love what happens because of the DRECP.

If you look at Appendix K it projects -- it has a number of alternatives that are basically talking about one or two, possibly two, new 500-kV lines going from the Imperial Valley to the Sycamore Substation in San Diego, and right now saying, for at least theoretical conceptual purposes, that they would be in the same corridor as the Sunrise Power Link. So next to the Sunrise Power Link for now, conceptually.

Now, that's puzzling because I don't know how realistic it really is to think that you could co-locate one or two more giant 500-kV lines in that same area, and here's

why. When we went through the struggle over the Sunrise Power Link, both SDG&E and California Independent System Operator did not want to do what the public suggested. The public said, hey, why don't we put another new transmission line, why don't we just put it next to the existing Southwest Power Link, and the public was told, no, we can't do that, that's too dangerous. We can't put them next to each other for their whole length. And yet right now conceptually that's what they're talking about here.

So maybe those one or two more lines coming through are not going to be in that same Sunrise Power Link corridor. Maybe they're going to be somewhere else coming through San Diego County. If so, then where? How are you going to get from Imperial Valley out to San Diego County? Are you going to go through Anza-Borrego Desert State Park? Are you going to go through the Cleveland National Forest? How about Cuyamaca Rancho State Park? How about through the Indian Reservations? How about the Campo, Manzanita, Viejas, La Jolla, Los Coyotes Reservations? Those are the kinds of siting problems that we had when we were looking at the Sunrise Power Link. And those of you who went through that remember there were a tremendous number.

So I want to -- I see we've got some red going there. So I want to talk just very quickly about one of the reasons this is so scary, it's the fire risk. In the

administrative law judge's proposed decision on the Sunrise Power Link, that decision said that either a northern or southern route for it would increase the fire risk. And with the fire risk there would be increased reliability problems because of the potential of wildfires making one or more transmission lines go down at the same time, the possibility that dense smoke from a fire would trip the circuit, the possibility of a forced outage, of having to de-energize lines for various reasons such as to meet the safety needs of the firefighters.

So with all of these things, I really want to ask, and I'll leave you here, how can the DRECP's draft EIR/EIS say that the risk to public safety from fire associated with transmission lines or with problems associated with fighting fire associated with transmission lines, how can they say in that EIR/EIS that that risk can be mitigated to a less than significant level by having a fire plan? And I'm paraphrasing, but that's what it says. We don't know that. You can't possibly know that until you know exactly where those lines are going.

So that's what I want to leave you with. Thank you for this opportunity to give public comment.

MR. BEALE: Thank you, Ms. Fuller.

Okay, next we have Ashley Richmond, Rick Benson, and Carol Benson.

MS. RICHMOND: Good evening everyone. As Chris said, I'm Ashley Richmond. I'm the Director of Siting Policy for the California Wind Energy Association. And first I want to thank you guys for hosting the meeting and providing an opportunity for feedback on the plan.

So I've worked with the wind energy industry for about seven years now. And prior to joining CalWEA I worked on a construction site on a wind farm in the California Desert, and some of the areas that the DRECP seeks to plan for. And one of the proudest moments in my life was being able to see that facility go into operation. And it wasn't just about a job well done for me and my colleagues, but I felt like I was a part of something bigger than myself which is ensuring a clean energy future for California and for generations to come.

So it's with disappointment that I share with you that the Draft DRECP may threaten the continuation of that vision, along with the good paying construction and manufacturing jobs that my colleagues and friends have held for years, the associated benefits that go to local economies such as tax revenues, excuse me, to counties and the development of a zero-emissions energy source with relatively low impacts to the environment and the species that this plan seeks to protect. Despite the wind industry's constructive engagement in this process since the

very beginning, what the industry has seen during the development of the draft and now -- during the development of the draft plan and now in the draft plan itself, has already had a chilling effect on the future of wind energy development in California. Wind developers are leaving the state. Larger swaths of land, many that include active project areas, are proposed to be off limits to wind development. And the agencies seek to instead direct development to areas, some that are lacking commercially viable wind resource. So as a result the draft plan's stated development goals for wind energy likely cannot be met.

The draft plan would seriously diminish the state's ability to meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals at least costs. And without much wind development occurring throughout the lifetime of the plan this plan will lack a primary funding source for the conservation it purports to provide throughout the desert. The plan will also largely forgo the industry's engagement in developing innovative solutions to protecting the few species impacts it does have, as has been demonstrated with recent projects.

The wind industry supports this kind of landscape level planning. But we believe that this plan as written will fail to achieve its renewable energy development and conservation goals, at least at it pertains to wind energy.

So we think now is the time for the federal and state agencies to follow through on their commitment to roll up their sleeves and engage stakeholder groups in productive and meaningful dialogue. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you. Okay, next we have Rick Benson, and then Carol Benson, and then -- I need my glasses -- is it Jim Peugh? Okay. Thank you.

Please go ahead.

MR. BENSON: Thank you. Again, my name is Rick Benson. And I'm here to talk about the distributed generation alternative.

I live here in San Diego, and I also have a home out in the -- in Victor Valley, California. I'm a retired California school teacher. I taught here in California for 20 years. And my wife and I own a printing and manufacturing company here in San Diego for 25 years.

We embarked upon a solar alternative project of rooftop solar on our commercial building four years ago with a 20 kilowatt rooftop system. And in the last four years we have saved $40,000. I would like the DRECP to seriously consider the distributed generation alternative as -- as a real and serious viable alternative.

California is moving quickly and effectively with rooftop solar. Here in San Diego each month there's over 1,000 installations on commercial and residential rooftop

solar. So the distributed generation alternative consideration has been dismissed without any serious consideration. Rooftop solar will save the ratepayers here in the state hundreds of billions of dollars in the next 25 years. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comment.

Okay, Carol Benson, Jim Peugh, and then Ellen McKissick.

Hi, Carol.

MS. BENSON: Hello. As my husband stated, I'm a homeowner, both here in San Diego and in the Victor Valley area.

In the DRECP plan the assumption of 177,000 acres of ground disturbance for 20,000 megawatts of power is underestimated. That is 8.85 megawatt -- 8.85 acres per megawatt. That is the best case land allowance. If you had land that was evenly square or rectangular and flat you could meet that recommendation. However, that's not the high desert or the desert.

So based on my calculations of the proposed area, irregular terrain along with calculations by current and proposed projects of 15 to 25 acres per megawatt, that translates to 300,000 to 500,000 acres. Living in the area, that land disturbance in the desert, along with the strong winds that are prevalent in the area, underestimates the air

quality calculations addressed in the plan.

I ask you to revisit and recalculate your assumptions given the extreme terrain and wind of the proposed area.

Further, similar assumptions have been made in the plan regarding groundwater and hydrology. Living in the area I have a ten acre orchard that I tend to. And I have experienced the intense dust storms created by land disturbance and the water shed from the heavy rains in the area. And based on this experience the plan has not done a proper job on air and water issues.

Thank you for your consideration.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comment.

Jim Peugh, Ellen McKissick, and then Richard Gholson.

MR. PEUGH: Hi. I'm Jim Peugh and I'm the Conservation Chair of the San Diego Audubon Society.

My first comment is the review time you have now. The 90 days is just totally inadequate for people. You know, we're not professionals. This is a huge document. I think it's something like 1,200 pages -- or 12,000 pages. And we need a lot more time. A 60-day extension would be very reasonable.

I'm concerned about your no-action alternative. It's not a no-action alternative. A no-action alternative

means you're not going to do anything. What your no-action alternative is, you're going to do exactly the same thing only you're not going to plan for it, you're going to do it haphazard. That's not a no-action alternative. That's a worst case alternative, but it's certainly not no action.

I don't think you're going to get through CEQA with this because this doesn't satisfy the definition of no-action alternative. I think you need to -- you need to really revise that. And the alternative I would really see is one that was mentioned before. It just boggles my mind. This is -- somehow it's a desert plan, but it's not a renewable energy plan. I don't understand why you haven't at least one alternative that says how much in-basin -- or in-basin renewable energy we can get, and then how much is left over to go into the desert. It just doesn't make sense to back -- or to invert the loading order and look at the desert renewable energy capability without looking with in-basin, you know, rooftop and parking lots, photovoltaic and things like that. It's just nonsensical. I don't -- you're not analyzing the issue that you're claiming to analyze.

I'm concerned, too, about -- I don't know how durable the land protection of BLM is. I don't know. Their charter is -- what is it, "Land of Many Uses." And you know, there are other agencies that have a charter that -- that is focused on conservation. I don't understand why

there's not a Fish and Wildlife -- national wildlife refuge there because their -- their purpose is to protect endangered species and sensitive species. And so it's weird. It just seems to be twisting things out to have BLM as being a custodian of -- of most of the preserves.

So I think that's an alternative you ought to look at, whether the Service is better for this than BLM. I understand there are lots of complications of doing that, but that's not the issue. We ought to do it so -- so there will actually be a long-term preserve that's managed for the species that are there.

The next thing is I'm really concerned about the -- the calculation of eagle take. It looks like that you've looked at the number of eagles that are not just in the planning area, but are within 140 miles of that. That looks like you're just boosting up the number of eagles by a factor of ten so that you can have ten times as high an eagle take. That doesn't make any sense. You need to be making your calculation on take just on the eagle population of the planning area itself and not -- there's no -- there's no logical reason for excluding every eagle within 140 miles to bolster the take.

I understand that bird strikes aren't part of preserve system. I haven't been able to read a lot of the document, so I don't know how you're going to manage things

like -- like bird strikes and bird incineration and how you're going to compensate for those, how the mitigation for those is going to be set up outside of the -- the rest of the mitigation since that's not an issue covered by these conservation plans.

And I guess that's it. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you.

MR. PEUGH: Oh, time out. I also -- just -- I don't -- I don't -- I haven't had time to look, but I'm really concerned about how you're going to monitor for non-endangered and non-threatened wildlife, just common wildlife.

We know -- you know, Audubon just did a report showing that something like 40 percent, I think, of our wildlife species or our bird species are going to be approaching threatened or endangered status in 30 years because of climate change. And so we have a real serious problem on trying to protect biodiversity. And I don't know how that's going to be done under this program. And so I'm concerned but I don't know. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comment.

Okay, Ellen McKissick, Richard Gholson, and Erin D'Orio.

MS. MCKISSICK: Hello. My name is Ellen McKissick and I currently live in San Diego, but I've also been living

in the high desert on and off for the last 25 years.

It's not necessary to destroy the desert in order to provide renewable energy. The DRECP makes assumptions that the majority of renewable energy can be located in the California Desert. Why assume the deserts can take this level of burden for renewable energy? It cannot.

When I look at the alternatives it seems like someone has considered the desert as a wasteland that we're going to throw all of the renewable energy out there. There is no consideration at all for in-basin. It's narrow minded to focus on saving greenhouse gas emissions while ignoring the destruction of the desert habitat, air, and water quality. There's nothing green about that approach. It's not good nor necessary a tradeoff.

The use of renewable energy's initial goal of protecting our planet, our environment, is being lost. There's so much focusing down on the narrow perspective, we've lost the big picture.

On August 5th, 2014 Paul Douglas of the California Energy Commission acknowledged the RPS calculator for Renewables Portable Standard needs to be completely overhauled. The DRECP analysis is based on outdated assumptions. Outdated assumptions are driving this policy document, and it's not an environmental planning document, clearly.

On another issue Mr. Douglas also addressed the fact that transmission lines should be located close to existing lines and corridors. Creating excessive lines through new corridors would be unnecessary and extremely costly, billions of dollars. This cost will ultimately be passed on to us, the consumer, not to mention its effect on the environment.

So my two points are to use existing corridors for transmission lines as necessary, and consider other areas besides just the desert for renewable energy. Thank you very much.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comments.

Richard Gholson, am I pronouncing that right?

MR. GHOLSON: You're doing fine.

MR. BEALE: Erin D'Orio, and then Ron Rempel.

MR. GHOLSON: Okay, so now you know my name. So I live in San Diego and have a second home in the high desert. And as I was looking at the DRECP, particular in Appendix K, Transmission Technical Group Appendix, or TTG, there's going to be approximately 600 miles of new transmission lines in San Bernardino County alone. That's over 1,000 miles throughout the DRECP plan area. And then more from the DRECP plan area into -- into Southern California. Also, we can situate these large-scale renewable energy projects as far out as we can from where we need them.

One of the concerns I have is, you know, what impact these -- these transmission lines are going to have on our environment, specifically I'd like to note that the gases that are used in the insulation of the lines, it's called sulphur hexafluoride, also known as SF 6, it's known to be exponentially more destructive than the pollution that all of this is supposed to help mitigate.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change, SF 6 has a global warming potential of over 23,000 times that of CO2. SF 6 is extremely long lived and has up to 32,000 years of life. Your DRECP document does not adequately address the environmental impacts of the transmission lines on Southern California. I'm not going into it here, but there's plenty of empirical evidence to support my statement.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

MR. BEALE: Thank you for your comment.

Erin, and Ron, and then Neil.

MS. D'ORIO: Hello. My name is Erin D'Orio. And I want to thank the Board for having this public comment meeting.

And I recognize that there's been a tremendous amount of work put into the DRECP, but I question whether it's for the highest good of all. I think we need a lot more time to digest and come up with other alternatives and

ideas. And you know, I've been asked repeatedly during some of these meetings what are some of your solutions. We don't have enough time yet to even come up with some of those alternative solutions. I've heard some really good ones tonight about rooftop solar and parking lots solar. But we need -- we need time to be able to come up with that. And you know, taking into consideration that this took five years to plan, you know, an extended, at least 90 days, seems to be pretty reasonable to me.

There's these incentives that are being given to race towards this thing, which is pretty terrifying to me. And I question the use of the word "renewable energy". It seems to be primarily be a political agenda driven by large incentives. And you know, we're -- we're headed for an awful lot of trouble if we race at this thing the way that it -- that is happening.

Sustainable energy is what we really want. We want to have our water protected. We want to have our animals protected. Thirty-seven species? How about 1,137 species? We've got -- we've got some very fragile animals, creatures, plants. And I haven't heard the humans mentioned too much in those species that we're trying to protect. Because I'll tell you, the ones of us that have been out there for 20 and 30 and 40 years, the ones of us that dearly love our vistas and our desert, you know, just the stress

alone that it's causing us to try to set our lives aside to deal with all of this is -- should be taken into consideration.

We've got a lot of incidences of Valley Fever that are already happening out there. The tremendous land disturbance that is being proposed could cause an incredible amount of this Valley Fever. It's called coccidioides and it causes all kinds of chronic problems which include fever, chest pains, joint aches, fatigue, headaches, chills, night sweats. I think I have a lot of that from going through some of this process already.

And you know, there's just a lot of considerations that we feel need to be looked at before we hurdle into things that will destroy our desert forever. It's not just, you know, it's not just a few considerations. We've got -- we've got precious land out there that we want to protect, and we want to protect it for our generations to come.

And we are imploring you, especially the BLM and those of you that have, you know, stepped up, too, because you love this land, we're asking you to take another look at this and to give us the time that we need to -- to come up with some viable alternatives and solutions. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you. Ron Rempel.

MR. REMPEL: My name is Ron Rempel and I've had the privilege of working on numerous NCCPs, both in the

development and the implementation of those plans. And I just have a few comments tonight, since I haven't had a chance to look at the whole document yet. I do have the disk now, and I appreciate the Energy Commission providing that.

One of the clear pieces the NCCP Act requires is funding for the long-term management and monitoring of species. The plan does not appear to include funding that will take those management and monitoring into the long term. I think the assumption is that someday some plants will be taken out and be restored. But that is, I think, really open question over the long term.

But in addition the costs associated with management and monitoring appear to be off by a factor of 20 or more. In other words, there isn't near enough money being put into the program in order to do the management and monitoring. And I'm sure there are some folks here in San Diego that would be more than willing to sit down with Staff and go over the real costs of management and monitoring for an NCCP and the types of species we're talking about since we do know those costs today, and it's far greater than anybody anticipated.

I think the piece, also, with the long-term funding for management and monitoring is -- I see that really as a cost shift to future -- to future residents, to

future developers out in the desert. Because this program really is going to underestimate the required mitigation to fully offset the impacts. We know that out at Coso Geothermal, the mitigation that was put in there did not work for Mojave ground squirrels. There was not demonstratable increase to take care of the losses that occurred there, and I think that's going to be a situation throughout this conservation plan area.

Some very simple facts I didn't see in the documents at this point, maybe they're in there someplace, but for the plants, nobody has even discussed the ploidy level in the plants which could affect whether or not adjacent populations of plants are actually part of the same population or are they -- if they cross, are they incompatible? And that's terribly important if you're going to manage these plant species over the long term, understanding what that is. And the same thing with -- with the animal species. The talk is about connectivity, functional connectivity, yet there is no data that's in there that would show that, in fact, the populations of these various species are actually connected out there. The techniques are there. It does take some time to get that data. But the techniques are clearly there so you know whether or not you're trying to manage a meta population or a whole lot of individual populations. The management and

monitoring is totally different depending on that situation.

I think lastly, I didn't see anything in the document at this point that talks about the impacts of the NCCP for the DRECP on adjacent NCCPs. That appears to be totally missing. Perfect example there is within San Diego County in the western portion there's a very specific number of nesting pairs of Golden Eagles that is required to maintain. If -- and those eagles do move around. They do move out of the area at times. If one of those eagles gets killed by a wind energy project in DRECP, who has to make it up, the people of the Western San Diego County who had no impact on that eagle pair, or does DRECP proponents have to make it up and deal with that particular issue?

And I think we don't know enough about a lot of these populations to really understand how that whole piece fits together. It would strike me that a lot more data needs to go in and the management and the monitoring piece, at least sampling designs, how the data is going to be analyzed to understand whether change occurs, and what change has to occur in order for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to take the step of actually revoking the permits or removing species from the covered species list.

It seems to be the assumption that it's all going to work. I can tell you, it is not going to all work, based on experience. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thanks, Ron.

Neil?

MR. NADLER: That was one of my three topics was management and monitoring. But I don't think I could do nearly as well as Ron just did.

The -- the two topics I want to speak about is the -- the discussion in the Draft EIS/EIR of carbon releasing from disturbing the desert lands or the carbon sequestration discussion. It's grossly inadequate in the document. The -- the draft simply dances around the issue. And the resolution, I believe it's in Volume III or IV, I can't remember where it was, is -- they justify the carbon release of hundreds of thousands of acres, which we heard earlier tonight is an underestimate, as well, is really going to be offset by the reduction of greenhouse gases. And it's the -- the two things don't jive. You don't -- you don't give and take. And you know, you look at an issue, you deal with the issue, you evaluate the issue. It wasn't evaluated clearly and accurately.

The second thing I want to talk about is the assumptions in the DRECP plan of placing the utility-scale renewable energy in close proximity to the greatest populations that exist in the deserts, specifically the high desert, but the deserts in general. And the -- the thought is flawed. I understand why you did it. You did because

certain groups of environmental people said, hey, those are disturbed lands. Well, some of it is disturbed. It all depends on how you value the conservation values and how you -- how you adequately value the level of intactness and the balance of plants and animals in certain areas.

And the -- the reality is, is that the energy projects have profound effects on human habitat, habitat of people living around solar, thermal projects, solar PV projects, wind energy projects. Those profound examples, you know, I'm not going to go into them today, but there's health effects, there's financial effects, there's visual effects, the community attitudes. You know, people are affected by those projects. And they're affected by them in many ways. And we haven't been dealing with them that long a period of time.

I can just tell you that the area around Desert Hot Springs is -- it used to be a nice sleepy little town. And today it's got -- it's the crime center of Riverside County. And the statistics, the -- the demographics are not much different than other areas in Riverside County, but that is the hotbed of crime in Riverside County. So I'm attributing it to that, but I don't know if there's any statistics on that or anything.

I thank you. I urge you to reconsider the close proximity to populations on -- on placing the renewable

energy. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you, Neal.

That concludes the speaker cards we've received. We're going to open up the phone lines now to see if any of our participants on the web or on the phone would like to speak.

Kristy, did you get any chat responses, requests for comment?

MS. CHEW: No. Nobody has requested to speak today.

MR. BEALE: I'm sorry, is yours -- is your mike on?

MS. CHEW: No one has requested to speak tonight.

MR. BEALE: Okay. You want to open up the lines and see if anyone --

MS. CHEW: They're open. There isn't anyone.

MR. BEALE: Okay, great. Anyone on the phone like to make a comment tonight? Okay, I'm not hearing any comments on the phone.

We have some time left in the meeting. Would anyone else like to speak tonight or make a follow-up comment to an earlier comment?

Yes, sir?

MR. GOLDMAN: I'm Sam Goldman with the Conservation Lands Foundation. Sorry, I didn't get to fill

out a card. Thanks for letting me speak. Thanks for all your hard work.

I work with organizations that work with BLM National Conservation Lands, so I'm quite familiar with the mission to conserve, protect and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations, which is the mission for the National Conservation Lands.

And in the Draft DRECP, BLM relied on ecological, cultural, and scientific data, as well as development pressure, landscape, intactness, scenic quality, landscape linkages, and large blocks of BLM jurisdiction to determine which lands should be added to the National Conservation Lands.

The -- BLM's approach to identifying National Conservation Lands will make an important contribution to conservation in the California Desert. And so we are urging that BLM stand strongly behind this effort, continue to identify those lands that were not in the preferred alternative that are really important for conservation purposes like Silurian Valley, Chuckwalla Bench, Sheephole Valley, and Iron Mountain. And I will write -- we'll be submitting written comments, as well, on this.

In addition, BLM should strengthen its approach to

management of these areas so that these values will be truly protected from development. And I encourage folks that are interested in the National Conservation Lands additions here in San Diego County, I don't know many of you, to come up to me at the end and I can give you a lot of information on some of these really remarkable places that could be added to the National Conservation Lands, places like the Trona Pinnacles and places like the Panamint Valley.

We will be really excited to go to the rest of the hearings and introduce some of the friends groups that we work with to this process, many groups that work in the desert to help BLM protect these lands and are interested in continuing to look for some of the best areas that -- that we all would agree that should be open for stewardship, restoration, recreation, and conservation primarily. So we'll see you at the next meetings with, hopefully, more people who live and work in these landscapes. Thanks, you guys, so much.

MR. BEALE: Thank you. Any other comments for tonight?

Ron?

MR. REMPEL: I guess I sort of danced around one critical issue. I think there's only one of us in the room here tonight that actually negotiated the NCCP Act, and that would be myself. And we had discussions about these kinds

of projects, not specifically DRECP. But what is proposed here, based on all the discussions that happened because we had already done linear projects and decided that they didn't work so well under the NCCP Act, would imply that this plan will not meet the requirements of the NCCP Act in order to get a 2835 Permit for numerous reasons, and among those is the conservation of the species within the plan area. This does not provide for the conservation of the species within the plan area. It reads as a mitigation plan.

And I would suggest it would be much more appropriate to permit this project under 2081 of the Fish and Game Code rather than try to permit it under the NCCP Act. I realize what that means is developers don't get assurances, but that's the point. You don't get assurances if you don't do a better job of conservation. And they can't deal with unlisted species, but that's fine. You can go back and get a permit when it's time to list -- when a species gets listed. It's a headache, but it's happened since 1986 when the state Endangered Species Act was passed. I wrote the first of the permits under that act.

And you know, clearly NCCP was supposed to be up here as a standard, not down here. And I think this program would need to go back out for recirculation and actually really beefed up if it was going to make the standards of

the NCCP Act.

MR. BEALE: All right. Thank you, Ron.

One more comment?

MS. OWENS: Hi. Thanks. My name is Rene Owens. I don't have a prepared comment, so I'm just going to wing it here.

But I have an environmental consultancy, small consultancy, Sage Wildlife Biology. I wear a lot of hats. I'm also an environmental science teacher out in Imperial County at Imperial Valley College. And I've -- I'm on a national committee for the Sierra Club. I'm here speaking for myself.

And as I'm listening I thought, oh, I have to get up and just say one thing from my perspective as an environmental consultant. I've been consulting on and off in San Diego and Imperial County and other places for about 20 years. I specialize in wildlife. And if there's one thing that I would say, and I've barely gotten into this 12,000 pages, but I go straight to the mitigation protocols. And I'm one of those people who's out there before, during and after these developments are built. And I have worked on various solar and wind installations.

And to really summarize a whole lot into one statement, I would say that the implementation and enforcement of mitigation protocols by and large are flawed

at best. And I'm speaking very broadly. And I know I've also been commented on a lot of EIRs/EISs and the like for desert areas. So when I read through and I see some of these mitigation recommendations that sound great and they look great, I always have a red flag of but how great is the implementation going to be? Are we really capable of doing this? There's a real disconnect between what's on the paper and what happens after the fact.

And part of that, I think, is because just assessing the success of mitigation is such a huge overwhelming task. You're not going to find much out there that looks and says how well have we done our job by looking at some sort of large-scale picture of -- and when I say mitigation I'm mostly talking about things that are restoration or banking combined. So just the assessments of how well we're doing, whether it's on a multi-species or species-by-species approach, we're way behind on that.

So I would just ask you to please take care when you're considering these mitigation protocols and really consider, practically speaking, financially. You know, like I said, I'm the one out there who gets to see what happens to our Big Horn Sheep, our eagles, our Flat-Tailed Horn Lizards, our Burrowing Owls, our Desert Tortoise. And I'm rather pessimistic based on what I've seen over the years and the lack of truly successful implementation of

mitigation, and even knowing how well we're doing because, like I said, there's so little out there that does a long-term assessment of how well we're doing.

So I'm just kind of saying let's please be careful in writing these really great sounding almost pie-in-the-sky mitigation protocols and really take a step back and look at what's most practical. Thank you.

MR. BEALE: Thank you. All right. Anyone else want to make a comment tonight? All right.

Well, I want to thank you all for coming out tonight. You know, as I said earlier, I know it's not easy to get here on a weeknight. It's not easy to stand up in front of people and make comments like this, but we really appreciate your engagement and we appreciate your being here. And we really appreciate your comments. So thank you very much. And I hope to see you at some of our future meetings. I know some of you are planning to be there and I thank you for that. Thank you.

(The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.)

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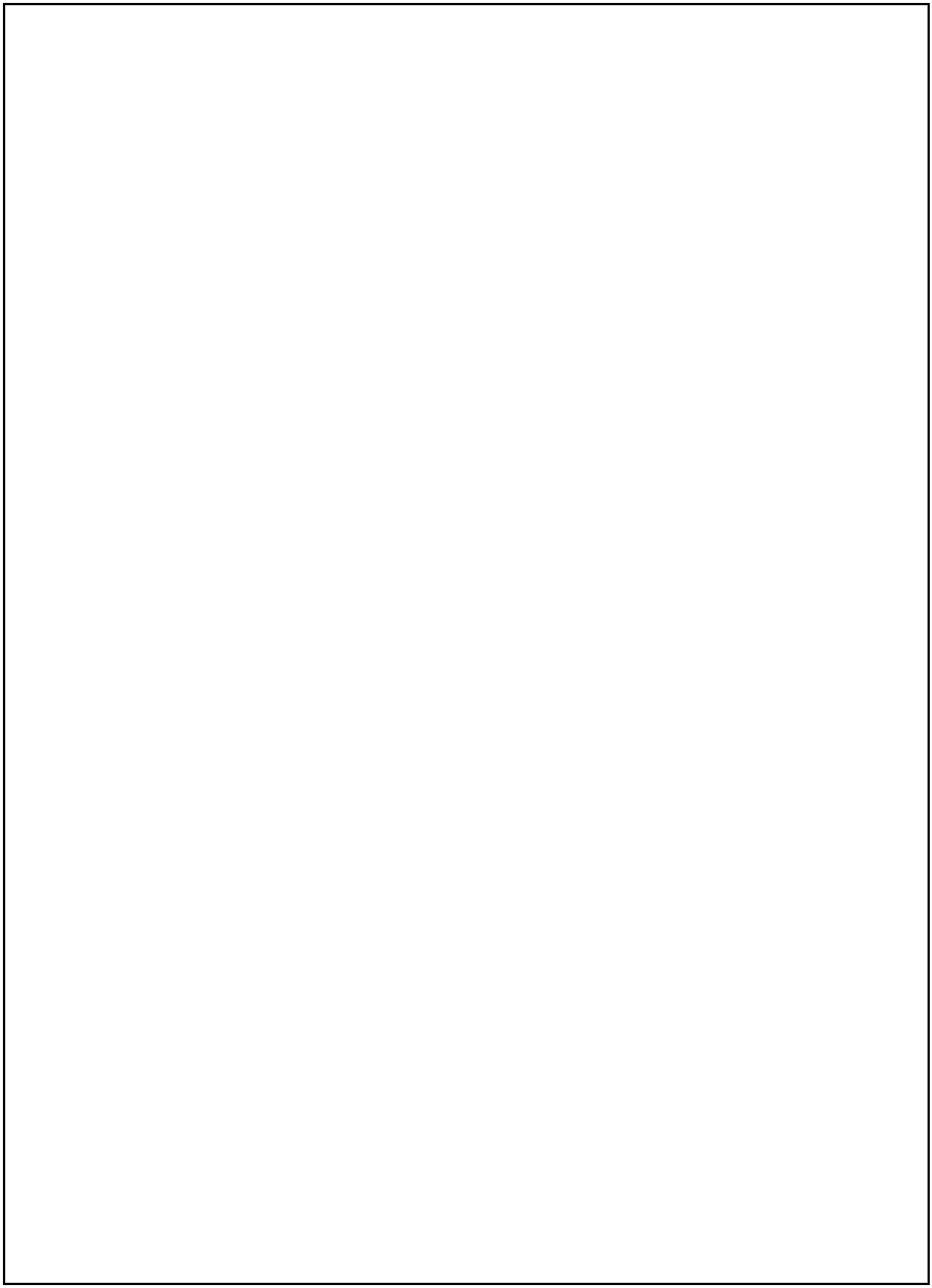

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I, TROY RAY, an Electronic Reporter, do hereby certify that I am a disinterested person herein; that I recorded the foregoing California Energy Commission's Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan; that it was thereafter transcribed.

I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for any of the parties to said conference, or in any way interested in the outcome of said conference.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 21st day of October, 2014.

/s/ Troy Ray_ _
TROY RAY

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I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript, to the best of my ability, from the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

/s/ Martha L. Nelson
MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367

October 21, 2014