February 19, 2015
California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Docket No. 09-RENEW EO-01
1516 Ninth St.
Sacramento, CA 95814-3512


To Whom It May Concern:

On Thursday, February 5, 2015 we walked into a public meeting on the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) held at the Lone Pine High School. We were shocked and dismayed to find our property and the property of our neighbors were included and marked as "conservation land" to be acquired from private property owners. Our property is located in Cartago on the west side of Highway 395. As the owner of a large parcel of land (63 acres) we own some of the only private property in the southern end of the county that could be used for future development. Thirty one of our 63 acres is already zoned to be divided into one acre parcels. We respectfully request that our property be removed from this designation.

Inyo County is large in area but private land ownership is very limited (less than 2% is privately owned). For this DRECP to even suggest acquiring any part of that private land to put into conservation areas we feel will severely handicap the ability of the County to have any potential for growth. It could also cause major problems for our economy by reducing our fragile tax base. Any large construction projects like this can bring a false sense of an upswing and then when they leave we are plunged into a lower source of income. This would not be a good cycle for the County to try to plan for. We strongly feel that all private land should be removed from this plan. There is plenty of public land to use for Renewable Energy Sites and Conservation areas without buying up private land.

We are also concerned that no consideration has been given to what the current County General Plan is. People invest in property because the General Plan says the property can be used in a certain way and then a plan like the DRECP comes in and changes everything. We do not feel that this is good for the County or the people living here. Our County put a lot of blood, sweat and tears into forming a plan for Renewable Energy in our area. They held many public meetings and tried to formulate a plan that the residents could live with. They know the land, they know the water situation, they know how people live, and we feel they are better able to write a Renewable Energy Plan than someone sitting in front of a computer looking at a map or Google Earth picture that may or may not be accurate. We want to know how much consideration will be given to this work that has already been done.
We have two other concerns for our area: livestock grazing and recreation. These two items are a huge part of our economic security in Inyo County. We feel that if any grazing land is lost, that another area of equal size, in close proximity should opened up to grazing so there is no net loss. We are concerned that the EIR/EIS’s states that impacts to recreation will be unavoidable. This is totally unacceptable – our County cannot survive if our recreation dollars are impacted by this plan. These lands must remain available for multi-use recreation.

All in all we see this DRECP as asking the residents of Inyo County to give up a lot – private land, recreation land, grazing land, and economic stability with NO foreseeable benefits to the County or its residents. Yes, we have the best place for renewable energy, but we should not have to sacrifice so much so others can benefit.

Troy & Susan Patton
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Response to Comment Letter F158

Troy Patton and Susan Patton
February 19, 2015

F158-1 Thank you for your comment. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has taken it into consideration in developing the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As described in Chapter I.1, Phase I of the DRECP is the BLM Proposed LUPA and Final EIS that addresses activities on BLM-administered lands only. See also Volume II, which includes revised descriptions and mapping for the range of alternatives considered for the BLM LUPA. Conservation Planning Areas are not a part of the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS.

F158-2 Please note that under the phased approach to the DRECP, the BLM Proposed LUPA and Final EIS applies only to BLM-administered lands and would not apply to private lands. See Section II.3.7 for a description of LUPA implementation.

F158-3 The BLM has taken this comment into consideration in developing the DRECP Proposed LUPA and Final EIS. As described in Chapter I.1, Phase I of the DRECP is the BLM Proposed LUPA and Final EIS that addresses activities on BLM-administered lands only. BLM will continue to work with local governments as it implements the LUPA.

F158-4 The voluntary removal of livestock for proposed consideration is covered under Public Law 112-74 (the Appropriation Act of 2012). This law covers the entirety of the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA), which surrounds a vast majority of the DRECP area. It allows for the voluntary relinquishment and the permanent removal of all grazing from allotments within the CDCA Plan Area. The BLM does not have the authority to say "no" when it comes to accepting these allotments as mitigation.

F158-5 The Draft DRECP and Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/EIS concluded there would be a significant and unavoidable indirect impact to recreation due to the visual effects of renewable development. The conclusion for all other impacts to recreation were less than significant.

F158-6 This comment is not directed toward any specific discussion or the analysis presented in Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS Chapters III.23 or IV.23 (Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice). This is a general comment or opinion that BLM will consider during its LUPA decision process.