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Via e-mail and First-Class Mail

Robert Lovingood (Chairperson and First District Supervisor;

SupervisorLovingood@sbcountry.gov)

James Ramos (Vice-Chairperson and Third District Supervisor;

SupervisorRamos@sbcountry.gov)

Janice Rutherford (Second District Supervisor; [SupervisorRutherford](mailto:SupervisorRutherford@sbcountry.gov)

@sbcountry.gov)

Curt Hagman (Fourth District Supervisor; [SupervisorHagman](mailto:SupervisorHagman@sbcountry.gov)

@sbcountry.gov)

Josie Gonzales (Fifth District Supervisor; [SupervisorGonzales](mailto:SupervisorGonzales@sbcountry.gov)

@sbcountry.gov)

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors

San Bernardino Government Center

385 N. Arrowhead Ave., 5th Floor

San Bernardino, CA 92415-0110

Re: Policy 4.10 of the County's Renewable Energy and Conservation Element

Dear Supervisors:

We are a coalition made up of the following community groups, businesses, agencies and individuals: Lucerne Valley Economic Development Association (LVEDA), Lucerne Valley-Johnson Valley Municipal Advisory Council, Johnson Valley Improvement Association, Homestead Valley Community Council, Oak Hills Property Owners Association, Newberry Springs Chamber of Commerce, Newberry Springs Economic Development Association, Newberry-Harvard Property Owners, Morongo Basin Conservation Association, Church of Our Lord and Savior (Lucerne Valley), Lucerne Valley Market/Hardware, Newberry Springs Community Alliance, Lucerne Valley Realty, Expert Appliance Service, Jubilee Mutual Water Company, Inc., Alliance for Desert Preservation, Mojave Communities Conservation Collaborative, Brian Hammer, Sue Hammer, Bradley R. Hicks, Dennis Morrison, Pat Flanagan, Ruth Rieman, Marina West, Randy West, Barbara LaGrange, John Smith, Barbara Smith, Aaron Idouchi, Barbara Idouchi, George Stone, Gail Stone, Robert L. Berkman, Ray Gagne, Randy Polumbo, Jim Johnson, Ellen Johnson, Ted Stimpfel, Deborah Myers, Owen Myers, Roger

Peterson, Annie Lancaster, Allan Raish, Sara Tambellini, Russell Scott, Lakey Kolb, Stephen Andrews, Kathryn Anema, Kathy Spindler, Teresa Reyes, Rachael Buettell, Ann Garry, Dave Garry, Diana Bork, Sarah Kennington, Steve Bardwell, Dennis Schwander and Peter Quintin Pena. Together, we represent a broad spectrum of residents, businesses, organizations, recreationists and conservationists in the High Desert of San Bernardino County.

On November 6, 2018, the Board of Supervisors will vote on whether or not to adopt Policy 4.10¹ as part of the County’s Renewable Energy and Conservation Element (the “RECE”). It presents the Supervisors with two stark choices -- two disparate visions – the choice between which will determine the fate of our desert regions for generations:

(1) whether to protect the rural desert and mountain communities and adjacent wildlands against industrialization by a vote *in favor* of Policy 4.10 – a vote that would, as per the rest of the RECE, **still permit utility-scale projects in the rest of the unincorporated County (if they satisfy certain criteria)**; or

(2) whether to throw out a welcome mat for utility-scale solar and wind developers -- by a vote *against* Policy 4.10 – even though this would result in the export of power and profits out of the County to the profound detriment of our human and natural communities.

If the Supervisors’ primary concern, in considering Policy 4.10, is (as it should be) how to best benefit the County and its residents, this would call for an embrace of the first proposition and a vote in favor of Policy 4.10.

The County’s Planning Commission took such an approach during its hearing on Policy 4.10 on May 24, 2018. There – after a day’s worth of conflicting public comment from across the spectrum, and after considering the issues from all perspectives – the Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Supervisors adopt Policy 4.10 as part of the RECE. In

¹ Policy 4.10 would, if adopted, “[p]rohibit utility-oriented RE [renewable energy] project development on sites that would create adverse impacts on the quality of life or economic development opportunities in existing unincorporated communities.”

More specifically, two of its subparts, RE 4.10.1 and RE 4.10.2, would prohibit -- development of utility-scale projects “in the Rural Living land use districts throughout the County” and “within the boundaries of existing community plans, which at the time of adoption of this Element are the Bloomington, Muscoy, Bear Valley, Crest Forest, Hilltop, Lake Arrowhead, Lytle Creek, Oak Glen, Homestead Valley, Joshua Tree, Lucerne Valley, Morongo Valley, Oak Hills, and Phelan/Pinion Hills Community Plans.”

A third subpart, RE 4.10.3, would allow for the establishment of additional exclusion areas, such as new Community Plan areas that may be adopted in the future.

doing so, the Planning Commission rejected an “alternative,” pro-development Policy 4.10 proffered by the Land Use Services Dept. that bore no resemblance at all to the original Policy 4.10.

At stake in the vote on Policy 4.10 is whether the rural character of our desert and mountain communities and wildlands will be preserved, or whether these communities and surrounding wilderness will be turned into industrial zones with vast fields of solar panels, wind farms substations and transmission lines/towers.²

Thus far, the Board of Supervisors has acted wisely in favor of protecting the County’s rural communities and open space from utility-scale incursions, by issuing:

(1) a February 17, 2016 Resolution (the “Resolution”), which designated five sites -- which are seriously degraded, buffered against any rural communities, and relatively close to existing transmission – as the only places that utility-scale can go, subject to the project’s otherwise satisfying the County’s criteria -- the Supervisors stated that they had a “strong concern” about putting industrial-scale projects anywhere else; and

(2) the “County of San Bernardino Position Paper on the Draft Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan,” dated February 3, 2015, in which the Board stated that the communities of Lucerne Valley, Newberry Springs, Stoddard Valley, Johnson Valley and Apple Valley are not appropriate for Development Focus Areas, which are places in which the DRECP would allow utility-scale renewable energy projects to be established.³

² In prior letters on the subject, including our May 21, 2018 letter to the Planning Commission, and in our public comments, we have made the point that utility-scale development in our community areas has adverse impacts on the quality of life and economic development opportunities there. Rather than repeat at length what was said on the subject in our May 21, 2018 letter, we are attaching a copy of that correspondence to this letter and incorporating it by reference.

³ Additionally, Supervisor Ramos has, through his staff, spoken favorably of Policy 4.10: his Chief of Staff, Molly Wiltshire, sent an email to Chuck Bell, dated February 12, 2018, stating that:

“I hope you know that the Supervisor remains supportive of the desires of the community. Unfortunately, when this [the RECE] was heard by the Board back in August [of 2017], he realized there wasn’t support for 4.10 because some Supervisors did not feel comfortable with it not being vetted by the PC [the Planning Commission].”

Right now, Nextera and other worldwide energy developers – working closely with Southern California Edison -- have applied for more than 5,000 acres of new solar development in Lucerne Valley, as well as a for a new substation and related transmission/towers. We expect that, at the November 6, 2018 hearing, these developers and those aligned with them will argue that Policy 4.10 will kill jobs, and that California needs all the renewable energy it can get. Certainly, California has decided to go one hundred percent renewable, and a lot of that renewable energy is going to come from new industrial-size projects. But they can go lots of places other than our County’s rural communities. And wherever we put them, such jobs as they produce will pay just as well.

In the ongoing dialogue regarding the future of energy generation and consumption, San Bernardino County has far too often been treated as disposable by federal and state planners and policy-makers, developers, and others who have no stake in the welfare of the high desert. Let’s not abet them in this; let’s take the target off our backs.

Without Policy 4.10, the RECE will not provide rural communities and the local/regional environment with the protection needed to stem the ongoing utility-scale “gold rush”. The RECE contains well-meaning catch phrases that “encourage” developers to build in seriously degraded sites rather than in or next to our existing communities, but we can already see that these phrases mean nothing to the developers, who – again to use Lucerne Valley as an example – have zeroed in on the very places the RECE would supposedly discourage. .

The RECE’s standards-based approach is, in and of itself, too porous to stop our rural communities and adjacent open space from being industrialized. In fact, *any* standards-based approach requires community members (many of them working people living in economically disadvantaged communities, and who are already exhausted from fighting this fight for so many years) to take on the impossible task of opposing well-funded, sophisticated developers on a project-by-project basis.

Clearly, we need the Supervisors’ protection. The RECE, with Policy 4.10 included in it, provides them with the perfect vehicle for this, one that embodies a careful balancing of two competing interests, large-scale energy proponents seeking to profit by exporting power to the grid and rural County residents intent on preserving their way of life and the natural habitats they live among. Clearly, Policy 4.10 was formulated to stop utility-scale incursions in the places where people make their homes and where fragile wildlife connectivity corridors are located, while still holding open other sizeable portions of the County as potential locations for utility-scale facilities.

We urge the Supervisors to stand up for their constituents and vote in favor of Policy 4.10. This is truly a watershed moment for the County’s rural communities and environment; their fate is in your hands.

Very truly yours,

Community Associations, Businesses and Organizations:

LUCERNE VALLEY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Chuck Bell, President

JOHNSON VALLEY IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION

Betty Munson, Secretary

LUCERNE VALLEY-JOHNSON
VALLEY MUNICIPAL ADVISORY
COUNCIL

Roger Peterson, Chairman

OAK HILLS PROPERTY OWNERS
ASSOCIATION

Lynn Buehler, President

HOMESTEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY
COUNCIL

Rick Sayers, Vice President

NEWBERRY SPRINGS CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

Paula Deel, Board Member

MORONGO BASIN CONSERVATION
ASSOCIATION

Steve Bardwell, Treasurer

NEWBERRY SPRINGS ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Paul Deel, President

NEWBERRY SPRINGS COMMUNITY
ALLIANCE

Ted Stimpfel, President

NEWBERRY-HARVARD PROPERTY
OWNERS

Robert Vasseur, President

MOJAVE COMMUNITIES
CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE

CHURCH OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR
(LUCERNE VALLEY)

Lorrie L. Steely, Founder

Bill Lembright, President

LUCERNE VALLEY MARKET/
HARDWARE

LUCERNE VALLEY REALTY

Linda Gommel, Chief Executive Officer

Martha Lynn, Owner

ALLIANCE FOR DESERT
PRESERVATION

JUBILEE MUTUAL WATER COMPANY,
INC.

Richard Ravana, President

Raymond M. Gagne, Jr., General Manager

EXPERT APPLIANCE SERVICE

Bill Peterson and Alyn Peterson, Proprietors
(and residents of Lucerne Valley)

Individual Community Members:

Brian Hammer, Analyst and Adjunct Professor
(owner of home in Lucerne Valley)

Bradley R. Hicks (resident of Lucerne Valley)

Sue Hammer (owner of home in Lucerne
Valley)

Barbara LaGrange (resident of Lucerne Valley)

Renee Lynn (resident of Lucerne Valley)

Ruth Rieman (resident of Flamingo Heights)

Pat Flanagan (resident of Twentynine Palms)

Deborah Myers (resident of Lucerne Valley)

Barbara A. "Rusty" LaGrange (resident of
Lucerne Valley)

Owen Myers (resident of Lucerne Valley)

John Smith (resident of Apple Valley)

Kathryn Anema (resident of Lucerne Valley)

Barbara Smith (resident of Apple Valley)

George Stone (resident of Apple Valley)

Aaron Idouchi (resident of Milpas Highlands (Apple Valley))	Gail Stone (resident of Apple Valley)
Barbara Idouchi (resident of Milpas Highlands (Apple Valley))	Randy Polumbo (resident of Lucerne Valley)
Robert L. Berkman (resident of Daggett)	Ellen Johnson (resident of Newberry Springs)
Ray Gagne (resident of Lucerne Valley)	Marina West (resident of Landers)
Jim Johnson (resident of Newberry Springs)	Roger Peterson (resident of Lucerne Valley)
Ted Stimpfel (resident of Newberry Springs)	Annie Lancaster (resident of Milpas Highlands (Apple Valley))
Randy West (resident of Landers)	Dennis Morrison (resident of Lucerne Valley)
Allan Raish (resident of Milpas Highlands (Apple Valley))	Sara Tambellini (resident of Pioneertown)
Russell Scott (resident of Pioneertown)	Lakey Kolb (resident of Pioneertown (Pipes Canyon))
Stephen Andrews (resident of Pioneertown (Pipes Canyon))	Kathy Spindler (resident of Hesperia)
Teresa Reyes (resident of Lucerne Valley)	Rachael Buettell (resident of Yucca Valley)
Ann Garry (resident of Pioneertown)	Diana Bork (resident of Helendale)
Dave Garry (resident of Pioneertown)	Sarah Kennington (resident of Pioneertown)
Steve Bardwell (resident of Pioneertown)	Peter Quintin Pena (resident of Lucerne Valley)
Dennis Schwander (resident of Hesperia)	