

MBCA News
Tuesday, November 18, 2014

One last reminder...

The DRECP Scoping Meeting will be held **tomorrow**, Wednesday, Nov. 19 at the Joshua Tree Community Center, 5:30 – 8:00 PM.

A strong turnout of Basin residents will make a difference!

Representatives from the BLM, US Fish and Wildlife Service, California Energy Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife will present an over-view of the DRECP Draft Plan and to hear & record public comments. ***This is our big chance to speak to them on the need for continued improvements to the Draft Plan!***

A list of Talking points follows to help frame your comments that may be either: 1) publically presented (3 minutes provided) to the DRECP board at tomorrow's meeting, 2) verbally recorded at the meeting to the court reporter present, 3) submitted as written comments to the court reporter, or 4) submitted as comments on-line (DRECP.org) through February 23, 2015.

There are conservation protections in this Draft. But, more are needed! Even if you're not prepared to submit comments at tomorrow's meeting, attend to show your support and learn about the Plan!

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MEETING AGENDA

- I. Welcome and Introductions – 5:30 pm
- II. Presentation on the Draft DRECP and EIR/EIS – 5:45 pm
- III. Information stations – 6:15 pm
- IV. Public comment – 7:00 pm

Sincerely,
Sarah Kennington, President

Your 2014 MBCA Board

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Steve Bardwell, Treasurer
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Ruth Rieman, Director
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*MBCA advocates for a healthy desert environment
that nurtures our rural character, cultural wealth,
and economic well-being.*

November 19, 2014-DRECP Talking points-Joshua Tree

Summary:

The DRECP is a renewable energy and conservation plan for the southern California desert region that spans 7 counties and 22.5 million acres with much of that acreage in San Bernardino County. The Draft environmental document is over 10,000 pages and is out for public review until February 23, 2015. The agencies have been hosting public meetings throughout the desert region, San Diego and Sacramento. The Joshua Tree meeting is the last of a total of 11 meetings. At these meetings, public comment is generally only 3 minutes long and therefore it is important to be succinct and to focus your comments on your top three points. This will not be the only opportunity to provide input for the DRECP, but it is the last opportunity to express concerns and educate decision-makers orally and publicly. It is also a good opportunity to point out plan errors, shortcomings and incorrect underlying assumptions. Here are some talking points our coalition has assembled for your consideration to use during the brief public comment period:

- For the past several years, large renewable energy projects have been proposed in locations all over the desert. While some have been built on lower impact land, others have harmed important desert habitat and had major impacts on threatened and endangered species like the desert tortoise. We need a plan because there is a better way--a well-crafted landscape level conservation plan will focus renewable energy projects away from important habitat and put them in places where they will cause the least harm to animals, plants and people.
- There is a need for another round of meetings after folks have more time to review the DRECP document. Please plan for another round of meetings to ensure stakeholders and residents can comment publicly on these critical issues. Additional meetings should include locations that have been excluded from the first round such as locations in the East Mojave like Barstow, Baker, Shoshone, or Needles.
- The target for the amount of renewable energy to come from the DRECP region (20,000 MW) may be too high based on current population and energy need projections.
- There is no funding plan in the DRECP to show how any of the planned conservation actions will be carried out. Without any

- reliable sources of funding, we are not confident that the federal and state agencies will live up to their conservation commitments in this plan.
- Funding for implementation of the plan is critical. The success of the DRECP depends heavily on adaptive management and monitoring. BLM and the other REAT agencies must provide staff to collect, manage, evaluate and analyze monitoring data. Monitoring data must be made available to the public and must not be considered the agencies and project proponent's proprietary information.
 - Conservation actions and designations must be long lasting and meet the state standards for conservation. The goal for the DRECP should be to create a reserve design for conservation purposes that will not allow development in critical habitats and protect species, ecosystems and processes in perpetuity, reaching beyond the life of the DRECP. Mitigation on public lands must be more clearly defined and should extend beyond just the operational life of the project to encompass the life of the project's impact.
 - There is a need to refine Development Focus Areas (DFAs) including those in the Lucerne Valley area: Now that North Peak Wind has been taken off the table, DRECP agencies and counties must refine harmful DFAs. DRECP and County staff should work with local communities to understand the impacts of DFAs and find low-conflict areas for development. The REAT agencies and County must work with communities to find low and no conflict locations in San Bernardino County: Lucerne Valley has led in this respect and the aforementioned entities must actually work with communities to find low conflict areas for development and to refine the DFAs to reflect that work. San Bernardino County must take leadership role on this issue, as it is one of the single most important issues of our time in the desert. Ramos and Lovingood must work with the County planning agency to work constructively with communities to plan, revise SPARC to be more effective, and oppose projects that harm County interests, National Parks and residents' quality of life.
 - The reserve design should be revised to include areas with known critical resources such as the Soda Mountains and the Silurian Valley. . Development in these sensitive areas would undermine credibility in the DRECP process and reinforce the public's belief that the DRECP agencies care more about politics than about science and conservation.
 - There is a need to protect critical wildlife and ecological linkages. The DRECP conservation reserve design must include

the most important linkages, as proposed by the many connectivity projects, and development must not occur in places like the Soda Mountains, Silurian Valley, or the Eagle Mountain area (e.g. Eagle Crest Pumped Storage, where connectivity would be lost if development proceeds.)

- There is a need to protect critical wildlife habitat on private and public lands. The plan shifts much of the development focus from public to private lands, which could be an improvement, but species and sensitive cultural resources occur on these lands as well. DFA's must be refined to exclude critical habitat and cultural resources on private lands, too.
- There is a need to oppose alternatives that propose more development focus areas than the preferred alternative. It is important to state that no alternatives with more acreage of DFA than the preferred alternative be adopted. The preferred alternative must be refined so natural and cultural resources are protected. The DRECP's range of Alternatives is flawed. The No Action alternative assumes the same level of development – 20,000 MW, as the preferred. This doesn't provide a true range of alternatives and must be remedied.