

Two County Plans for Our Future in the Homestead Valley

UPDATING THE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

Land use planning all over San Bernardino County now takes into account an added RENEWABLE ENERGY ELEMENT. Federal and State mandates to use more renewable energy resources resulted in an industrial solar and wind power gold rush in the California High Desert. Widespread citizen protests against these destructive developments caused a County overhaul in its permitting policies.

State and Federal agencies have combined in a manner not dreamed of when the County General Plan was approved in 2007. The goal: to fast-track huge solar and wind projects in seven California desert counties, to sacrifice the desert to generate and transmit power for heavily-populated urban areas. The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) had been born.

Residents who did not agree this was the best land use argued for renewable energy generation at the point of use: on rooftops and parking lots in already developed towns and cities.

This better way to generate power was mostly ignored in the DRECP. Big, expensive wasteful projects receive taxpayer subsidies. But they fail to work as well as expected, or to create local jobs. Rural communities get nothing but lowered property values, degraded environment and ugliness.

The Renewable Energy Element in the County General Plan must defend us from these destructive land uses and encourage more solar at the point of use, and more logical permitting of projects by the Planning Commission.

Because a solar project “does not obstruct mountain views” does not make it acceptable by any other standard. Witness Lone



Before: Photo from Lone Valley Solar Park brochure. After: Living desert on private property reduced to rubble beside Camp Rock Road.

Valley Solar on Camp Rock Road in Lucerne Valley (see photos).

The SPARC Forums asked for citizen input into County planning standards. A draft Renewable Energy Element has been published, and we are asked to comment on how successfully it reflects our input.

UPDATING THE HOMESTEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY PLAN

The Countywide Plan program now in the works will revamp all community plans in the 2007 County General Plan.

The **County General Plan** includes:

All **Community Plans**, which include:

the **Homestead Valley Community Plan**,

which includes the unincorporated communities of **Johnson Valley, Landers, Flamingo Heights, Yucca Mesa**, and some surrounding areas.

Development guidelines for land use planning in the Homestead Valley Community Plan include consideration of environment, infrastructure, community character and history, but did not foresee the threats we faced between 2007 and today.

The Countywide Plan study now under way wants to know our opinions and judgements on the advantages and defects of life in the Homestead Valley and how best to encourage the good and discourage the bad and the ugly.

Obviously an overlap exists between these two planning processes. The 600-pound canary is the threat to our lifestyle posed by industrial-scale renewable energy projects. This must be addressed in the Homestead Valley Plan as well as in the Renewable Energy Element. Some communities may have private property and public lands in their plan area that are suitable for large solar or wind projects. Homestead Valley does not.

Several months of community workshops have been held by county consultants to develop citizen input on community plans. The first workshop for the Homestead Valley will be held on Monday evening, September 12, from 6:00-8:30 p.m. at the Johnson Valley Community Center. Everyone is invited to discuss results at the HVCC meeting in Landers, Monday, September 19.

A follow-up workshop at Yucca Mesa Community Center is planned for November.

See SPARCforum.org for the draft Renewable Energy Element
Find the 2007 HOMESTEAD VALLEY COMMUNITY PLAN on www.hvccsite.org
See www.countywideplan.com