

HOMESTEAD VALLEY
COMMUNITY COUNCIL



"One voice for the people of Homestead Valley"

P. O. Box 3694 Landers, CA 92285 www.hvccsite.org

July 18, 2011

Dear _____:

Homestead Valley is located in the Third District of San Bernardino County in the High Desert of Southern California. The four Homestead Valley communities of Flamingo Heights, Johnson Valley, Landers, and Yucca Mesa formed the Homestead Valley Community Council (HVCC) in 1997 to address matters of mutual interest with local, state, and federal lawmakers.

HVCC is extremely alarmed by the number of solar, wind, and transmission line project/upgrades currently proposed for installation on publicly owned lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Even if only a modest fraction of these projects is approved and built, we believe they will have an immediate, irreversible, devastating impact on our communities and other desert communities in the western states.

There is a long held misconception that the western deserts are little more than vast swaths of sun-baked, lifeless, worthless landscape. Those of us who admire desert ecosystems like the Mojave, who have chosen to live here and experience daily all the diversity and beauty it has to offer know first-hand this misconception could not be further from the truth.

The desert flora consists of an unimaginable number of plant species, including Creosote rings dating thousands of years old, still living and playing an important role to the survival of animal species like the Kangaroo Rat, San Joaquin Kit Fox, and the Desert Tortoise. Eagles, hawks, owls, and raptors fly our desert skies, as they have been for thousands of years. From the flowering yuccas of New Mexico, to the Saguaro cacti of Arizona, to the Joshua Trees of California and Nevada, there should be no doubt our desert open spaces are teeming with life.

Centralized renewable energy projects such as those currently being proposed on publicly owned lands require massive amounts of this land to accommodate them. Nothing demonstrates this better than the proposed 400 MW Ivanpah Solar project, which will permanently destroy approximately **4,000 undisturbed acres** of Mojave desert.

There are over 100 applications to the California BLM for Rights of Ways to build large projects like Ivanpah, many even larger! In the Ivanpah project alone over 10 times the Desert Tortoises were discovered during construction than were estimated and mitigated for by the environmental/biological assessments conducted in the pre-approval/construction stages. What other inadequate surveys and assessments will be uncovered after the fact and how many of these projects will be approved on faulty and under-reported studies?

Large centralized solar and wind projects sited remotely rely upon transmission lines to bring the generated power into the urban load centers. Transmission lines are very costly to build or even upgrade, disproportionately impact rural communities like the Homestead Valley communities, introduce line losses and unsafe emissions that increase with line length, and pose threats to our national security. We should be working to decentralize our transmission infrastructure and this century old technology – not expand it or add to its congestion.

A 4,000 acre area of Black Lava Butte and Flat Top Mesa in Pipes Canyon is being studied for massive windmills to be installed. The intermittency, inefficiency, costs (to build, maintain, and transmit the output), along with the adverse impact on area property values makes industrial wind a very undesirable option for California to increase renewable energy supplies and meet the 2020 goal of 30%.

We believe our current energy policies of supporting large scale remotely sited wind and solar projects, and the transmission lines they will inevitably require, is highly misguided. Centralized generating facilities on our publicly owned open spaces will be harmful to our communities by reducing the open areas and views that make our communities so unique, reduce our property values, increase our electricity rates, and not bring any appreciable new employment to our area (especially when you consider the large amounts of land that will be consumed). If increasing renewable energy supplies in California is the real objective, there is a better way.

Utilizing the already developed environments of residential/commercial rooftops and parking lots for solar PV panels is the fastest, cleanest, and least expensive way to ramp up renewable energy supplies. Germany integrates over 10 times the solar energy into their existing electricity grid as California does each year, despite the fact that they enjoy only half the solar resources. This has been accomplished by leading with energy policies based on fair compensation for home and business rooftop generation (feed-in-tariff), and readily available loans to cover the upfront costs (PACE/AB811). Los Angeles alone could benefit from 4,000 MW of new homegrown solar energy produced right in their own basin by implementing these 21st century Energy Decentralization policies.

The Homestead Valley Community Council strongly urges all our County, State, and Federal lawmakers to reject policies that favor centralized large scale solar, wind, and geothermal projects on our publicly owned open spaces. We instead encourage you to support sensible and responsible renewable energy policies that promote renewable energy generation sited in the already built environment. Market value compensation for home and business owners who participate in the renewable energy generation revolution, along with non-subsidy-based low interest loans are the proven method for increasing renewable energy supplies in a safe, timely, and least costly manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Harvey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Harvey
President, Homestead Valley Community Council