

April 15, 2015

Sally Jewell, Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240
Submitted via email

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We the undersigned petitioners, who are comprised of individuals, businesses, artists, communities, former employees of the Department of the Interior and organizations, support the nomination for a Soda Mountains Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) as this designation would protect the significant natural and cultural resources found at this site from current and future inappropriate industrialization proposals. This petition was assembled by the National Parks Conservation Association in response to the widespread requests from local and regional groups to share their concerns about the impacts of the Soda Mountain Solar project on public resources, local communities, and renewable energy policy in the California desert.

The proposed Soda Mountains ACEC would span both north and south of Interstate 15 in California and protect the following important trust resources:

- Crucial bighorn sheep habitat and migration corridors.
- Groundwater resources that feed desert springs that are necessary for rare fish, migratory birds, bighorn sheep, and a wide variety of other wildlife.
- Scenic and recreational values of the adjacent Soda Mountains Wilderness Study Area and the Mojave National Preserve.
- Habitat for high densities of kit fox, burrowing owl, and desert tortoise.

Until the time of the ACEC designation, we urge the Department of the Interior to select "Alternative G" in its environmental review of the Soda Mountain Solar project. Specifically, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) should not authorize a right-of-way grant for the project. Subsequently, we request that the BLM amend the California Desert Conservation Area Plan to identify the site as an ACEC unsuitable for future energy generation, and to institute a disturbance cap to significantly limit destruction of the intact bighorn sheep habitat and intermountain sheep dispersal opportunities.

As evidenced by this letter, there is widespread, broad based support for the protection of this unique area and its resources. Please act immediately and designate the Soda Mountains as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Sincerely,
{Signatories listed below}

Cc:

Michael Connor, Deputy Secretary, Department of the Interior
Tommy Beaudreau, Chief of Staff, Department of the Interior
Jon Jarvis, Director, National Park Service
Neil Kornze, Director, Bureau of Land Management
Jim Kenna, California State Director, Bureau of Land Management

ACEC SIGNATORIES

ORGANIZATIONS

**Brenda Burnett, President
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FORMER DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

Mary Martin, Former
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