

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2015

Sally Jewell
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We write in support of your continued work on the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). This planning effort is critically important for protecting the California desert's most sensitive wildlife, cultural riches, and recreation areas while also facilitating responsible renewable energy development. We were pleased to hear the Department's decision to move forward in a phased approach based on feedback from counties and local stakeholders. As the planning effort continues, we urge you to continue to work in partnership with desert communities to address local needs.

Under the phased approach, BLM's Land Use Planning Amendment (LUPA) will proceed first, designating areas for both development and conservation on public lands. The California desert is home to iconic public lands, including many popular tourist destinations like Joshua Tree National Park and the Imperial National Wildlife Refuge. It also contains abundant sun, wind and geothermal resources that make the area one of the most attractive in the world for renewable energy development. Through the LUPA, the Bureau of Land Management can demonstrate that conservation and energy development can happen simultaneously, supporting development in the lowest conflict places and conserving special places.

Investing in responsible renewable energy development will strengthen local economies, provide clean energy jobs in our communities, all while increasing America's energy independence. As the BLM plans for low-conflict development, we kindly request the BLM designate appropriate lands at and underneath the Salton Sea as a renewable energy Development Focus Area. As the sea recedes, it poses dangerous threats to public health and the surrounding communities. Identifying areas around the sea as a Development Focus Area and committing funding to its restoration are necessary for the long term public health and job growth potential of the area.

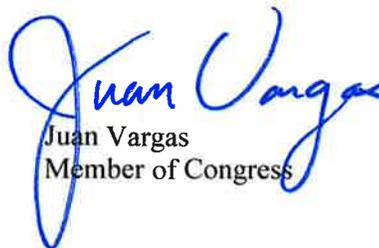
The BLM also has a great opportunity through the DRECP to conserve natural and cultural areas for future generations. There are countless areas of our desert whose history and cultural significance deserve to be protected and conserved. BLM can accomplish this by protecting public lands important for recreation, tourism, cultural resources, and wildlife as National Conservation Lands.

The effort and collaboration to draft the DRECP has been significant, and we look forward to working with you to build on progress made, improve and finalize this important plan which will shape the future of the desert for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress