



Dance

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Established in 1949

Borrego Sun

(USPS 061-260)

Vol. 61, No. 10

Borrego Springs, California

\$1.00

May 10, 2012

Ocotillo Wind Express

Wind energy farm on edge of state park is proceeding as planned

By Casey Jones
Sun Editor

One speaker compared erecting wind turbines in the Anza-Borrego Desert to drawing a knife across the Mona Lisa. Another said the drone of the blades over his ancestors' graves will be like "beating on somebody's soul." A third said the proposed wind energy project will cause "irreparable" damage to virgin desert and the adjacent Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

But after two days of public testimony, most of it against the sprawling Ocotillo Wind Express wind energy farm, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors was unconvinced.

The board approved a project implementation agreement for Pattern Energy to build the power plant just west of Ocotillo. Now, only the pending BLM record of decision stands between Pattern and its plan to place 112 465-foot-tall wind turbines on 12,500-acres of undisturbed desert.

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Anza-Borrego Desert State Park officials silenced by governor

Gov. Jerry Brown prevented state park officials from commenting on the potentially negative effects of a wind farm that may be built on federal land bordering Anza-Borrego Desert State Park.

Colorado Desert District park officials were prepared last fall to submit written comments for consideration as the federal Bureau of Land Management prepared to write the Environmental Impact Report for Pattern Energy's Ocotillo Wind Express project.

But, former ABDSP Superintendent Mark Jorgensen told *East County Magazine*, Brown's office called and issued what amounts to a gag order when it comes to commenting on renewable energy projects adjacent to the park.

A spokesman for the California Department of Natural Resources denied the order was issued, but several state park sources confirmed to the *Sun* that the call occurred. Comments from the park

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GAG ORDER:

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district were never submitted to the BLM for consideration.

Several persons with ties to the park told the Imperial County Supervisors about the gag order on April 24 as the board considered a project implementation agreement necessary for Pattern Energy to proceed with the project.

Diana Lindsay, a member of the Anza-Borrego Foundation board of trustees, told the supervisors that "What you don't see and what you will not hear today are the voices of those who have every right to speak out but are being muzzled by our Governor - employees of California

State Parks, the Colorado Desert District, and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park."

Conrad Kramer, Executive Director of the ABF, also alluded to the gag order during his testimony.

Kramer said he wished the supervisors had been able to tour the common boundary with ABDSP leadership and scientists and learn about their concerns.

"Of course," Kramer said, "the staff of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park has been silenced so this would not be possible. However, when the park is silenced the Anza-Borrego Foundation speaks."

-by Casey Jones



Games

STUDENT