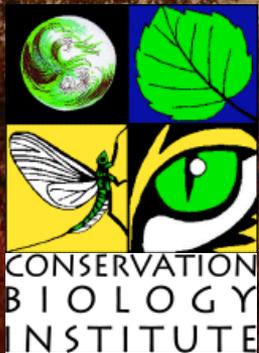


# Independent Science Advisory Process for California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

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A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Providing science for efforts to conserve biological diversity.

# Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

- A federal **Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)** under ESA
  - Provide for “incidental take” of federally listed species
  - No **explicit** requirement for independent science input
- A state **Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP)**
  - Provide for incidental take of state-listed species
  - Conserve multiple species and the habitats they depend on at a landscape scale:
    - Listed and unlisted species
    - Natural communities
    - Ecosystem processes
  - Contribute to species recovery and prevent future declines
  - Provide for economic land uses and protect property rights

# The NCCP Act of 2002

- Replaced the experimental 1991 act for south-coastal California with a statewide version.
- Provides more explicit standards based on lessons learned from the SoCal experience, including:
  - A requirement for “inclusion of independent scientific input to assist the department and plan participants...”
- However, does not specify a *process* for science input.

# CDFG (2002): “Guidance for the NCCCP Independent Science Advisory Process”

- Defined a science advisory process emphasizing:
  - *Early* science input (not post-hoc peer review)
  - Focus on *biological resources*
  - Focus on *principles* to guide planning and reduce uncertainties
- Stressed *independence* of advisors:
  - No conflicts of interest
  - No decision authority
  - Not a government-appointed “panel” (i.e., no Brown Act requirements)
- Described advisors’ roles:
  - **Do** provide input and review of *data, principles, methods*, etc.
  - **Do not** advocate for certain plan *policies, values*, etc.
  - **Do not** comment on ultimate *plan adequacy*
- Described roles for:
  - Science facilitator
  - Lead Scientist

Sometimes combined

# NCCP Act Requires Independent Science Input on Four Topics:

- Principles for Addressing Data Gaps and Uncertainties
- Principles for Conservation and Reserve Design
- Principles for Conserving Specific Target Species and Natural Communities
- Principles and Framework for an Adaptive Management and Monitoring Program

## Also often addressed:

- Principles for Analyzing Plan Effects
- Specific Questions from Plan Participants and Stakeholders

# The DRECP Independent Advisors

- **Wayne Spencer** (CBI) – Wildlife conservation biology, reserve design, mammals.
- **Reed Noss** (U Central Florida) – General conservation biology, reserve design.
- **Kristin Berry** (USGS) – Desert wildlife ecology, tortoise, Mohave ground squirrel (and more).
- **Cam Barrows** (UC Riverside) – Desert ecology, reptiles, risk assessment.
- **Kimball Garrett** (LA Natural History Museum) – Birds.
- **Ted Weller** (US Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station) – Bats and wind turbines.
- **Richard Redak** (UC Riverside) – Invertebrates.
- **Todd Esque** (USGS) – Desert community ecology, vegetation, fire, invasive species, desert tortoise.
- **Chrissy Howell** (PRBO Conservation Science) – Spatial analyses, GIS, predictive modeling, bird ecology.
- **Scott Abella** (Northern Arizona University) – Restoration ecology.
- **Robin Kobaly** (SummerTree Institute) – Botany & plant ecology.
- **Robert Webb** (USGS) – Desert disturbance & recovery processes.

# Additional Peer Input

- Science Advisors are encouraged to seek additional peer input for:
  - Greater taxonomic and geographic coverage,
  - Additional specialties,
  - Etc.
- Advisor recommendations will be peer reviewed.

# Draft Schedule

- **April 22-23:** Initial Science Advisory Workshop
  - **April 22 – (Public)** Orientation Session with presentations to advisors followed by Q&A
  - **April 23 – (Closed)** Independent Advisors' deliberations
- **May:** Draft Initial Science Recommendations
- **May/June:** Obtain peer review from additional scientists
- **June/July:** Finalize Recommendations
- **TBD:** Additional workshops or ad hoc input?

# Example Questions for Advisors

- Are the planning boundaries appropriate?
- Should the region be subdivided, and how?
- What species and communities are likely to be affected and how can their conservation needs be met?
- What ecological processes (e.g., migration, range shifts, predator-prey interactions) might be affected by plan actions?
- What key data gaps or uncertainties need to be addressed, and how?
- What model(s) are most appropriate for addressing data gaps and predicting plan effects?
- What guidelines are appropriate for siting energy facilities to minimize harm to covered species?

# Written Comments and Questions Welcome!

- Due by 5 p.m. on May 10, 2010
- Include **Docket No. RENEW EO-01**
- E-mail to [Docket@energy.state.ca.us](mailto:Docket@energy.state.ca.us)
  - Include your or your organization's name in file name
- Mail copy to:  
California Energy Commission Dockets Office  
**Docket No. RENEW EO-01**  
1516 Ninth Street, MS 4  
Sacramento, CA 95814

# Additional Information



- Existing NCCP science advisors' reports:

[www.dfg.ca.gov/nccp/science.htm](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/nccp/science.htm)

- CDFG guidance for NCCP independent science advisory process:

[www.dfg.ca.gov/nccp/scienceprocess.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/nccp/scienceprocess.pdf)

- USFWS policies concerning use of science:

[www.fws.gov/endangered/policies/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/policies/index.html)