



Friday, June 2, 2023

Dear Gov. Newsom, Senate President pro Tempore Atkins, and Assembly Speaker Rendon:

It's never been more urgent to transition from dirty fossil fuel-generated power to 100% clean energy sources in California given the escalating impacts of global warming, from more intense wildfires to more extreme weather and heat. We have the power to reduce climate pollution and air pollution throughout our state by generating clean energy from abundant sources, including the renewable sun and wind.

However, building the clean energy infrastructure -- including solar panels, wind turbines and transmission lines -- that we need can be difficult and slow. California's [2021 joint agency report](#) found that the state needs to roughly triple its current electric power capacity to meet its required 100% clean energy target by 2045. That will require building clean energy infrastructure at an unprecedented rate and sustaining this pace in the upcoming decades.

While we build this "clean energy economy," we must not abandon our bedrock environmental protections such as the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which play a fundamental role in minimizing harms to the environment and wildlife while developing infrastructure. These crucial avenues for public input allow for meaningful community engagement so that valid issues may be considered and addressed.

Simply put, we need commonsense solutions for more energy efficiency, conservation and clean energy in California while ensuring that environmental protections that govern infrastructure projects remain strong. Clean energy projects should prioritize putting solar and storage in or on top of homes, warehouses, parking lots and community buildings and solar, storage and transmission lines along highway rights of way, which we can build upon quickly and minimize environmental conflicts.

Gov. Newsom's recently proposed budget trailer bill package to streamline infrastructure projects in California includes some commonsense solutions that can facilitate progress on important energy and transportation infrastructure that will help us meet our climate goals. However, some elements of the package omit critical environmental and community

engagement considerations and should be left out of the package. In addition, controversial water projects, such as the Delta plan, desalination plants and the Sites Reservoir project should not be included in the package. These environmentally harmful proposals will wreak more havoc on nature and better alternatives exist that we should consider. We **oppose** more resources going towards these flawed solutions as well as any efforts to speed these projects up.

For clean energy and clean transportation projects, Environment California **supports** Executive Order N-8-23, which creates an interagency Infrastructure Strike Team designed to maximize federal and state funding opportunities for innovation and infrastructure projects and focus on streamlining efforts. This will facilitate decisive action and coordination to advance critical clean energy projects.

Environment California enthusiastically **supports** the Green Financing trailer bill, which establishes a green bank financing program to leverage federal money for climate projects. This bill would allow state agencies to use funds from the greenhouse gas reduction fund as matching grants for competitive grant processes, making the state eligible to compete for more federal funding for climate and energy projects. Passing this reform through a trailer bill is beneficial because it would immediately allow state agencies to compete for federal funds, rather than delaying until January if a similar bill was passed through the normal legislative process.

Environment California **supports** the three trailer bills to accelerate environmental mitigation, extend NEPA authority to Caltrans and to allow direct contracting. These three bills will collectively streamline transportation projects, accelerate time-intensive environmental mitigation, shorten delivery schedules for public works projects and avoid delays.

Environment California **opposes** the trailer bill related to administrative record review that would shorten the time frame for preparing documentation for CEQA actions. This bill could drive up the costs of preparing the administrative record, thus potentially cutting local groups out of the process. This could have unintended negative consequences on decisions with important environmental and community impacts.

Environment California **opposes** the Delta Reform Act Refinement trailer bill, which would streamline certain review processes to speed up planning, permitting and building of the environmentally harmful Delta Plan.

Environment California **has serious concerns** about the trailer bill related to CEQA judicial streamlining, which would expedite judicial review of challenges to water, transportation, clean energy and other projects under CEQA. This bill would require resolution of any litigation, including appeals, within 270 days, which could potentially stifle valid environmental concerns and appeals from being thoroughly considered in the CEQA process. We're worried that this very broad bill, as written now, with drastic changes, could have grave unintended consequences.

Lastly, Environment California **opposes** the trailer bill to reclassify fully protected species. This bill would repeal existing laws designating species including the golden eagle and the southern sea otter “fully protected” and reclassify dozens of iconic California species at lower levels of protection to more easily build infrastructure projects. While building more clean energy infrastructure is important to meet our climate goals, these broad changes would have implications far beyond clean energy projects and could mean significantly weakening protections for wildlife at risk. It may make sense to consider updating the California “fully protected” species status to be more in line with the federal Endangered Species Act. However, if the “fully protected” statuses are ever reconsidered, this should happen through a regular, transparent process with public participation and with scientific input to ensure that vulnerable species are properly protected.

In addition to getting more clean energy on the existing built environment, California can do more to expedite clean infrastructure projects by speeding up interconnection by utilities and by giving the necessary resources to local governments so they can expedite thorough processing of permits rather than shortcutting valid environmental review. We look forward to continuing to work with the governor’s office and the legislature to make our clean energy future a reality, while protecting our state’s incredible biodiversity and beautiful open spaces for generations to come.

Sincerely,

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

Laura Deehan
State Director
Environment California