



June 4th, 2020

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu St, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Santa Barbara County Budget Hearing, Utility-Scale Solar Ordinance

Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

The undersigned organizations urge the County to prioritize work on developing a utility-scale solar ordinance in 2020. We understand the significant budget challenges the County faces, but urge the Board to consider that a modest investment now could provide significant revenue and environmental benefits in the future. For example, the Strauss Wind Project, which is now under construction, is projected to provide \$40 million in tax revenue to the County over its 30 year project life.

Currently, the opportunity for utility-scale solar growth is very limited because of the County's definition of utility-scale solar AND the current location/acreage cap on that development. In the Santa Barbara County General Plan, Utility-Scale Solar Photovoltaic Facilities are described as: "Facilities that are connected to the electrical grid on the utility side of the electric meter and are built for the primary purpose of generating and selling wholesale power." Utility-scale solar is limited to 600 acres within Cuyama Valley, and the majority of this land is already built out with the Cuyama Solar Project.

Per the County's 2019 Strategic Energy Plan:

"This restriction is in place because Cuyama Valley was the first region which developers determined was suitable for utility-scale solar development, due to its high solar intensity and duration. However, with falling solar costs, more areas are financially viable for utility-scale solar development. Therefore, a new solar ordinance is necessary to open up utility-scale development in the rest of Santa Barbara County. Solutions - The main recommendation is: 1) Allow utility-scale solar photovoltaic development in all agricultural and industrial zones in Santa Barbara County. Rather than allow utility-scale solar development on a case-by-case basis as was done with Cuyama, the County should open it on a blanket basis, as is currently the case with wind energy. Permit applications can then be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, rather than updating the ordinance for each new region of interest."

In order to spur the development of solar resources throughout the County, the undersigned urge the County to prioritize development of a utility scale solar ordinance in 2020. By allowing solar projects to be considered in areas beyond Cuyama, our region can take steps toward meeting the County's Energy and Climate Action Plan goals while increasing tax revenue from solar energy projects.

Sincerely,

Sigrid Wright, CEO

Community Environmental Council

Linda Krop, Chief Counsel

Environmental Defense Center

Katie Davis, Chair

Sierra Club Los Padres Chapter

Craig Lewis, Executive Director

Clean Coalition

Marell Brooks, President
Citizens Planning Association

Vijaya Jammalamadaka, President
League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara

Rebecca August, Chair
Safe Energy Now! North County

Michael Lyons, President
Get Oil Out

Ken Hough, Executive Director
Santa Barbara County Action Network

Jim Taylor, Vice President
Carpinteria Valley Association