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February 16, 2011

Ms. Sherrill Neidich  
California Energy Commission  
Dockets Office, MS-4  
1516 Ninth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5504

Dear Ms. Neidich:

**COMMENTS REGARDING THE PROPOSED RENEWABLE PLANNING AND PERMITTING PROGRAM (RP3) GRANTS [DOCKET NO. 02-REN-1038]**

The Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the California Energy Commission's (CEC) Proposed Renewable Planning and Permitting Program (RP3) Grants. The purpose of this proposal is to create a new program that would provide local governments with planning and permitting assistance to help them evaluate and expedite renewable energy development in their jurisdictions.

The Task Force considers the RP3 a positive proposal that would promote the development of renewable energy projects in California. While we are fully supportive of the local governments' authority to oversee permitting of renewable energy facilities producing less than 50 MW of power, we consider this proposal a prospective resource to local governments in developing these facilities. We would like to offer our continued assistance in the stakeholder process for developing this program and provide specific comments relating to the permitting of conversion technology facilities.

RP3 may be a vehicle to help clarify the permitting process for solid waste conversion technology facilities in California. For the past decade, the Task Force, in coordination with local governments such as the County of Los Angeles, has supported the advancement of conversion technologies as an alternative to landfills. While these facilities are operating successfully throughout the world and efforts are underway to commercialize these technologies in other states, commercial development has not taken place in California.

Legislative and regulatory roadblocks and lack of a comprehensive permitting framework have stifled establishment of this industry in California. At a time when California is facing record budget deficits and unemployment rates, these technologies

could infuse millions of dollars of economic investment in our renewable energy infrastructure and create countless green-collar jobs.

The Task Force would like to offer three specific suggestions that could be implemented through RP3 that could help foster a more comprehensive permitting framework in California:

1. Given CEC's technical expertise with renewable energy, offer training to local governments on various types of renewable energy projects so that when a proposed project comes across their desk they are more familiar with how to permit it.
2. Create a "one-stop shop" website for renewable energy project developers. The website would have links to all potential permitting agencies in the region of the proposed project and agencies to contact regarding the major types of renewable energy projects. The website would also indicate the expected timeframe to get a permit from a specific agency. Additionally, the site would link to CEC's website so the project developer could get a current listing of grant solicitations relating to renewable energy projects.
3. Work with CalRecycle and counties to ensure that the development of a conversion technology facility does not require an amendment of the Countywide Siting Element (CSE), which can be a very lengthy and costly process especially in Los Angeles County. Each county in California is required to adopt a CSE, which identifies that there is a county- or region-wide minimum of 15 years of combined permitted solid waste disposal capacity through existing or planned disposal and transformation facilities or through additional strategies. The CSE must be amended for each new facility, and there is a possibility that the development of certain conversion technology facilities would require an amendment to the CSE. The CSE amendment process is challenging for the following reasons:
  - a. The approval process required for a CSE amendment encompasses three stages. First, the proposed amendment must be approved by the majority of cities in the county containing the majority of the incorporated population, a process known as "majority/majority approval". Subject to the successful passage of the first stage, the amendment must then be approved by the county Board of Supervisors and finally by CalRecycle. This is a lengthy process, especially for the populous counties.
  - b. The cost to amend the CSE is substantial. In Los Angeles County, for example, a basic amendment process can take a minimum of two years and cost taxpayers upwards of \$250,000 *provided* it is approved by the cities and CalRecycle on the first attempt. An Environmental Impact Report is required for each amendment, and project developers could be responsible if it is found that they are the sole reason for the amendment.

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Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared by the County and the 88 cities in the County of Los Angeles. Consistent with these responsibilities and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective solid waste management system in the County of Los Angeles, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the solid waste management system on a countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities (Los Angeles County Division), the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, the City of Los Angeles, the waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. The Task Force meets on a monthly basis in the City of Alhambra. We would like to invite your team to attend one of our meetings and make a presentation on the RP3 proposal. Our members are longtime supporters of renewable energy sources, development of conversion technology facilities within the County of Los Angeles, and could offer additional insight and feedback on your proposal. Please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at (909) 592-1147 if you are interested in making a presentation to the Task Force or if you have any follow up questions.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair  
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/  
Integrated Waste Management Task Force  
Council Member, City of Rosemead

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cc:

Each Member of the California Energy Commission  
California Bioenergy Interagency Working Group  
California State Association of Counties  
Leagues of California Cities  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force  
Each Member of the Alternative Technology Advisory Subcommittee