



A Renewable Energy General Plan Amendment
(REGPA)
for Inyo County California



In 2002, the State passed the Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS). Originally, the RPS required that electric service providers procure 20-percent of electricity from renewable energy resources by 2017. In 2006 the RPS was accelerated to meet the 20-percent goal by 2010, and in 2011 it was expanded to require 33-percent by 2020.

This put a lot of pressure on the communities in the California desert.

Inyo County's REGPA - A Five-Year Odyssey

In 2010 the County adopted Title-21 the Renewable Energy Ordinance and began work on a General Plan Amendment

In 2011, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the REGPA and then subsequently rescinded it due to CEQA litigation brought forth by environmental groups

Due to the County's involvement in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered into with California Energy Commission the County was able to apply for a Renewable Energy Planning grant

The County was awarded the grant in July 2013 . . . and A REGPA was adopted on March 26, 2015 . . .

. . . sounds so simple?!

On February 26 2014, after numerous public and stakeholder meetings, a Background Report, and an Opportunities and Constraints Technical Study, staff brought Draft REGPA policies and Draft Renewable Energy Development Areas (REDAs) to the Planning Commission

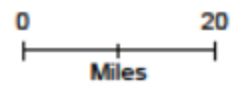
Much of the policy from 2011 was brought forward in the first Draft

The REDAS included areas for both wind and solar energy development and also included caps on allowed megawatts per REDA.

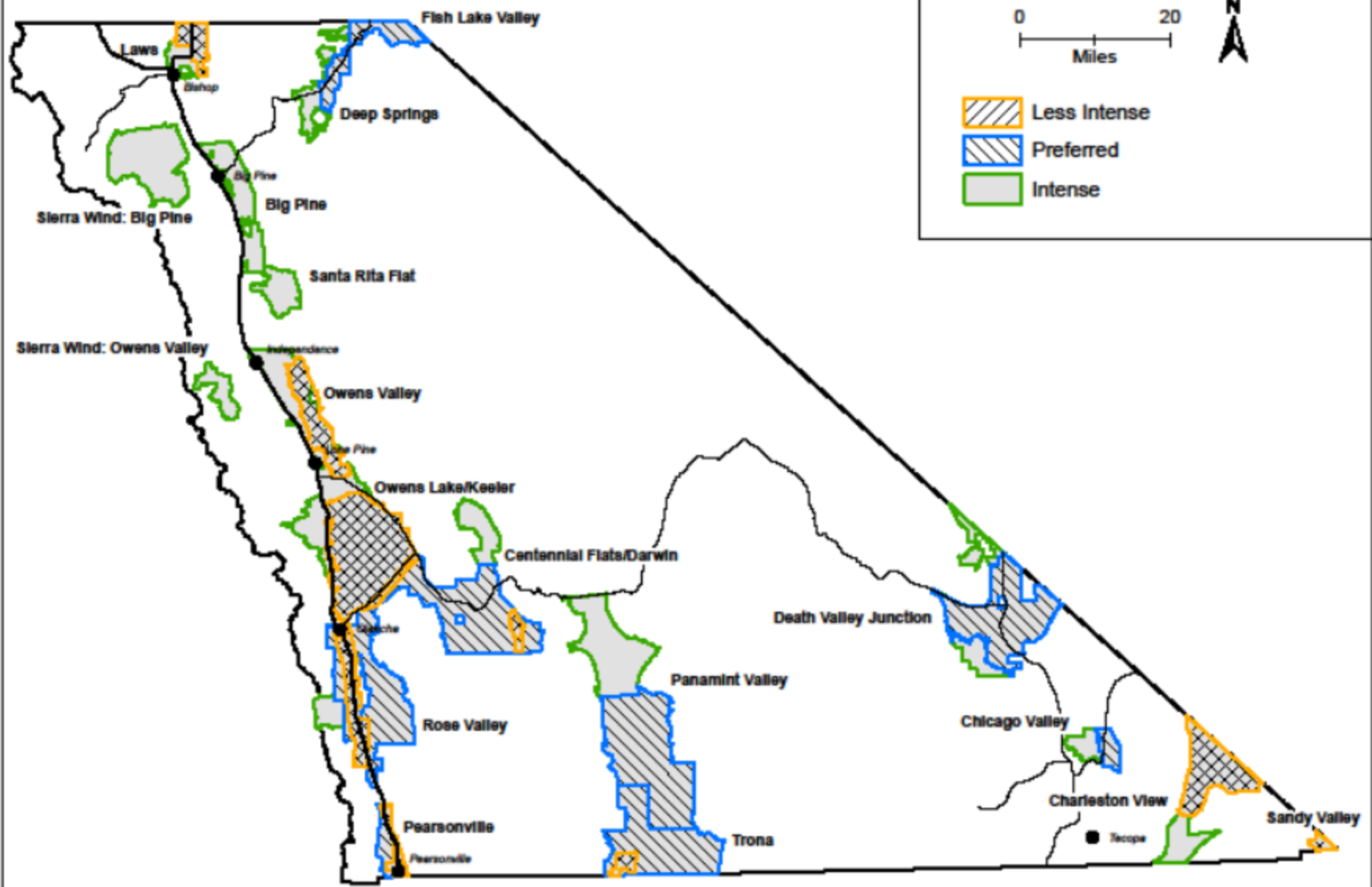
Staff provided three alternatives for the REDAs: Intense, Preferred and Less Intense



Renewable Energy GPA



- Less Intense
- Preferred
- Intense





The Public Hated It!!

There was a huge turnout from the public who expressed concerns and a general dislike of the DRAFTS, staff also received many comment letters along the same vein, most of these concerns were related to:

- Utility Scale development
- Wind energy and its effect on birds
- The Owens Valley
- The effects of development on visual resources

The Planning Commission recommended that the DRAFT REGPA as presented by staff be taken to the Board of Supervisors for input. With a suggestion to go with the 'Less Intense' alternative and to take out one of the REDAs



March 18, 2014 – the Board of Supervisors held an informational workshop on the REGPA efforts. Many people from the public attended this workshop and the Board took public comment

April 1 2014 – the Board of Supervisors conducted a workshop to provide input for a revised project description to use for the PEIR. This was another very well attended meeting and the Board took public comment

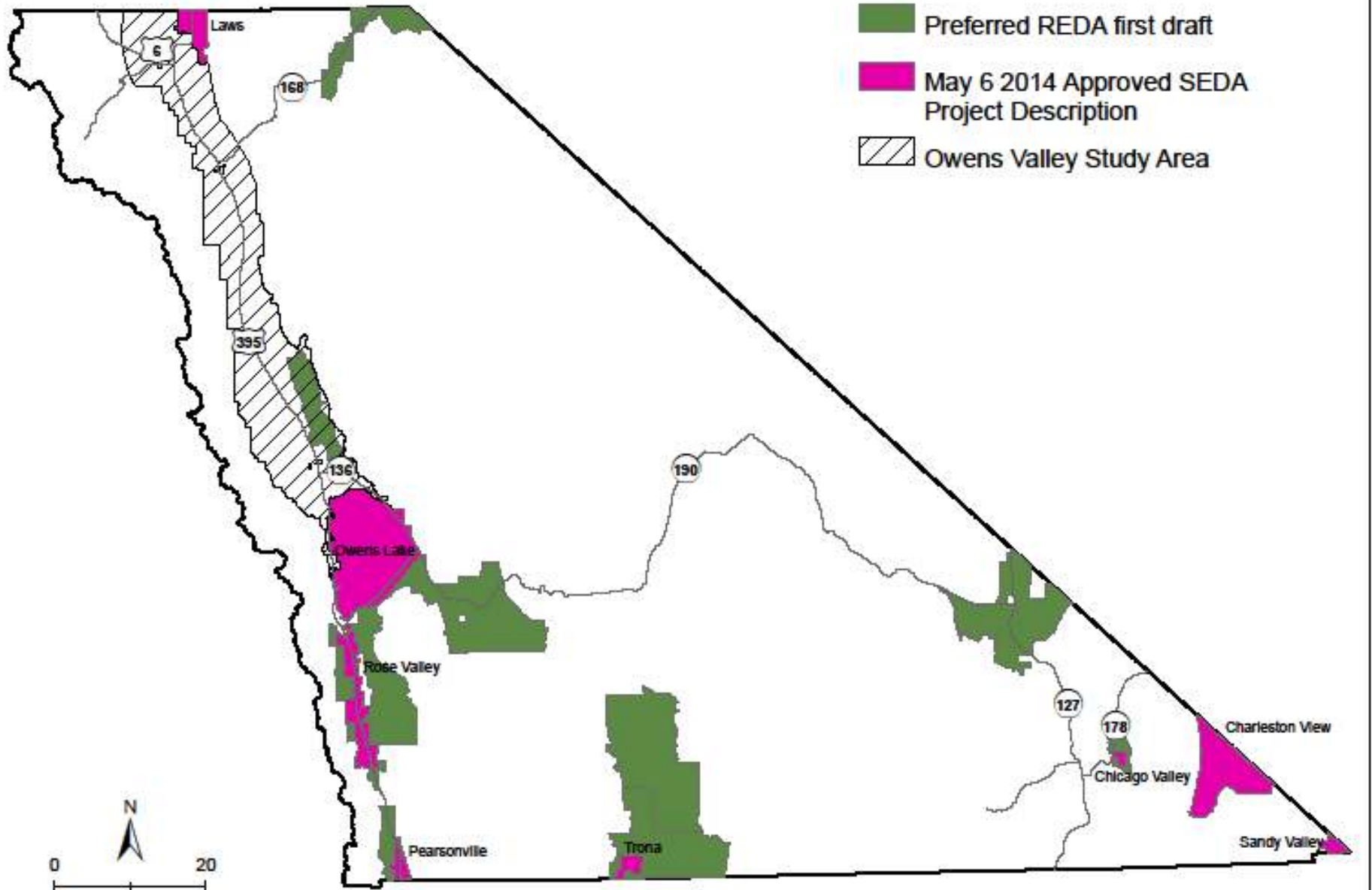
May 6, 2014 – the Board of Supervisors held an additional meeting to approve the modifications staff made based on the direction received from the Board during the April 1, 2014 meeting. Also well attended and the Board took public comment

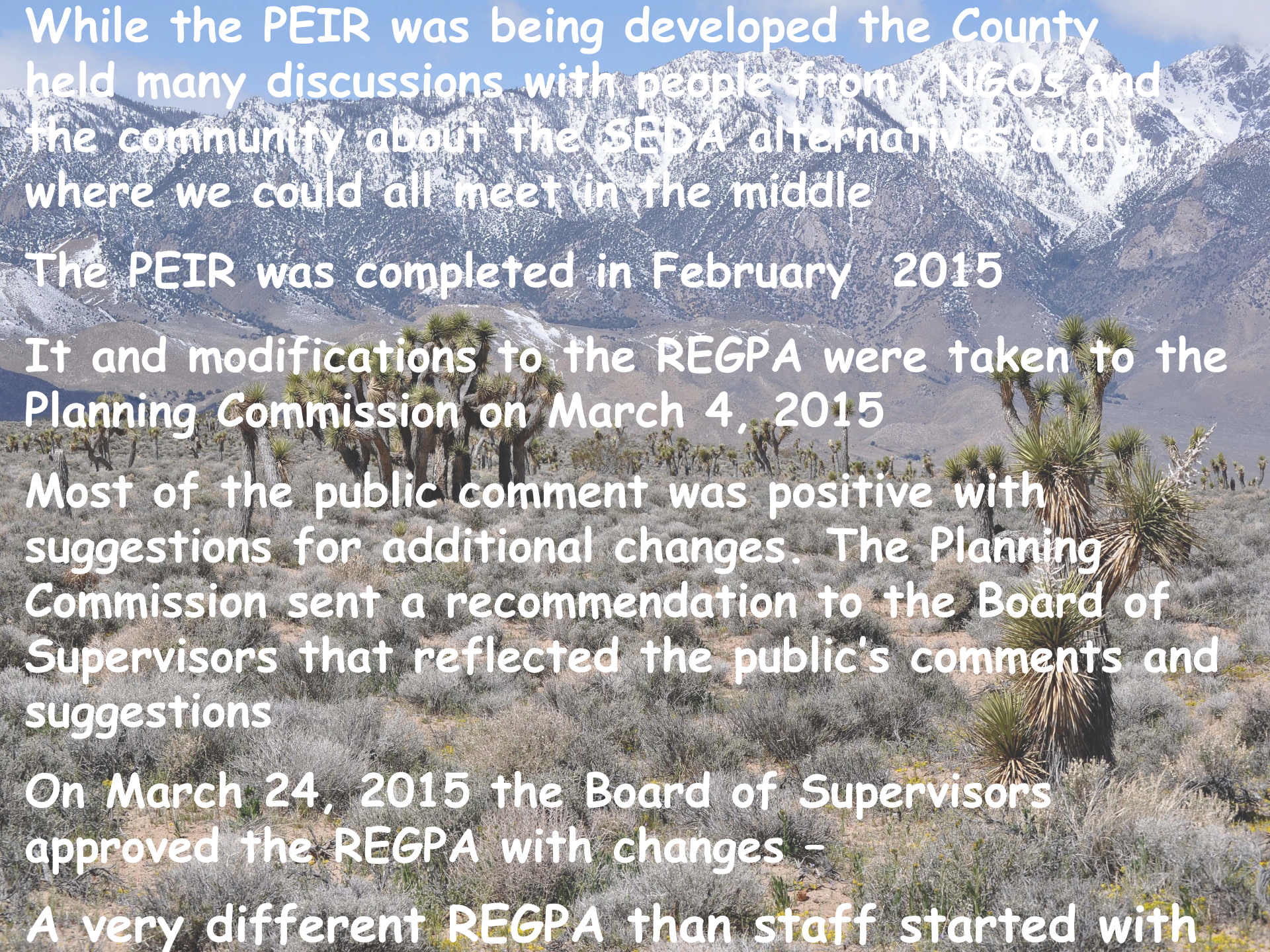
Based on public input the Board directed staff to update the project to include:

- Use the Less Intense Alternative and Megawatt Caps
- The Owens Valley was taken out and made the Owens Valley Study Area
- A 250-megawatt cap was imposed on the Western Region of the County based on current available transmission
- Megawatt caps would be accompanied by corresponding acreage caps
- No wind energy development
- The REDAs were renamed Solar Energy Development Areas (SEDAs), since the REGPA only considers solar

This was used for the Project Description







While the PEIR was being developed the County held many discussions with people from NGOs and the community about the SEDA alternatives and where we could all meet in the middle

The PEIR was completed in February 2015

It and modifications to the REGPA were taken to the Planning Commission on March 4, 2015

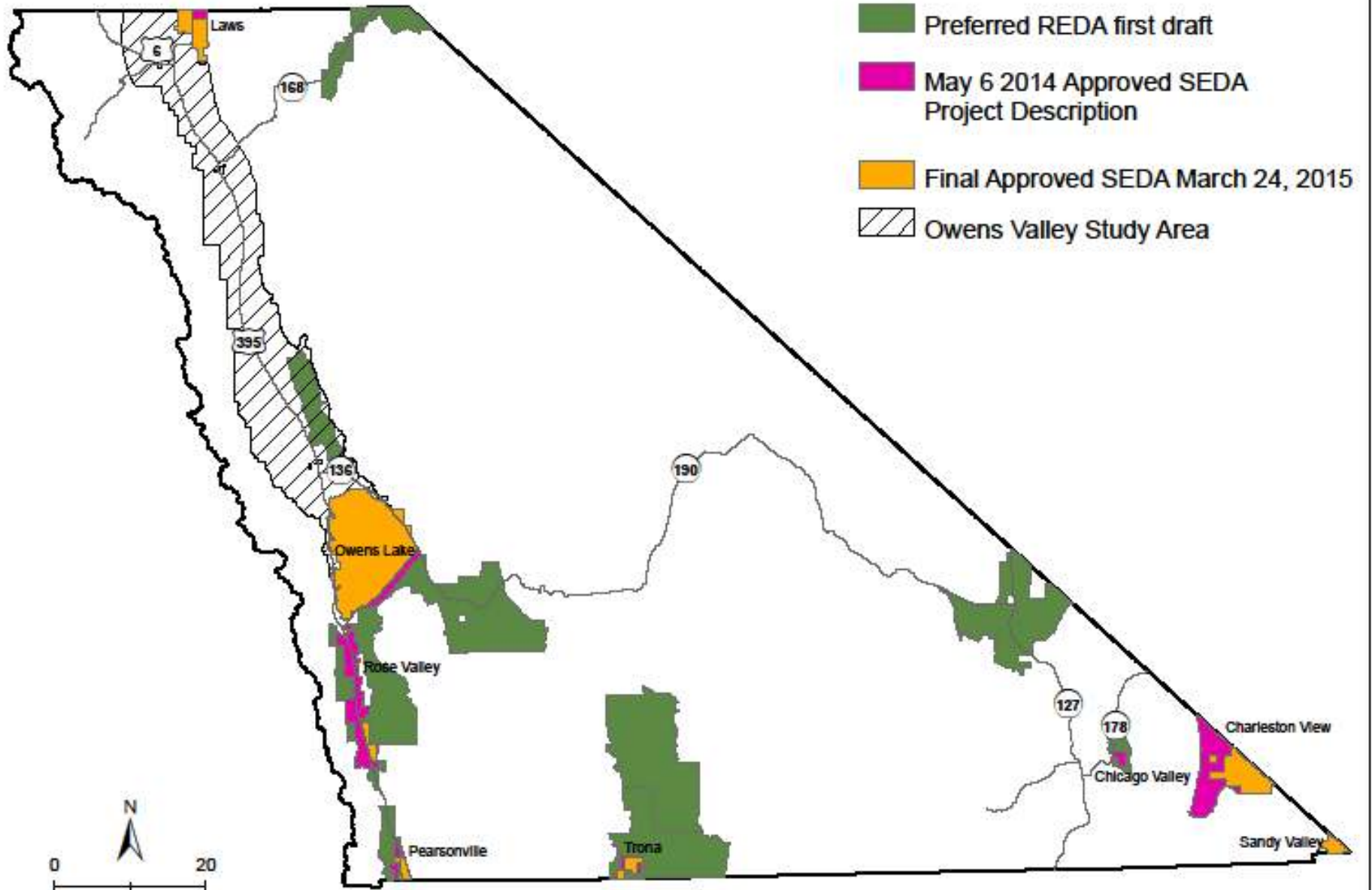
Most of the public comment was positive with suggestions for additional changes. The Planning Commission sent a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors that reflected the public's comments and suggestions

On March 24, 2015 the Board of Supervisors approved the REGPA with changes -

A very different REGPA than staff started with

REGPA Highlights

- Solar Photovoltaic Only
- Caps on the acreage that can be developed per SEDA
- Sustainable water practices for development in specific areas
- Public will be notified at the onset of all solar projects and provided the opportunity to participate in the process
- Reclamation plans and financial assurances are required for solar PV projects
- Development is encouraged on already disturbed lands
- County will be compensated to offset costs for services for new solar development



Public Input

- 10 - Introductory stakeholder and public meetings
- 4 - Project description meetings, 1 - Planning Commission, 3 - Board of Supervisors
- 3 - Scoping meetings and 2 - scoping sessions
- 3 - Draft PEIR public comment meetings
- 1 - Planning Commission Draft PEIR public comment meetings
- 1 - Inyo County Natural Resources Advisory Committee
- 5 - Tribal Consultations
- 1 - Final Planning Commission Meeting
- 1 - Final Board of Supervisors Meeting

Lessons learned

Listen - The public is very passionate about issues that can affect where they live, ignoring their concerns is counterproductive

Remember - Renewable energy facilities can have a huge impact on the areas they are built - be sensitive to this

Find allies - Allies may be people you never expected

Be open to change - We all approach this type of work with good intentions in mind but will likely need several versions before it's in a state where a majority will accept it

Where we are now

The County applied and was awarded a second grant from the Energy Commission. This grant is funding a study of the Owens Valley for solar photovoltaic development

This work includes a GIS data collection effort, primarily vegetation mapping to supplement the area of the Owens Valley that is not in the DRECP boundary. We are also collecting and mapping visual resources data and working directly with the tribes to identify cultural resources and landscapes

The County was presented an Award of Merit from the Central California Chapter of the American Planning Association for Innovation in Green Community Planning for the REGPA

Questions

