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Planning and Community Development
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**Joint Hearing Senate Natural Resources and Water and Environmental Quality
Sacramento, February 12, 2013
Testimony of Lorelei Oviatt AICP
Director of Kern County Planning and Community Development**

Chairwoman Pavley, Chairman Rubio and members of the Committee, I am Lorelei Oviatt, Director of the Kern County Planning and Community Development Department. Supervisor Mike Maggard, Chair of the Kern County Board of Supervisors extends his regrets that a Board member could not attend as they are in session today as well. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in an open discussion on an issue that affects the future of our County as well as the future of California.

Energy development is a Kern County tradition. From the development of the Kern River oil field in 1899 to the first Tehachapi Wind Farms in 1981, Kern County has been a leader in new technology in the energy field. Kern County produces 80 percent of the gas and oil extraction in California. As well, we have now permitted 7885 MW of wind and Solar photovoltaic commercial scale and distributed generation renewable energy with 2/3 in production and another 3000 MW in processing and review. This has resulted in a new \$10 billion investment in California of private funds in addition to our existing energy providers. This is eight times the amount of any other county making us truly an "all of the above" energy county. We continue to support investment and expansion of appropriate oil exploration and extraction.

Kern County also remains a leader in agriculture which contributes \$5 trillion to our private sector gross domestic product and leads the nation in production of almonds and pistachios. Kern County and California's economy depends on the growth of these two industries and they have co-existed for over 100 years on a local level.

These energy and agricultural sectors provide significant jobs and property taxes as well as contribute to the government economy and provide the food, fuel, and electricity we need for our growing future, here in California. Kern County has extensive natural resource areas that are suitable for, agriculture, oil/gas, wind, solar PV, biomass, bioenergy and alternative fuel projects. Yet Kern County's location in California, with its difficult regulatory structure and reputation for business discouraging hurdles, changes a logical location to a risky investment decision. Attracting and keeping jobs in California takes creative thinking, thoughtful preparation and active involvement.

We appreciate the committee's interest in the practices of hydraulic fracturing in oil production and share an interest in addressing questions. But the practice has been common in Kern County for the last 60 years, and we are not aware of any specific problems directly linked to this oil field operational practice. We have opened a productive dialogue with Mark Necadom, Director of the Department of Conservation, which oversees DOGGR and its Director Tim Kustic and our oil industries to discuss the new regulations and find solutions for the concerns being raised.

Public discussion is always useful but calls for bans and moratoriums on hydraulic fracturing are not. From a high of 17.5 percent unemployment rate, Kern County has now put people to work in new and existing energy sectors to reduce our rate to 13.5 percent. And even green energy sectors have opposition. When we began our processing for new wind projects, there were many questions and calls for a ban on the newer 485-foot-tall turbines. Potential mechanical fires, ice throw from blades, and even the impacts of solar PV on the viewshed have all been reasons for the public to ask our Board to stop this industry from operating. Yet we opened up a dialogue and found solutions while still keeping the companies at the table and interested in California, rather than Texas or Wyoming. As someone working on the front lines of bringing business to California, I can assure you, that all industries have options as to where to invest and grow.

On behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors, I ask that your committee provide a forum for an open discussion on the practices of hydraulic fracturing and bring a measured, thoughtful approach, including all stakeholders, for local solutions, to the important protections of the environment we all want and expect from government.