



The Old Spanish Trail: Unique 21st Century Challenges

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“Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?”



My talk today will treat 4 topics:

- I. The Old Spanish Trail and OSTA
- II. Tecopa chapter's trail recording
- III. Confrontation with a Solar Plant
- IV. Interpreting the Old Spanish Trail

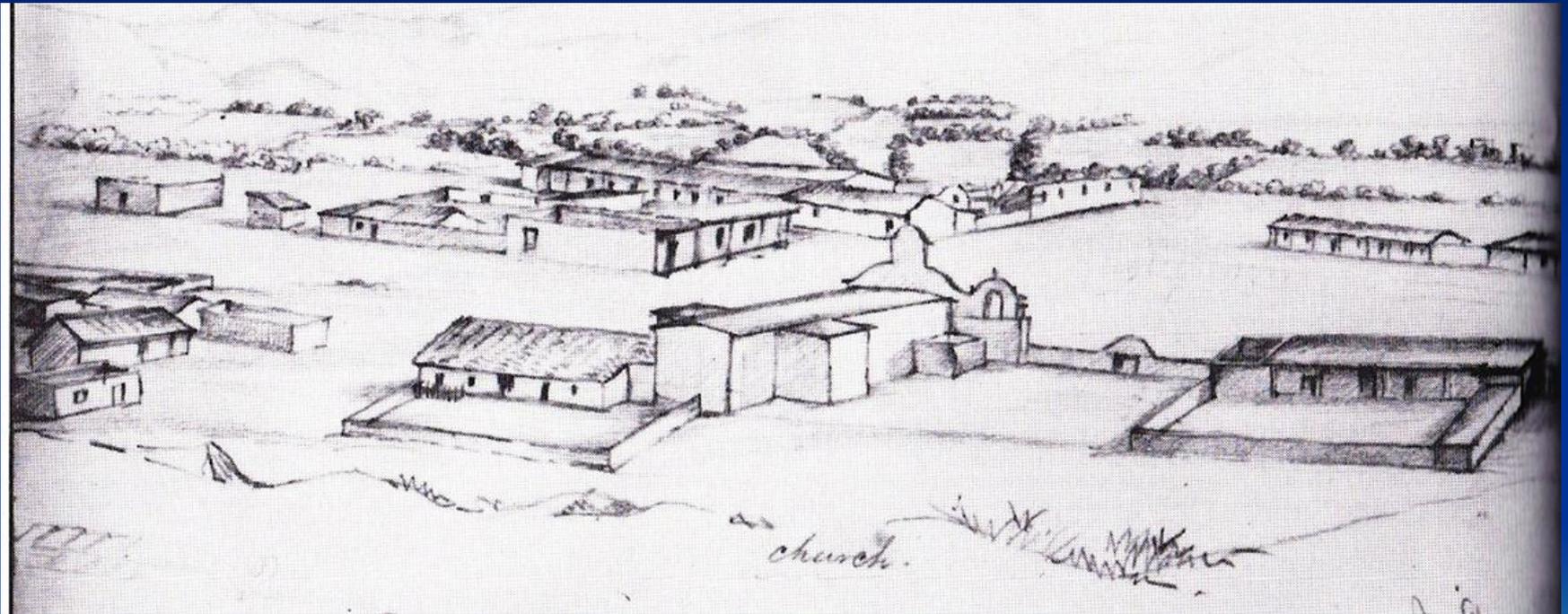
I. The Old Spanish Trail: A National Historic Trail since 2002



OST Was a Mule Caravan Route



Pueblo de Los Angeles: the Plaza in 1847. Terminus of the Old Spanish Trail



OSNHT in California



- Passes thru very dry portions of Mojave Desert
- Went from spring to spring
- Path of I-15 largely follows OSNHT from Barstow to DeVore
- Mojave River often flowed full (Fremont)



OST: a National Historic Trail



- Designated by Congress in 2002
- Has protections of the Nat'l Trail Systems Act
- Transportation, communications, migration route
- Traveled and recorded by John C. Fremont, 1844
- Jointly managed by NPS and BLM

What is OSTA? (How Do I Join?)



- Trail associations consist of citizen volunteers along trail routes
- Receive small budget from the Fed'l agencies
- OSTA formed in 1995, before NHT designation
- Chapters in 7 states and England
- Two chapters in CA: Tecopa and Mojave River

II. Tecopa Chapter: Researching OST in the CA Mojave



- 6 years of site survey accomplished
- Future plans:
 - Extend mapping of trace and wagon trails
 - Create overlay maps, interpretive mat'ls and publications



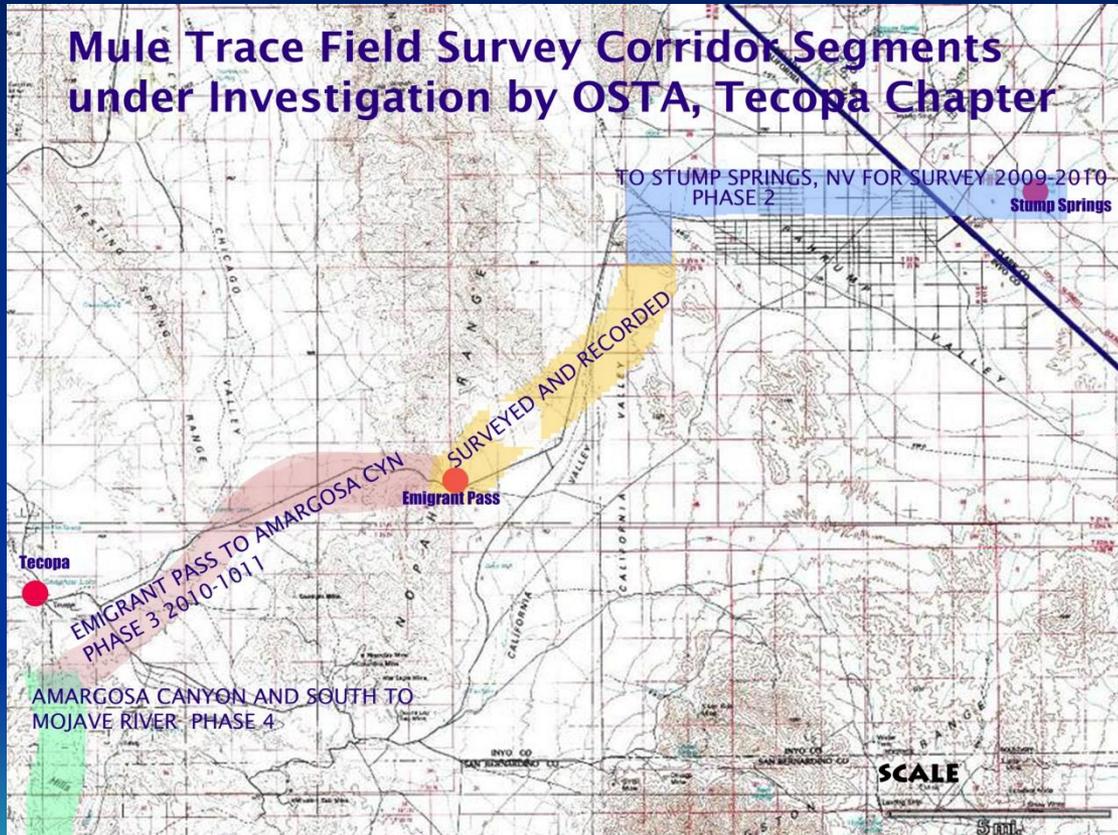
Where the Heck is Tecopa?



- East of Death Valley
- Chapter's "turf" extends to NV border
- Topography is "basin and range"



Tecopa Chapter Overall Survey Plan



OSTA-Tecopa Started from Emigrant Pass, Where Trace is Clear



- We followed trace east toward NV state line
- Have recorded 11+ km of continuous trace



Tecopa Chapter: Recording Trail East from Emigrant Pass



Mule Trace—What It's Like on the Ground



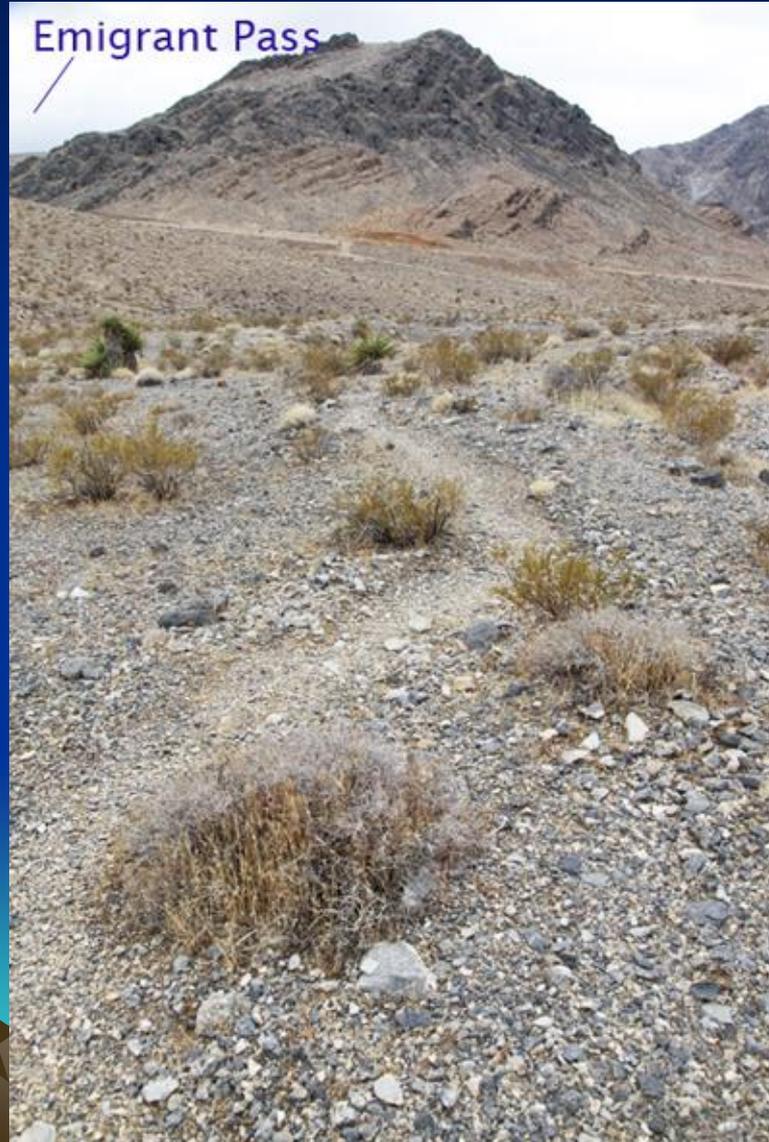
Trace Clearly Visible across Desert Pavement



- Passes through much pristine desert
- Many km with no sign of modern impact
- Almost no modern artifacts away from highway



Approaching Emigrant Pass from the East



Animals were going east
to west



Trace Is a Previously Unrecorded Branch of OSNHT



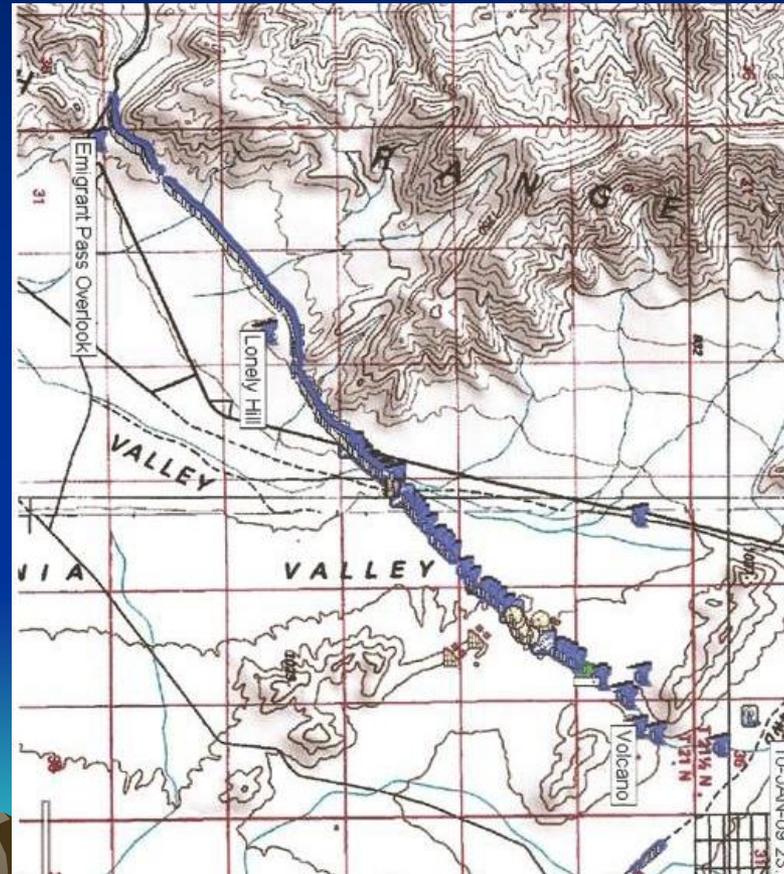
- Will submit documentation to NPS and BLM
- Much still to record in this area of CA

Tecopa Chapter: in 2011 Trail Recording Reached Charleston View



Three key things to note:

- 11 continuous Km
- Mule trace is “bee line”
- Our recording had just reached Pahrump Valley



III. Confrontation with the 21st Century



BrightSource

**HIDDEN HILLS SOLAR ELECTRIC
GENERATING SYSTEM**
INYO COUNTY, CA

August 2, 2011

The HHSEGS Application

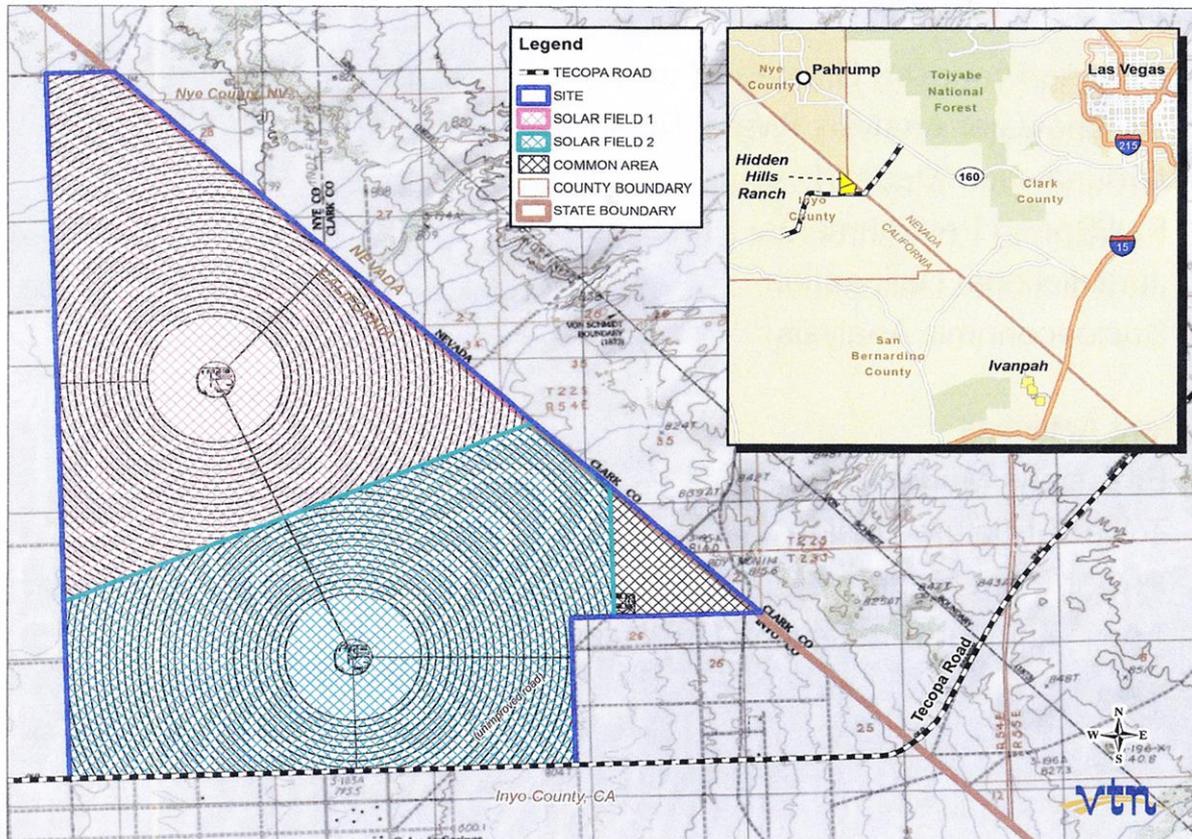


- Applicant was BrightSource, LLC
- Application filed Aug. 2011
- OSTA is an Intervenor in the Application for License before CA Energy Commission
- OSTA working with other concerned conservation and preservation groups
- BrightSource suspended its application Apr. 2013

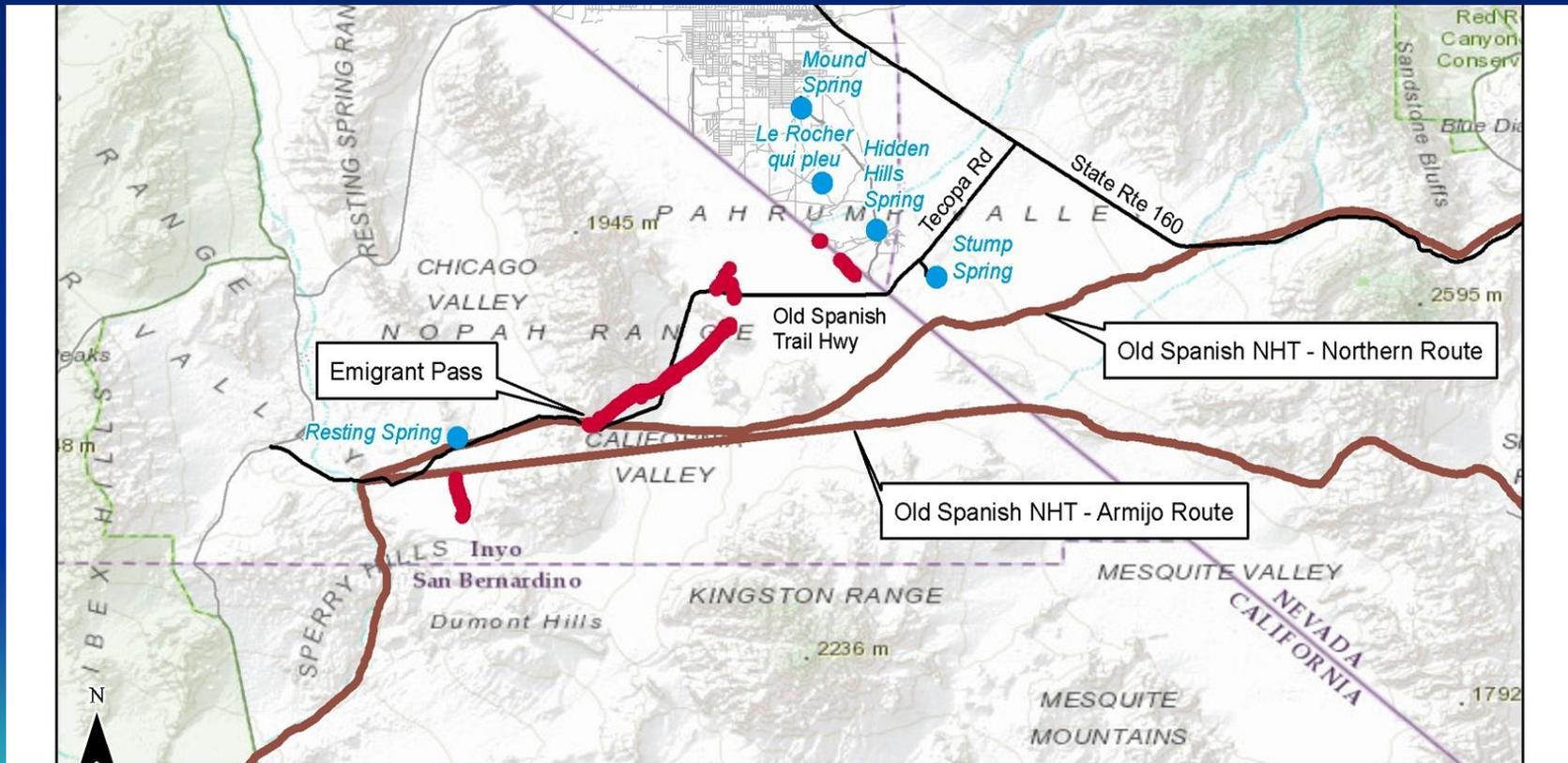
HHSEGS An Industrial-Scale Development



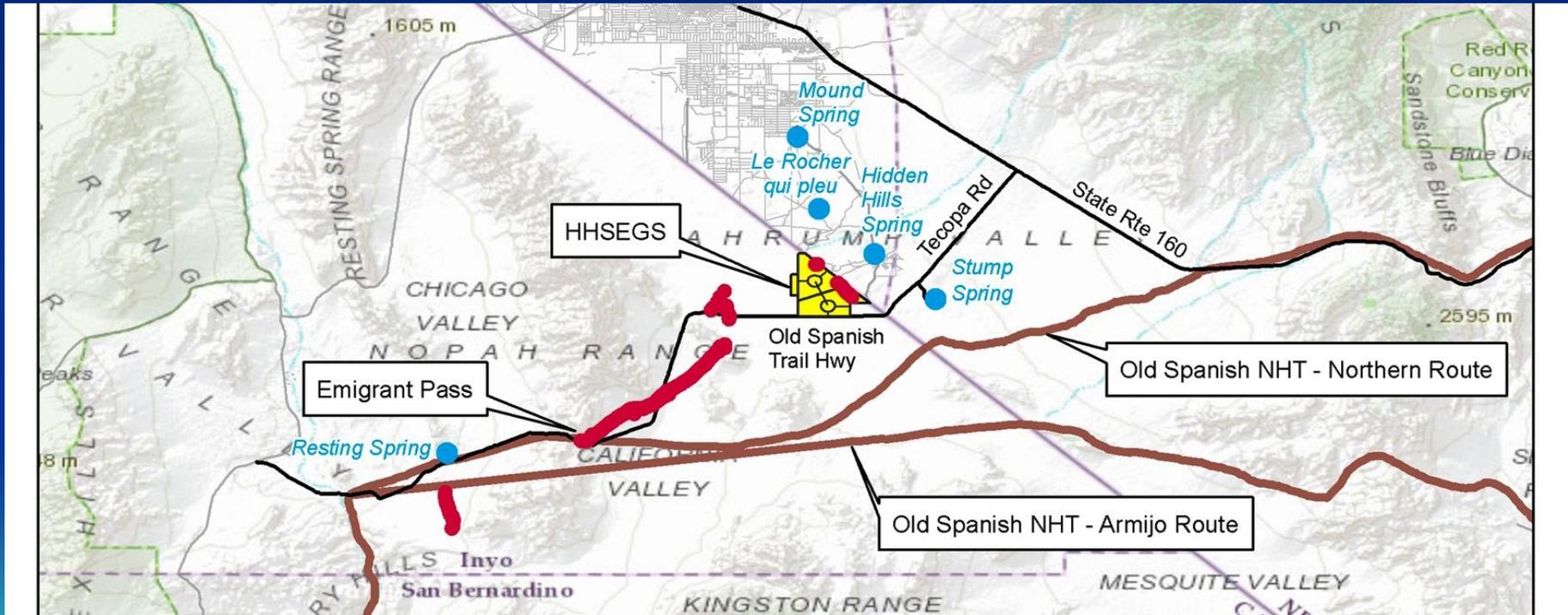
Hidden Hills SEGS – Relative Location



OSNHT in the State Line Area



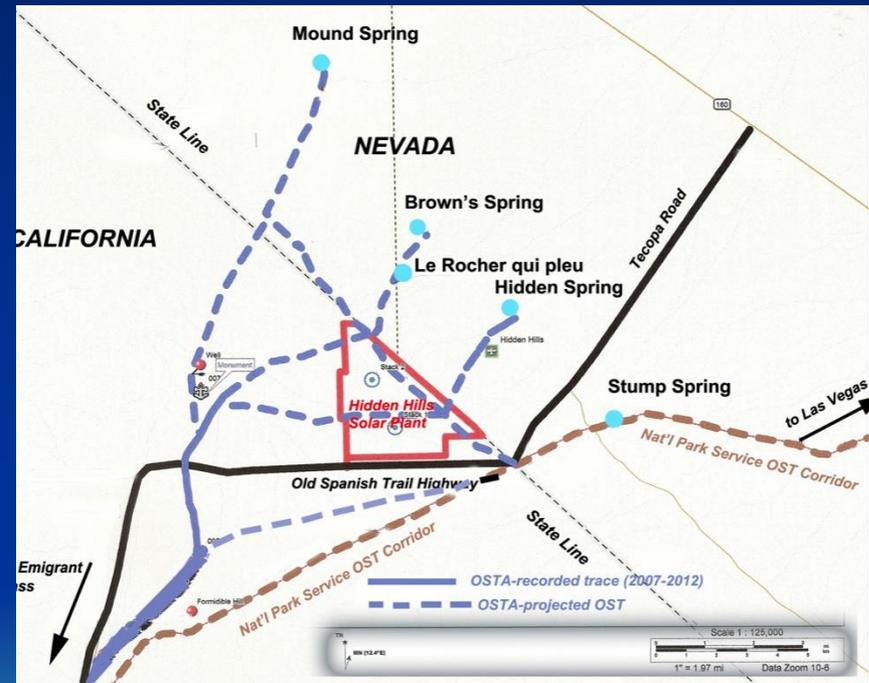
OSNHT in the Stateline Area— with HHSEGS



OSTA Adduced Strong Archival Evidence

- Choteau's log, 1848
- Coming east on OST from Resting Springs

“From [Resting Springs] one comes to...[Stump Spring]. If water is not found at the Parage about 5 m. NW of it, we will find it at Le Rocher qui pleu.” — Hafen and Hafen, 1993, p. 367



The Trail and HHSEGS: CA Energy Commission Staff Agreed with OSTA



- **Dec 2012, CEC Final Staff Assessment (p.4.3-116) —**
 - *”project would significantly impact the OST-MRNC...”*
 - *“tracks and traces...would be destroyed...”*
 - *“resulting loss of integrity is irreversible...”*
 - *“impact ...must be mitigated*
- ***April 2013, following***

Evidentiary Hearings: OSTA Testified That:



- **March, 2013 OSTA testified:**
 - Project site lies squarely across previously unrecorded section of OSNHT
 - Archival evidence on this point is clear
 - Standards for NHTs apply here
 - Federal Trail Standards support OSTA position
 - Strong mitigation measures required to compensate for damage to OSNHT and visual resources
- **April, 2013 Brightsource suspends application**

Last Word on Desert Solar and Wind: Heads Up! There's More Coming...



- Dozens of solar/wind projects in SW states
- Federal gov't pushing desert energy policy
- Companies well financed and organized
- Silurian Valley wind and solar is next challenge to OSNHT

IV. OSNHT: Trail Interpretation



- OSNHT is probably the least known CA historic trail
- Need to do much more interpretation
- Distinct issues in desert vs. urbanized areas

OSNHT: Trail Interpretation, continued



- **Tecopa area**
 - Kiosks along OST Highway
 - Shoshone Museum exhibit
 - Five CA obelisks
 - Proposed cell phone auto tour



OSNHT: Trail Interpretation, continued



- **Major issues**
 - Lack of Comprehensive Management Plan
 - Sensitivity of mule trace location

Lack of Comprehensive Management Plan



- **NTSA requires a CMP**
- **BLM and NPS have been developing it since 2002(!)**
 - Still no draft plan
 - Prevents OSTA from posting signage
 - Many local chapters ready with interpretive mat'ls

OSNHT: Trail Interpretation, continued

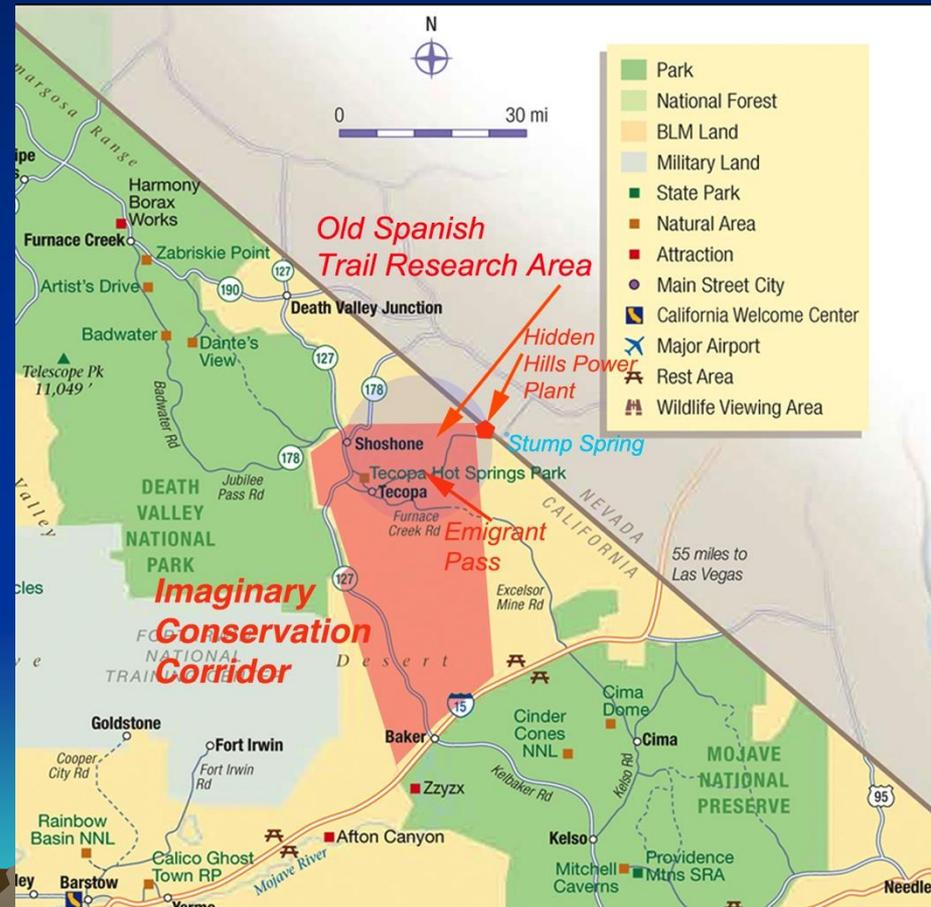


- Sensitivity of mule trace location
 - Very fragile, don't want ORVs to "follow it"
 - Local BLM office treating as "classified"
 - Seeking advice from other trail organizations

OSNHT: Trail Interpretation, continued



- A much broader vision: A desert conservation corridor
- Supported by local businesses in Tecopa/Shoshone
- Also by Wilderness Society, NPCA



Conservation Corridor: The Missing Link



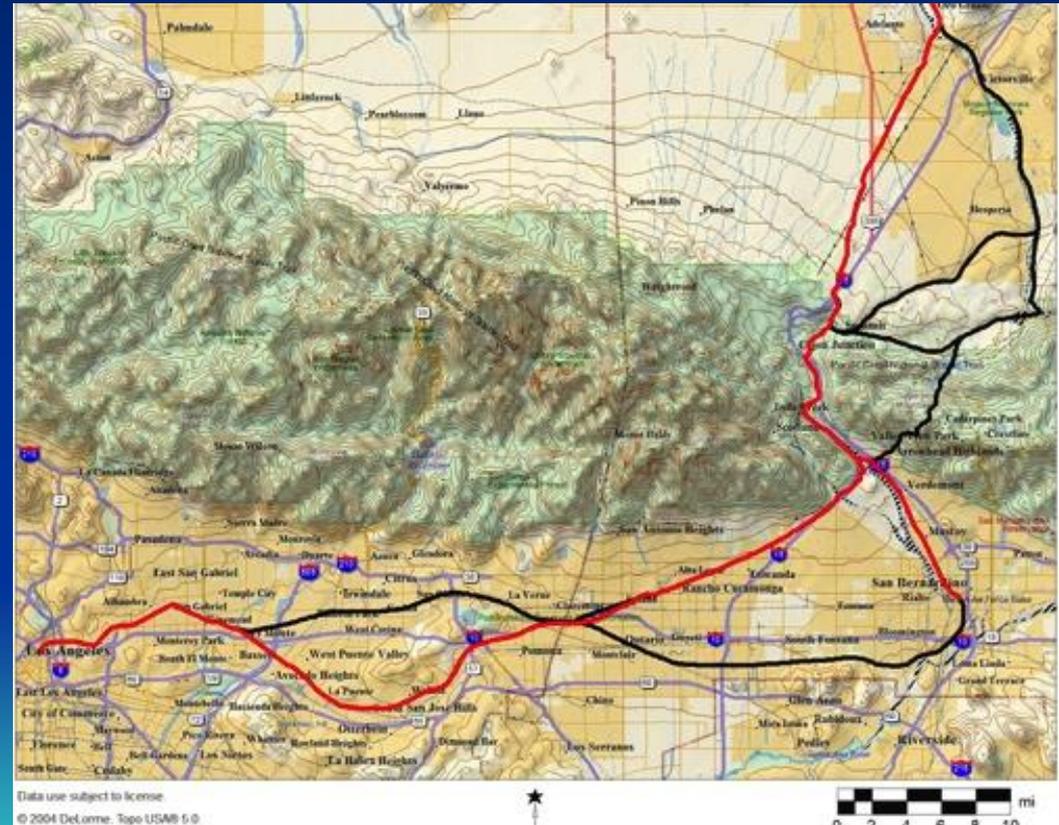
- **Connects 3 National Park areas**
- **Saves Silurian Valley, a desert treasure**
- **Adjoins many specially protected areas**
- **Prevents “checkerboarding” of wild desert**
- **Protects OSNHT and promotes interpretation**



OSNHT: Trail Interpretation in Urbanized Areas



- From Cajon Pass to LA
- Historical research since 2002 revealing Trail route
- Official OSNHT map being revised
- Many towns involved and some known Trail sites

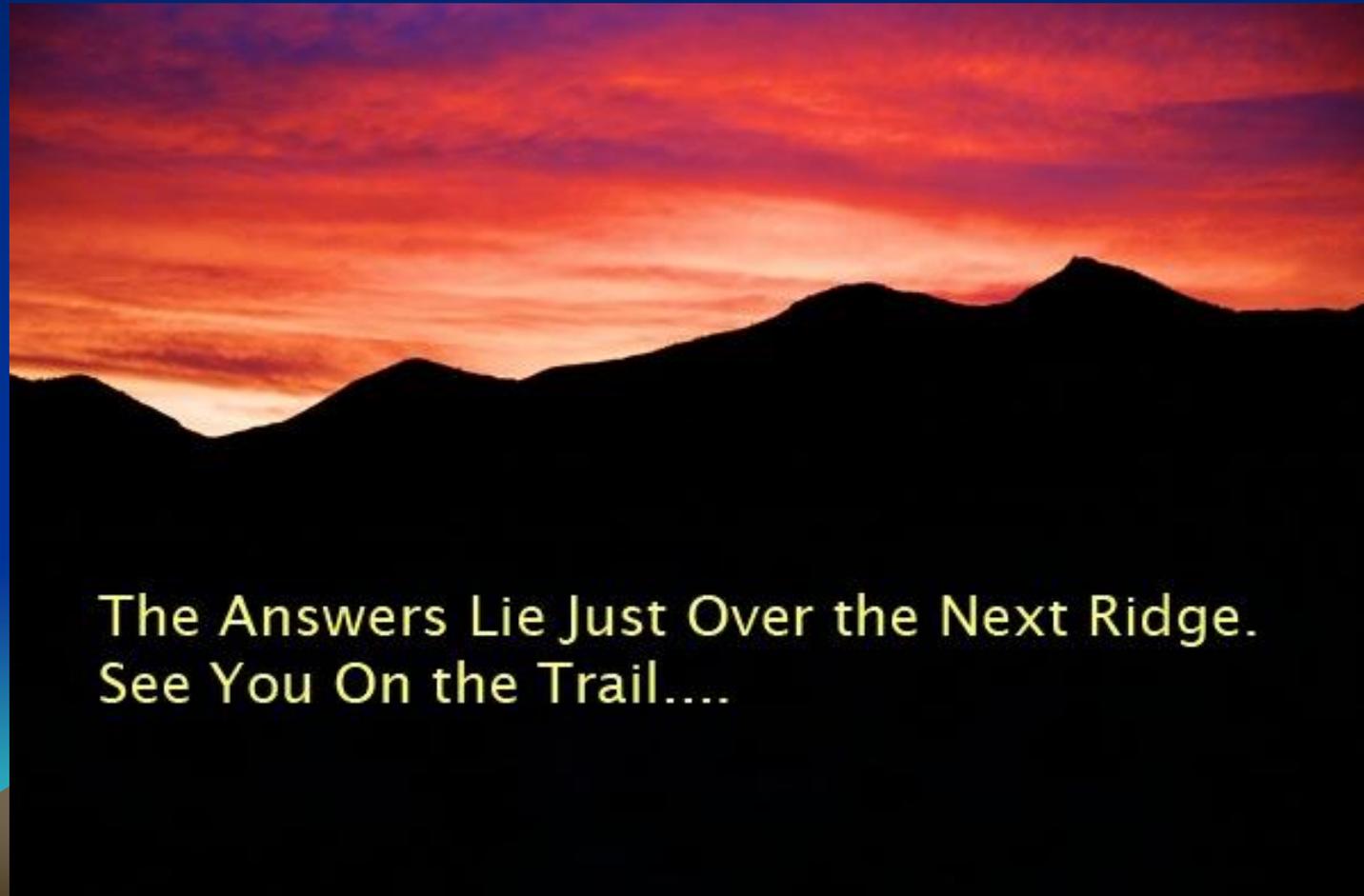


V. Resources: If You Want to Learn More...



- **Much info available**
 - OSTA website
 - The *Old Spanish Trail* by Hafen and Hafen
 - An extensive bibliography of books and published articles
 - A short list of Resources available on table at rear

OSTA Hopes You'll "Ride" with Us...



The Answers Lie Just Over the Next Ridge.
See You On the Trail....

APPENDIX: DESERT SOLAR AND WIND PLANTS



- Many complex issues for associations and the public
- I favor YIMBY
- Put solar power generation where the people are: in and near big cities

Many Other Issues Associated with Desert Energy Plants



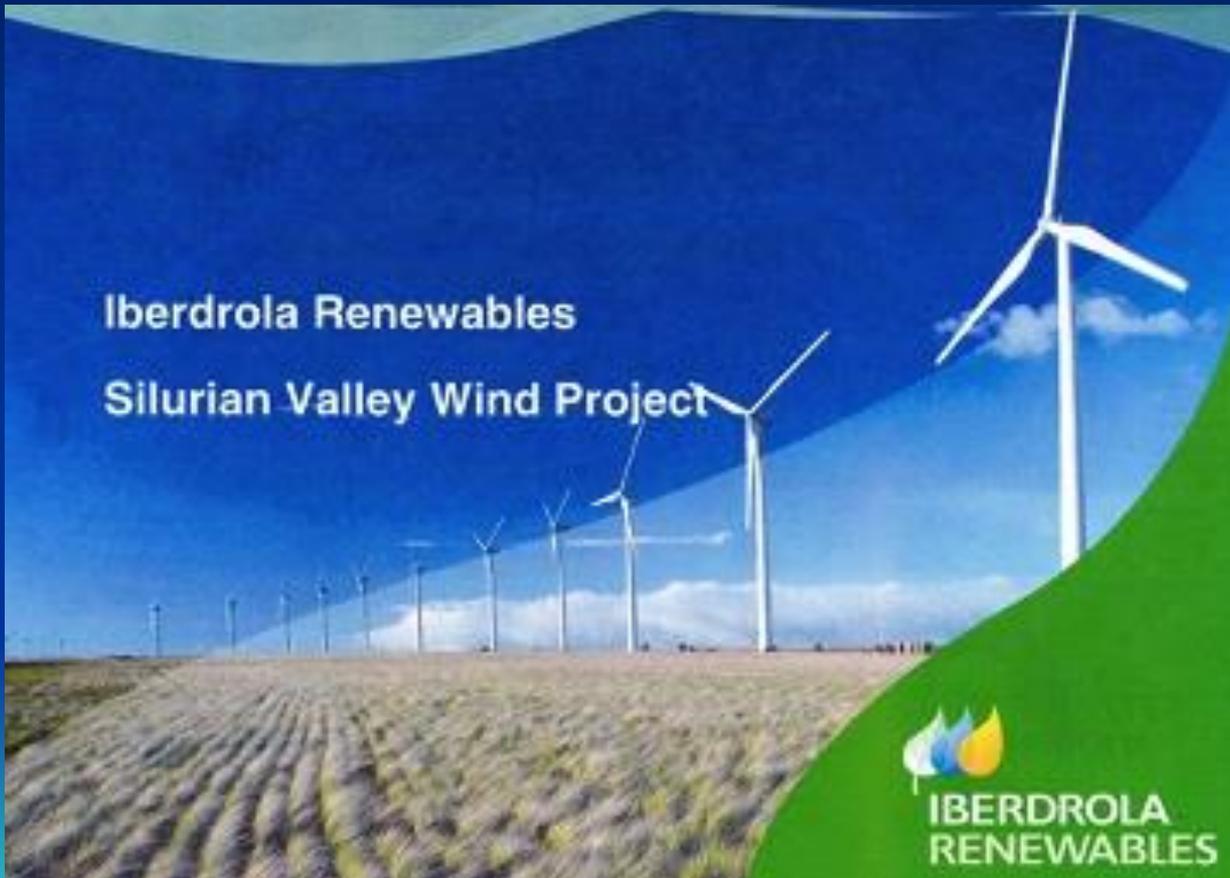
- **Plants require transmission lines**
- **May require gas lines and water supply**
- **Also require access roads**
- **Many proposed plants take 10s of 1000s of acres**

Nevada Component of HHSEGS Would Have Been Huge



- **NV transmission lines and gas line for HHSEGS**
 - BLM NV office = lead agency
- **Would almost certainly impact OSNHT corridor**
 - 64 miles of new transmission lines
 - 20+ miles of new gas line

CA: Silurian Valley Wind/Solar Farm



Silurian Valley Wind/Solar Farm, cont'd



- **Orig. proposal: 25,000 acres + 9,000 acres for trans. lines**
- **BLM Barstow office is project lead**
 - Project altered to be part solar/part wind
 - Now includes request for 7,000 additional BLM acres

VI. What to Do? Options for Historical and Environmental Organizations



- Desert solar issues are pressing, but complex.
- Trail and preservation organizations should not be passive.
- There are viable alternatives and creative solutions.
- OSTA can act in ways NPS and BLM cannot.

Organizations Need a Policy and a Strategy



- **Policy states organization's stance**
- **Requires high-level “elevator speech” statement**
 - Examples: “zero tolerance” or “equal opportunity”
 - Needed for speaking to
 - Gov't officials
 - Media
 - Other organizations
- **Also requires more detailed set of rules and admin**
 - Example: a company's HR manual

Policy Issues, I: What Does Policy Address?



- **Individuals and organization need guidance and support**
 - Build on HHSEGS experience (call me)
 - Build alliances with other organizations
 - Develop expertise on energy/preservation issues

Policy Issues, II: Broad Social Issues



- Develop expertise on energy/preservation issues
- Examples:
 - Advocate for “brown field” vs. unspoiled sites
 - CA’s west Central Valley
 - Sen. Feinstein takes this approach
 - Push for urban-based solar
 - LA DWP just started solar power “buy back” policy for urban solar

Policy Issues, III: Regulatory Agencies and Statutes



- **Understand state and federal regulatory processes**
 - Cases may involve federal, state, or private land
 - CEQA governed in the Hidden Hills license app
- **Know the governing laws and regulations**
 - Nat'l Trails System Act is in stewardship manual
 - Federal Trail Standards are clear

Policy Issues, IV: Who Else Will Advocate for the OST?



- **Fulfills OSTA's mission to preserve and protect**
- **OSTA can take positions impossible for federal or state agencies (BLM, NPS, SHPO)**
- **Chapter members have detailed local knowledge**
 - Know the trail route
 - Know local officials
 - Participate with other local organizations

Silurian Valley Wind/Solar Farm, cont'd



Planned Environmental Studies



Cultural Studies

- Past cultural resources studies indicate that Silurian Valley was an important travel corridor and destination for prehistoric and historic humans
- Paleoindians inhabited the margins of now-dry lakes that were and continue to be areas of seasonal abundance in certain foods
- Historic occupation mostly focused on mining and mining-related occupations
- Despite a long history of human occupation, transient or otherwise, the human footprint in Silurian Valley is relatively limited and much of the dynamic natural landforms retain strong integrity

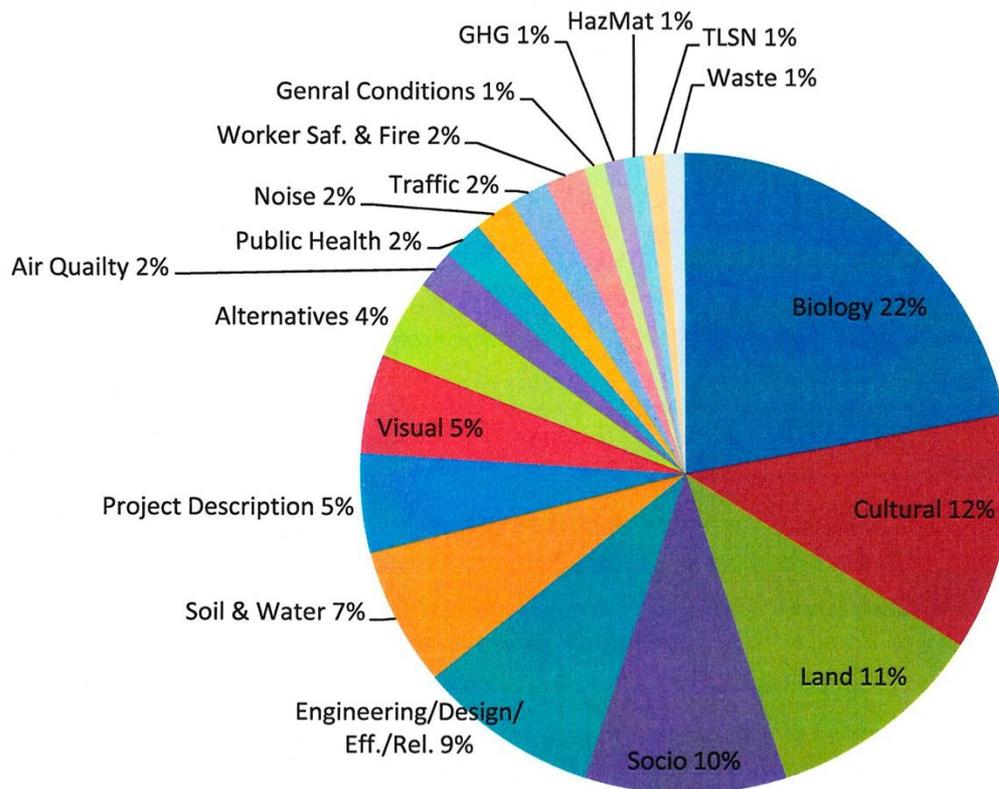


OSTA and Trail Protection Can Make a Difference



**HHSEGS
PIE CHART**

(Chart
created by
CA Energy
Commission)



Bottom Line Is: New Game, Big Players at the Table



- **“If you don’t want to run with the big dogs, stay on the porch”**
- **BrightSource and others**
 - Have the \$\$\$\$
 - Play high-stakes poker
- **Gov’t processes place a large burden on non-profits**
- **Up to trail associations and the public to respond**

OSTA and the 21st Century Land Rush



- Will require resources and organizational commitment
- OSTA needs to ally with other non-trail organizations
- The fight is on.
- It won't be short. Or easy.

But, the Tide May Be Turning



- **Hopeful indicators:**
 - Huge increase in use of U.S.-produced natural gas
 - Beginnings of large-scale urban solar
 - BrightSource suspension of two desert plants
 - Increased public awareness
- **I wanted to leave you on this positive note**