

Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 40
Bernalillo, NM 87004

February 13, 2025

Commissioner Katherine A. Bruch
Commissioner Jon Herr
Commissioner Michael Meek
Commissioner Jordan Juarez
Commissioner Joshua Jones

Dear Board of County Commissioners,

My name is Karen Yank, and I am the president of the Turquoise Trail Regional Alliance. Our group has spent the last 20 years preserving this one special asset in New Mexico, our Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway. Our state has only 8 National Scenic Byways. The Turquoise Trail is unique even among these 8, because it connects our only international airport to our state capital. My group, the TTRA, is foremost a preservation group. We support green energy, but this project poses a clear issue of "good project - wrong location". We would like to see PCR's project be relocated to Sandoval County's Westside Solar Corridor where its' chance of success is much better. Relocation of this project is a win-win for Sandoval County, its residence, and New Mexico. The Turquoise Trail is our state's national treasure, which is simply the wrong location for any kind of industrial project, including clean energy. Someday our children's children may have to make the hard decision on whether to sacrifice our state's national scenic byway for infrastructure or development, but that time is not now! We can pursue green energy in New Mexico without sacrificing our state's most cherished and scenic assets.

I present to you here letters from several important entities in opposition to this zoning change required for this project to continue at this location. Furthermore, they all request that the commissioners work with them to relocate this project to a more suitable location away from our Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway and further away from residential areas. Below is a list of these submitted letters of opposition.

- 1- Santa Fe County Commissioner Camilla Bustamante District 3 – SF County District Bordering this project site and Sandoval County District 1.
- 2- Turquoise Trail Association (TTA) – Commerce Organization representing Turquoise Trail Businesses.
- 3- Campbell Farming Corporation - Largest landowner along the Turquoise Trail dating back to before the Trail's existence.
- 4- Scenic America – Federal Agency charged with designating National Scenic Byway Distinction.
- 5- Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area – Has Congressional mandate to help sustain, preserve, promote, and protect the environment, culture and heritage of the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway as well as other significant areas in Northern New Mexico.

At the most center portion of the Turquoise Trail and at the location of this proposed project exists two preservation zones. One created by a collaboration with my group (the TTRA), BLM, Santa Fe County Open Space, State Lands and Albuquerque Open Space to create a trail system that connects the Sandia Mountains to the San Pedro Mountains while opening the public lands in the San Pedro Mountains, which were previously land locked. Starting south of Golden and moving north beyond the small historic community of Cerrillos is the most important preservation zone, which is under the protection of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area. Sadly, the PCR's Diamond Tail Solar Plant is also proposed within these two preservation boundaries. Good project, but wrong location. The TTRA along with these other important agencies ask the Sandoval County Commissioners to protect our cherished Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway! We ask you to work with us to relocate PCR's project to a more suitable land to ensure that this area's unique culture and natural recourses are preserved for future generations. Relocation of this project creates a win-win outcome for not only Sandoval County and New Mexico, but also ensures PCR Energy will have a successful project in the future.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Yank President of the Turquoise Trail Regional Alliance



TURQUOISE TRAIL REGIONAL ALLIANCE

ALLIANCE MEMBERS LINKS

[Earthworks Action](#)

[Wild Earth Guardians](#)

[East Mountain Regional Trail Council](#)

[Turquoise Trail Association](#)

[Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce](#)

[East Mountain Coalition of Neighborhood Associations](#)

[San Pedro Neighborhood Association](#)

[Galisteo Community Association](#)

[Coalition for La Bajada Mesa](#)

[Highway 285 Sustainability Alliance](#)

[Rural Conservation Alliance](#)

[Rio Grande Chapter of the Sierra Club](#)

[Pathways Wildlife Corridor](#)

[Concerned Citizens of Cerrillos](#)

[San Marcos Association](#)

[Madrid Merchants Association](#)

[Madrid Cultural Projects](#)

[Las Candelas de Los Cerrillos](#)

[Hamaatsa](#)

Along with HOAs and Traditional Communities Along NM14

Justin S. Greene
Commissioner, District 1

Anna Hansen
Commissioner, District 2

Camilla Bustamante
Commissioner, District 3



Anna T. Hamilton
Commissioner, District 4

Hank Hughes
Commissioner, District 5

Gregory S. Shaffer
County Manager

December 10, 2024

**Sandoval County Planning and Zoning Commission
Via Email**

RE: Rezoning for Diamond Trail Ranch

Dear Sandoval County Planning and Zoning Commissioners,

I write to request a denial of the rezoning of Diamond Tail Ranch from Residential Agriculture Ranching to Special Zoning to accommodate large scale solar proximate to the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway – a border shared with Santa Fe County District 3.

As solar energy is critical to the transition to renewable energy, we must take into consideration that housing, agriculture and ranching remain in the highest priorities for the residents of our state.

I offer that both Sandoval and Santa Fe Counties have vast landscapes that may be more appropriate for utility scale solar and that consideration of a more appropriate location can be a win-win for all of our residents.

Respectfully,

Camilla M. Bustamante, PhD. MPH
Santa Fe County Commissioner
District 3

Cc: Karen Yank, President Turquoise Trail Regional Alliance

TURQUOISE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

January 25, 2025

Sandoval Board of County Commissioners
Sandoval County
Bernalillo, NM

Dear Commissioners,

We are representing the 57 business members of the Turquoise Trail Association along the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway and we are concerned about the construction and truck traffic generated by the proposed Diamond Tail Solar Plant to be located at the center point of our National Scenic Byway. We are a National Scenic Byway and depend on tourism dollars generated by our promotion and preservation of the Turquoise Trail (State Highway 14 and State Highway 536).

The visual disruption caused by this proposed 2.8-square-mile solar facility, particularly its visibility from elevated points along the Turquoise Trail threatens to spoil views. We would propose relocating this project to a more suitable site away from the byway's view-shed. New Mexico offers vast stretches of land ideal for solar development that do not compromise its scenic or cultural treasures. Such a relocation would balance the need for renewable energy with the equally critical need to protect landscapes that hold significant cultural, ecological, and economic value.

We hope you take the scope of this project under close scrutiny so as to minimize the footprint on our National Scenic Byway and the impact of the construction.

Sincerely,

Carla Ward and Patricia Brown
Board members of Turquoise Trail Association



Campbell Management

December 2, 2024

Planning & Zoning Department
Sandoval County Administration Planning & Zoning Department
Sandoval County Administration Building
1500 Idalia Road, Building "D" 2nd floor
Bernalillo NM, 87004
State of New Mexico
Attn: Director

Re: ZNCH-24-005

Dear Director and P&Z Commissioners:

Thank you for taking the time to read and review our letter of concern.

The Campbell family has been a large if not the largest landowner along NM state hwy 14 since prior to its existence. In fact, Campbell specifically granting a right of easement for its path and construction while still retaining ownership. Campbell has always been a strong proponent of this scenic byway which has reached national prominence as the scenic and artful way for residents and annual tourist the travel to and from Albuquerque and Santa Fe.

One of the biggest strengths of this treasured asset for New Mexico is the striking natural beauty and vistas. The Campbells have always been proponents of rational alternative energy sources in particular solar. We are currently involved with several at different locations in the state. However, the common location characteristic among them, besides access to strong sunlight, they are all located in remote locations not easily visible from the majority of the public or along tourist corridors.

The proposed location of this current proposed zone change not only seems to defy the economic feasibility with remote locations its visual impact on one of New Mexico's greatest tourist assets defies logic.

No doubt the project itself has merits but placing it at this location considering the cost benefit of damaging one of the greatest tourist corridors and asset for the state can not be overstated.

We humbly recommend moving the project location to one of the MANY available sites better suited for this type of land use in order to preserve the beauty of arguably one of the best national scenic byways in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Gately", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Gately
President
Campbell Farming Corporation



January 10, 2025

To the Sandoval County Commissioners:

I am writing to you as the president of Scenic America, the nation's only 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated solely to the promotion, preservation, and protection of America's scenic beauty. In our over forty years of operation, we have been on the forefront of advocacy and education for many issues that directly affect the beauty and character of our communities. We have built a reputation as an organization that can quickly and effectively organize and activate a motivated group of supporters for or against issues of importance.

Scenic America has long been an advocate for the protection and enhancement of our nation's scenic byways, as evident in our support of the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP). When funding lapsed and its designation process disappeared in 2012, we fought to reinstate the program. We were instrumental in the passage of the *Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act* of 2019 and have since helped secure nearly \$50 million in funding for the NSBP. We are considered the program's foremost advocate at the national level and work tirelessly to ensure continued funding via the appropriations process in Congress.

We have long supported America's byways at the national, state, local, and Tribal levels. Therefore, we want to express our concerns about the proposed solar project on the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway. While we support renewable energy and understand the importance of transitioning to sustainable power sources, we also believe in responsible siting practices that respect the scenic, cultural, and economic value of America's cherished landscapes.

The Turquoise Trail, a National Scenic Byway, is renowned for its breathtaking views of the Sandia and Ortiz Mountains, its rich cultural history, and its ability to draw thousands of visitors annually. Projects like the proposed solar development, which would significantly alter the landscape and visual experience, risk undermining the intrinsic qualities that make this byway special.

Scenic byways, such as the Turquoise Trail, play a vital role in enhancing quality of life for residents while driving sustainable economic growth through tourism. Visitors are drawn to the unspoiled vistas and rural character, spending money on local accommodations, dining, and attractions, which supports small businesses and creates jobs. Byways also preserve the natural and cultural heritage of their regions, fostering community pride and environmental stewardship through educational and recreational opportunities. However, the visual disruption caused by the proposed 2.8-square-mile solar facility, particularly its visibility from elevated points along the Turquoise Trail, threatens to spoil view, thus deterring tourism and diminishing these critical economic and cultural benefits.

We urge the commission to recommend relocating this project to a more suitable site away from the byway's viewshed. New Mexico offers vast stretches of land ideal for solar development that do not compromise its scenic or cultural treasures. Such a relocation would balance the need for renewable energy with the equally critical need to protect landscapes that hold significant cultural, ecological, and economic value.

We stand ready to work with stakeholders to identify alternative locations that can meet renewable energy goals while safeguarding the visual integrity of the Turquoise Trail. Together, we can ensure that New Mexico remains a leader in both renewable energy and scenic preservation. Your influence and decision-making hold significant weight, and we believe that with your support, we can ensure a balanced approach to development that respects and integrates the beauty of the landscape.

Sincerely,

Mark Falzone

President, Scenic America

NORTHERN RÍO GRANDE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Board of Directors:

David Fernández, President
Taos community Member

Darlene Vigil – Vice-President
Taos County Commissioner

Roger Martinez, Secretary
Taos Community Member

Michael Garcia – Treasurer
Santa Fe City Councilor

Governor Jenelle Roybal
Pojoaque Pueblo

Corilia Ortega – Councilor
Town of Taos

Joanna Trujillo
Taos Community Member

John Ramon Vigil – Mayor
City of Espanola

Tarin Nix
Santa Fe Community Member

Anna C. Hansen,
Santa Fe Community Member

Alex Naranjo - Commissioner
Rio Arriba County

Sarah Stimson Karis
Santa Fe Community Member

Agapito Candelaria
Rio Arriba Community Member

Marvin MacAuley
Picuris Pueblo

Valerie Martinez
Rio Arriba Community Member

Eric Vasquez
Executive Director

Mail Address:
P.O Box 610
Española, NM 87532

Heritage Center:
101 Calle de las Españolas
Española, NM 87532

Sandoval County Board of County Commissioners
P.O. Box 40
Bernalillo, NM 87004

February 12, 2025

Commissioner Katherine A. Bruch
Commissioner Jon Herr
Commissioner Michael Meek
Commissioner Jordan Juarez
Commissioner Joshua Jones

Re: Opposition to Diamond Tail Solar and Storage Project

Dear Board of County Commissioners:

On January 23rd, 2025, the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Board met and voted to respectfully stand in opposition to the proposed PCR Energy solar and battery storage facility off the historic Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway.

The Northern Río Grande National Heritage Area encompasses Río Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties and has a Congressional mandate to help sustain, preserve, promote, and protect the environment, culture, heritage and languages of Northern New Mexico.

Like your state statute mandate for responsible stewardship, we are dedicated to safeguarding our regions environmental landscapes and believe viewshed impacts, environmental and public health concerns surrounding the Diamond Tail Solar and Storage Project will negatively impact the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area for decades.

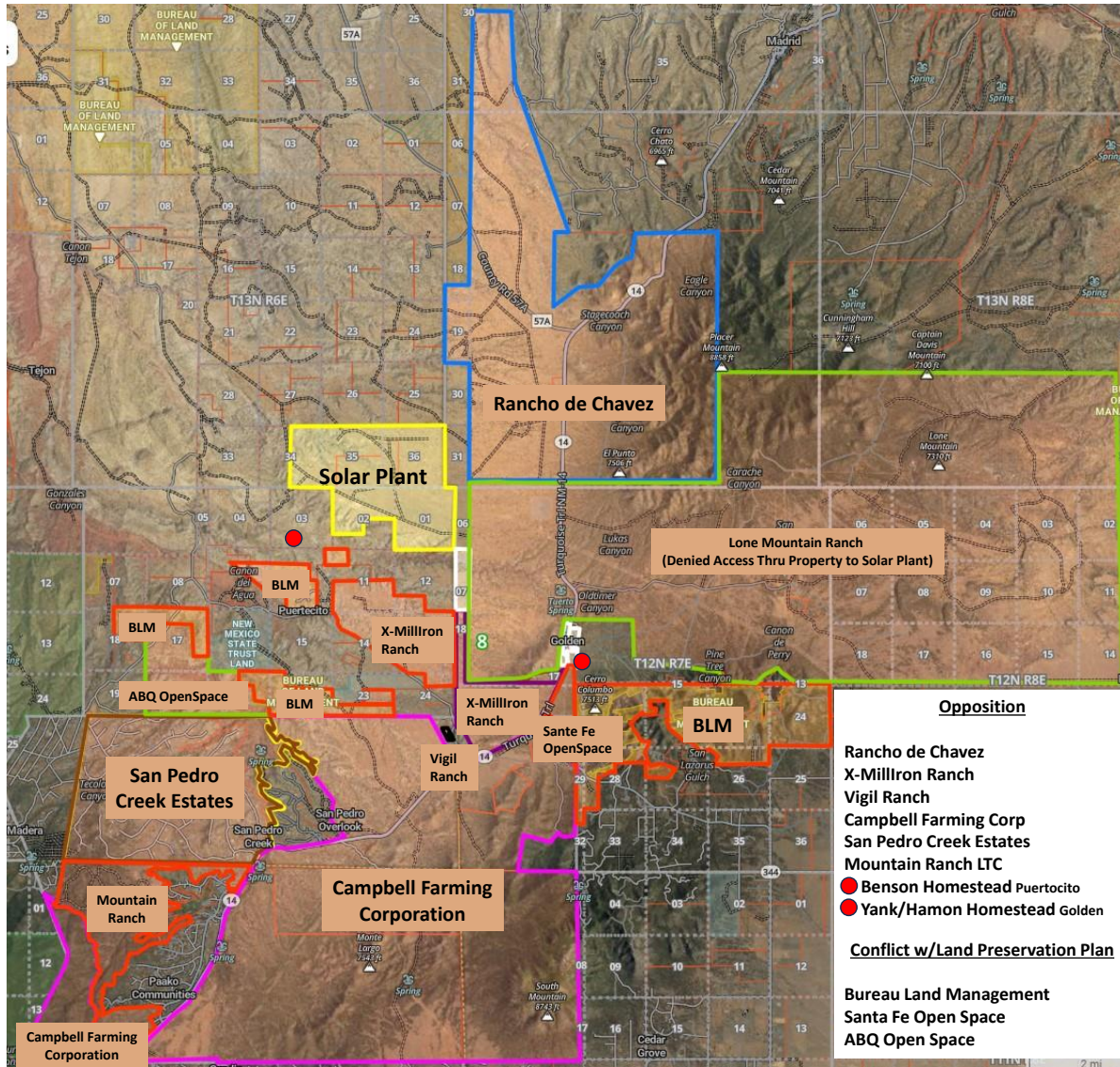
Protection of Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway and relocation of the Diamond Tail Solar and Storage Project ensures that this unique cultural and natural resource of the Northern Río Grande area is preserved for future generations.

Sincerely,

David A. Fernandez
David Fernandez, Board President

Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Board

Adjacent Land Owners - Opposing Solar Plant





View of the Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway from the top of the San Pedro Mountains