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MEMO

DATE: October 5, 2010

TO: Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

FROM: Joshua Hart, AICP, Planning Director 

RE: NRAC October 14, 2010 Agenda Item No. 5 (Renewable Energy)
General Plan Amendment (GPA) No. 2010-03

Inyo County is in the process of updating its General Plan¹ to address wind and solar renewable energy facilities. The County recently adopted an ordinance to regulate such facilities. Based upon interest expressed during this process, the County is undertaking a broader public outreach effort to provide information about renewable energy in general, renewable energy planning at the State and federal levels, and the County's renewable energy planning efforts, including the General Plan update currently underway. The Planning Department has set up a webpage with relevant information, links to other pertinent websites, and background regarding the County's participation in renewable energy planning at <http://www.inyoplanning.org/RenewableNewPage.htm>.

The County has been participating in current renewable energy initiatives over the past several years, including the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI), the Bureau of Land Management's Transmission Corridor and Solar Environmental Impact Statements, and the Desert Renewable Energy Transmission Plan (DRECP). Through these efforts, the County developed a map of areas where renewable energy development might be appropriate through several iterations of public meetings before the Board of Supervisors. Criteria utilized in developing the map include location of known projects, relatively flat slope, and proximity to transmission. This map has been distributed widely over the past year.

Subsequently, a draft GPA was prepared to incorporate the map and address renewable wind and solar energy broadly at a policy level (see attached). The proposed GPA is intended to update the County's planning policies to reflect the current effort at both the federal and State levels to develop renewable energy in the region. The proposed goals and policies work to balance renewable energy development with protection of sensitive resources, such as water, scenic views, agricultural and mineral resources, biological and cultural resources, recreational access and other access, social and economic resources, etc. The GPA includes the map developed previously to provide guidance for where renewable wind and solar energy may be developed, as well as where it should not be developed. Parcel-specific maps have been created to precisely indicate the extent of the Land Use Diagram Overlay (see attached).

¹ Refer to http://inyoplanning.org/general_plan/index.htm for more information about the General Plan.

The proposed Land Use Diagram Overlays works in concert with the language in the Land Use Element as follows:

The County shall consider Solar or Wind Energy facilities within areas with a Renewable Energy Land Use Designation Overlay and in any zoning district under Title 18 of the Inyo County Code. Based on site-specific studies and appropriate environmental review, the County may process Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facilities within the Overlay pursuant to Inyo County Code Title 21. Potential social, economic, and environmental impacts from Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facilities must be minimized to the extent feasible.

Additional language is included to address other pertinent topics. Changes are proposed to the Land Use, Public Services and Facilities, Economic, Conservation and Open Space, and Public Safety elements. The Government Element was recently updated, and includes information pertinent to renewable energy.

Staff is currently meeting with interested stakeholders and beginning public review of the draft GPA. Public meetings are planned in October and November. After environmental review, the GPA will be considered by the Planning Commission and the Board.

Staff recommends that the NRAC recommend that the Planning Commission and the Board adopt General Plan Amendment No. 2010-03 (Renewable Energy).

Thank you. If you have any questions, please call me at (760) 878-0268 or email me at jhart@inyocounty.us.

**Solar and Wind Renewable Energy
Draft General Plan Amendment No. 2010-03
August 2010**

Government Element

No change

Land Use Element

- Insert the following new definition:

Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facility. Any electric transmission line, solar thermal powerplant, photovoltaic powerplant, or wind energy powerplant to be constructed in Inyo County. A Facility does not include a “solar energy system,” a small wind energy conversion system or a windmill that does not generate electricity, or a pilot or proof of concept powerplant.

- Insert the following new Land Use policy:

Policy LU-1.17 (Solar and Wind Renewable Energy Development) – The County shall consider Solar or Wind Energy facilities within areas with a Renewable Energy Land Use Designation Overlay and in any zoning district under Title 18 of the Inyo County Code. Based on site-specific studies and appropriate environmental review, the County may process Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facilities within the Overlay pursuant to Inyo County Code Title 21. Potential social, economic, and environmental impacts from Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facilities must be minimized to the extent feasible. Appurtenant transmission facilities and related infrastructure may be constructed and operated within any Land Use Designation and any zoning district under Title 18 of the Inyo County Code, provided that the facilities they connect operate under valid approval and are the subject of appropriate environmental review.

- Insert the attached graphics as Land Use Diagram Nos. 32a-? (Solar and Wind Renewable Energy Land Use Designation Overlay) in the Land Use Diagrams.

Public Services and Facilities Element

- Insert the following new Gas and Electrical Facilities policy:

Policy PSU-10.5 (Encourage Renewable Energy Development) – The County shall encourage appropriate development of renewable energy resources, provided that social, economic, and environmental impacts are minimized.

Economic Development Element

- Insert the following new Economic Development policy:

Policy ED-4.4 (Renewable Energy Development Beneficial to the Local Economy) – Renewable energy development shall provide means to offset costs to the County and lost economic development potential. If potential economic impacts from renewable energy development are identified by the County, commensurate mitigation and/or offsets shall be required.

Housing Element

No change

Circulation Element

No change

Conservation/Open Space Element

- Modify the following existing Agricultural Resources policy:

Policy AG-1.3 (Conversion of Agricultural Land) – Discourage conversions of productive agricultural lands for urban development, and balance conversions of productive agricultural lands for renewable energy development.

- Insert the following new Mineral and Energy Resources goal:

Goal MER-1 – Encourage appropriate renewable energy development and minimize impacts from such development to the social, economic, and environmental resources of the County.

- Insert the following new Mineral and Energy Resources policies:

Policy MER-2.1 (Large-scale Renewable Energy Development Areas) – The County shall maintain a Land Use Diagram of areas where Solar or Wind Renewable Energy Facilities may be appropriate.

Policy MER-2.2 (Minimize Impacts) – The County shall work with renewable energy developers and other agencies to minimize impacts from renewable energy development.

- Insert the following new Mineral and Energy Resources Implementation Measures:

- 8.0 Review proposals for renewable energy development and work to minimize potential impacts to the County's social, economic, and environmental resources, in cooperation with other local, regional, State, out-of-State, and federal agencies.
- 9.0 Collect and disseminate strategies to minimize impacts from Renewable Energy Facilities.
- 10.0 Periodically review, and as necessary update, the Solar and Wind Renewable Energy Land Use Designation Overlay.

- Insert the following new Water Resources policy:

Policy WR-3.5 (Sustainable Renewable Energy Development) – The County shall encourage renewable energy development to incorporate measures to minimize water consumption and use of potable water.

- Insert the following new Visual Resources policy:

Policy VIS-1.8 (Renewable Energy Development) – The County shall encourage siting and screening to minimize significant changes to the visual environment from renewable energy development.

- Insert the following new Recreation Implementation Measure:

- 16.0 Work with developers and other agencies to minimize impacts to recreational access from renewable energy development.

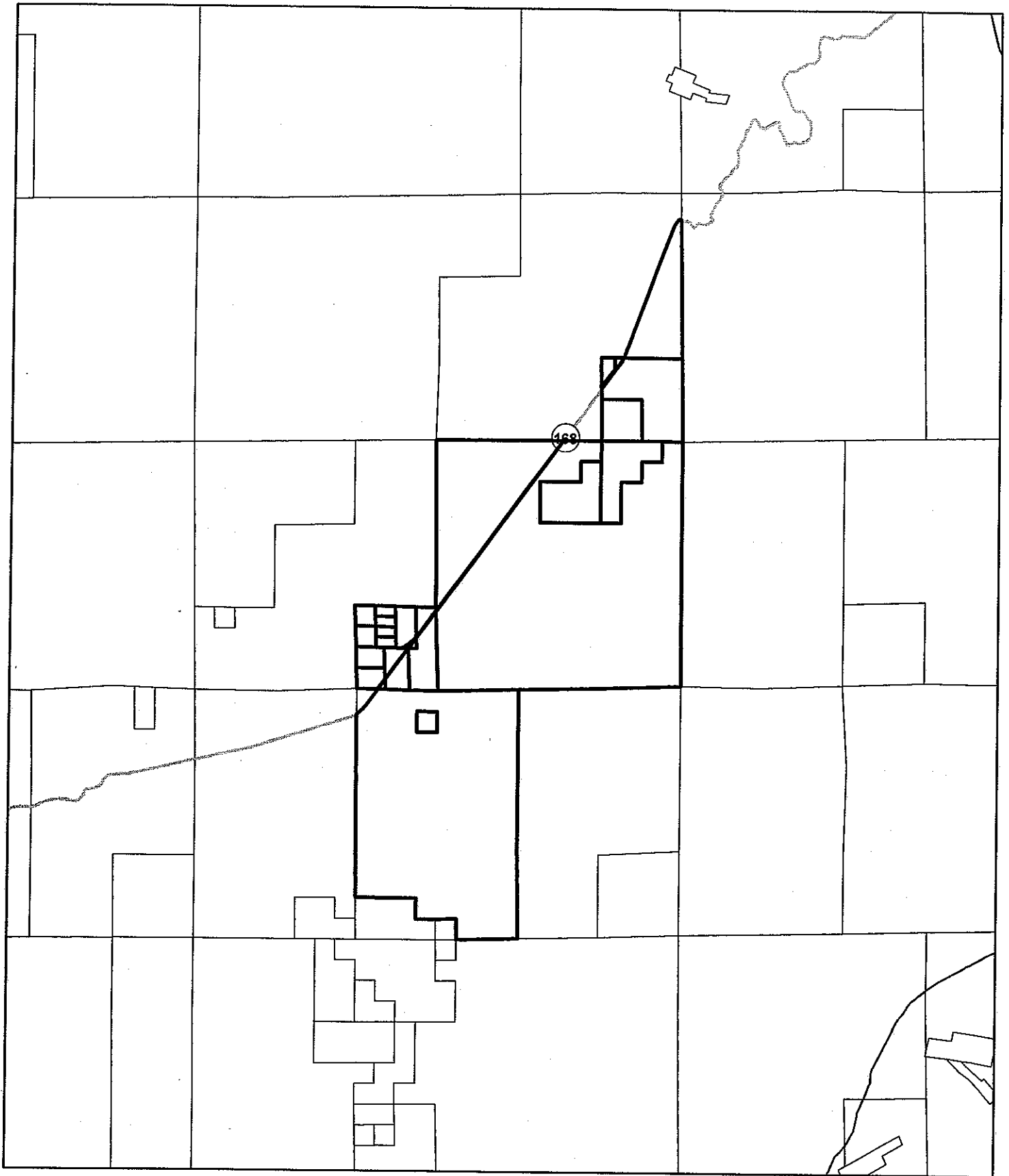
Public Safety Element

- Insert the following new Air Quality Implementation Measure:

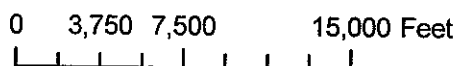
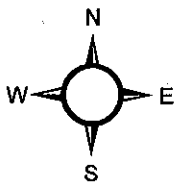
- 7.0 Support appropriate efforts to combine air quality improvements with other social, cultural, and environmental goals, including renewable energy development.

- Insert the following new Noise Implementation Measure:

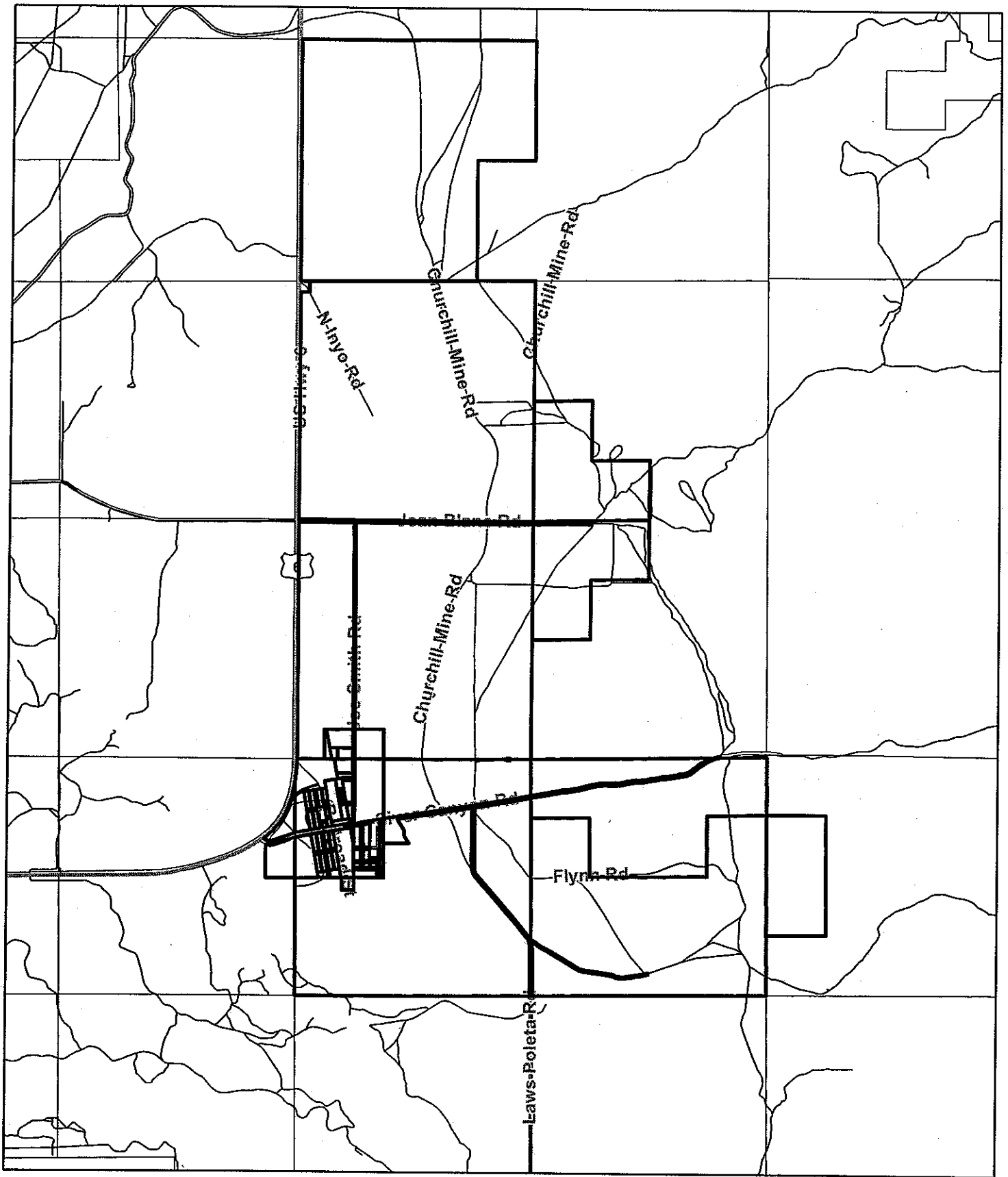
- 12.0 Work with developers and other agencies to minimize noise from renewable energy development.



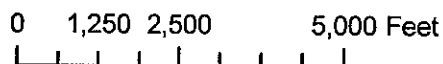
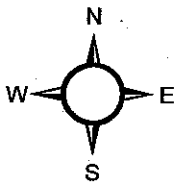
**Renewable Energy GPA
Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary
Deep Springs**



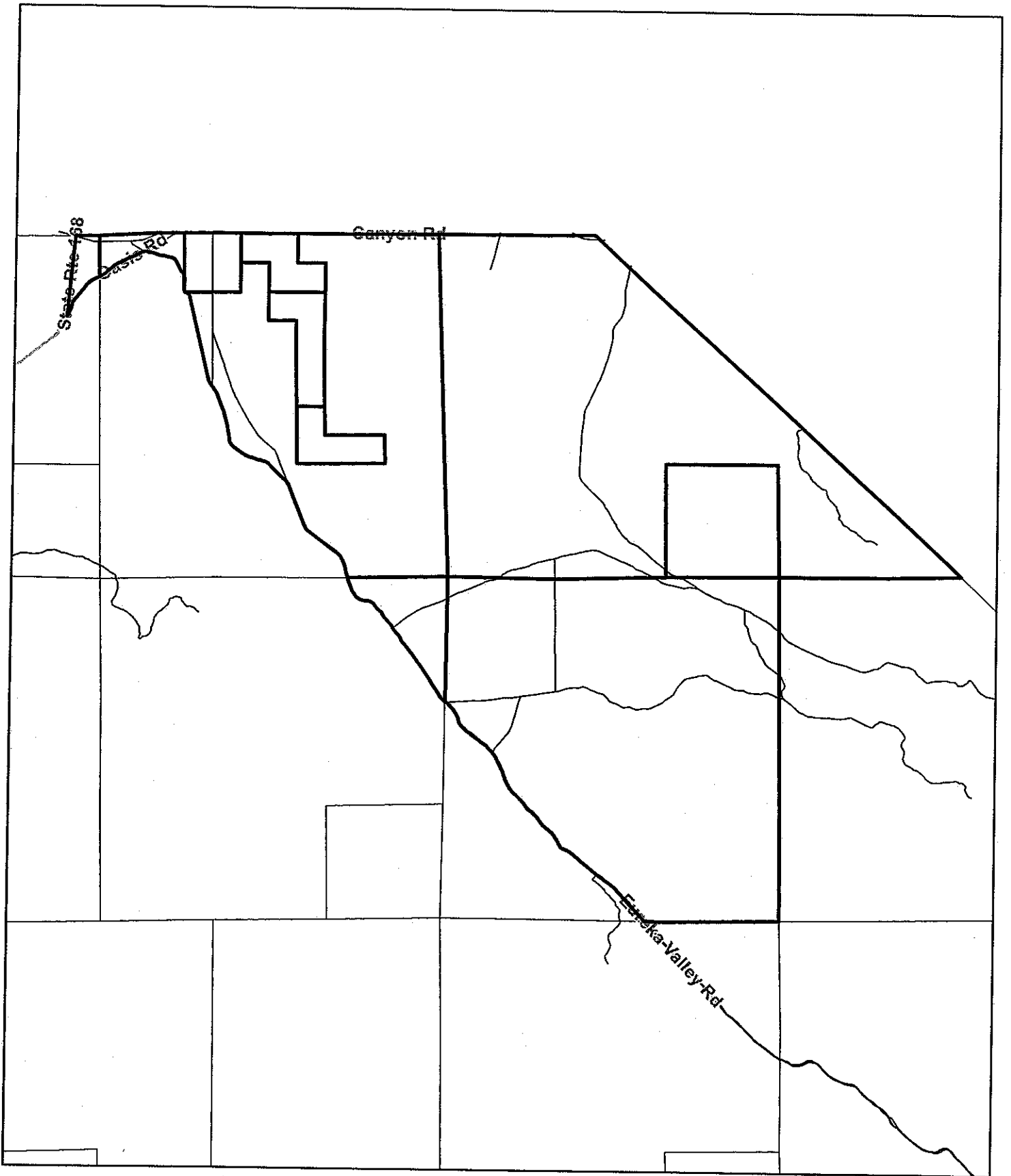
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



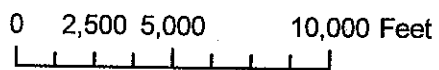
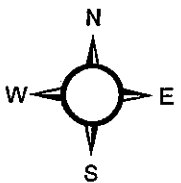
Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Laws



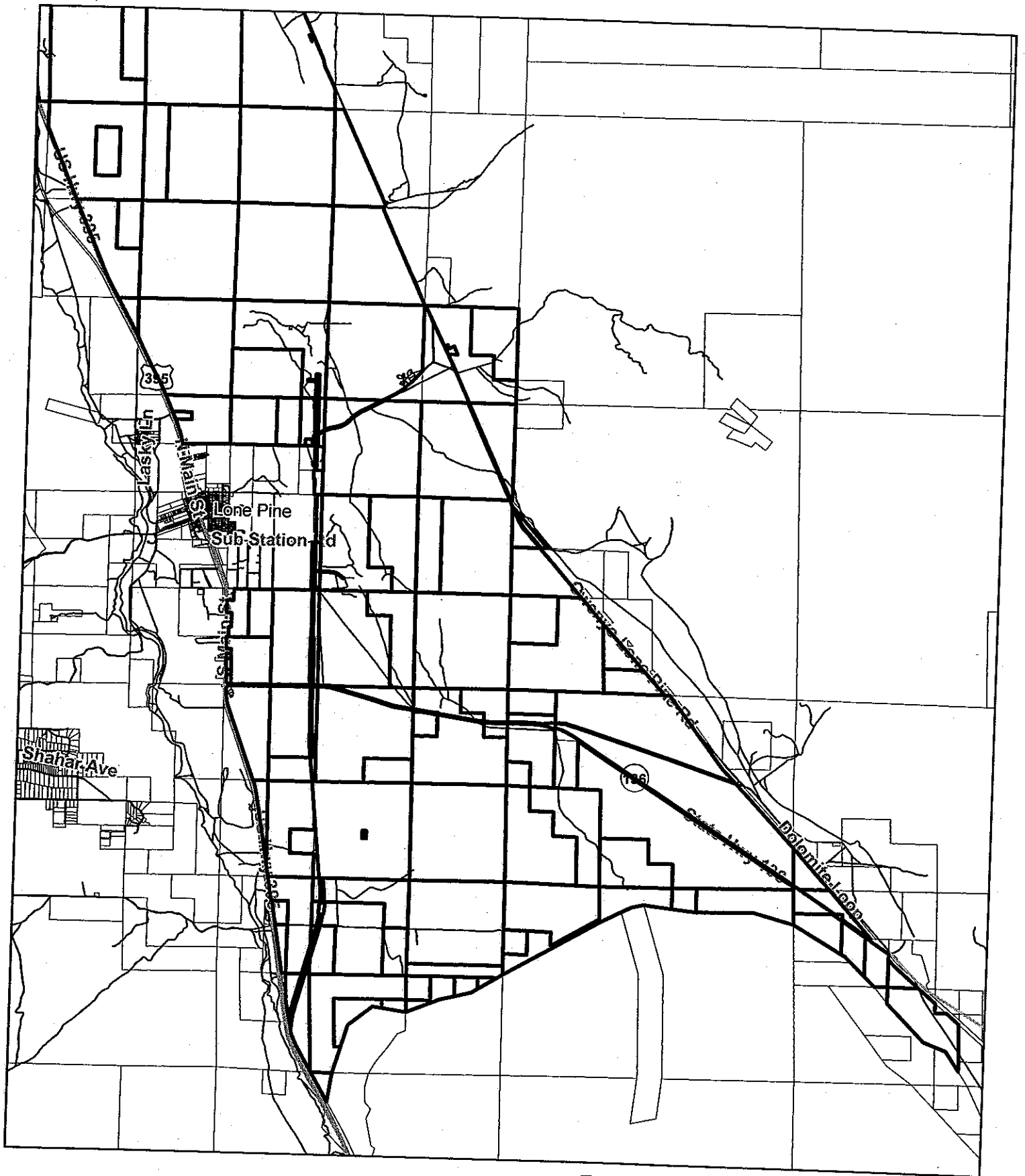
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



**Renewable Energy GPA
Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary
Fish Lake Valley**

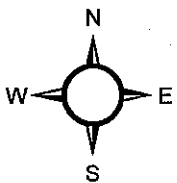
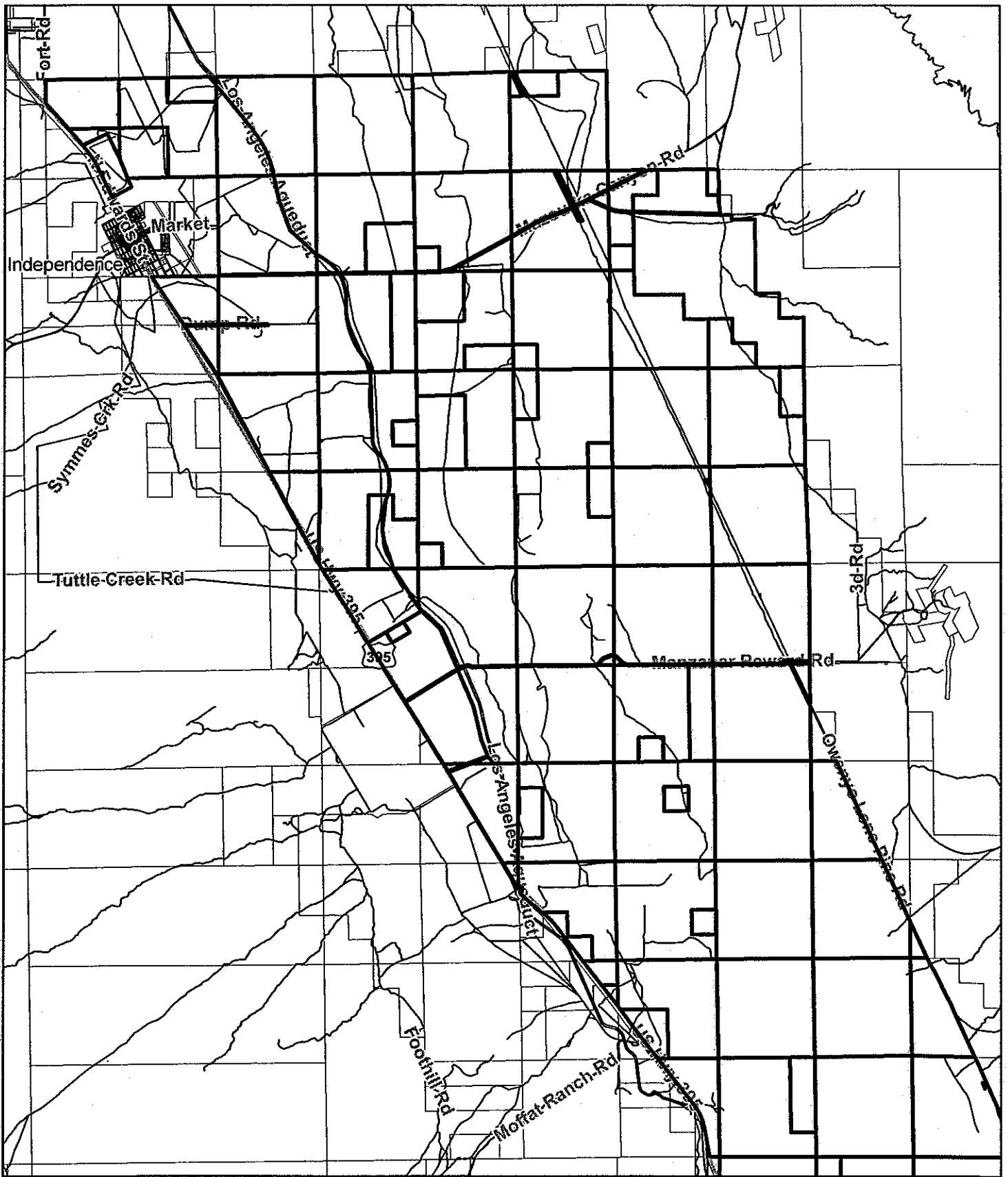


Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



**Renewable Energy GPA
Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary
Owens Valley - South**

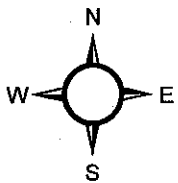
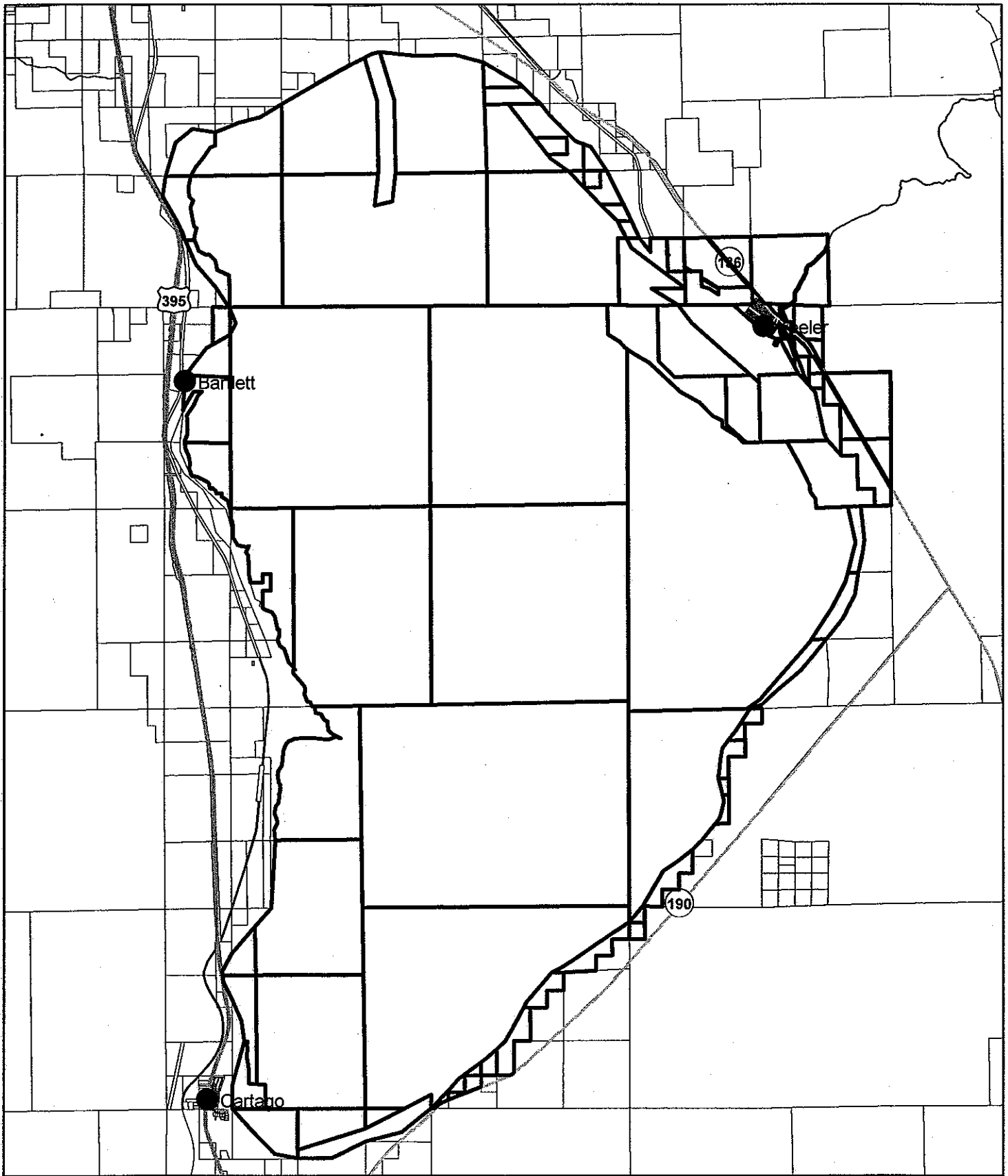
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



0 3,400 6,800 13,600 Feet

Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Owens Valley - North

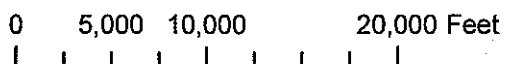
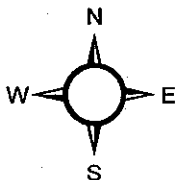
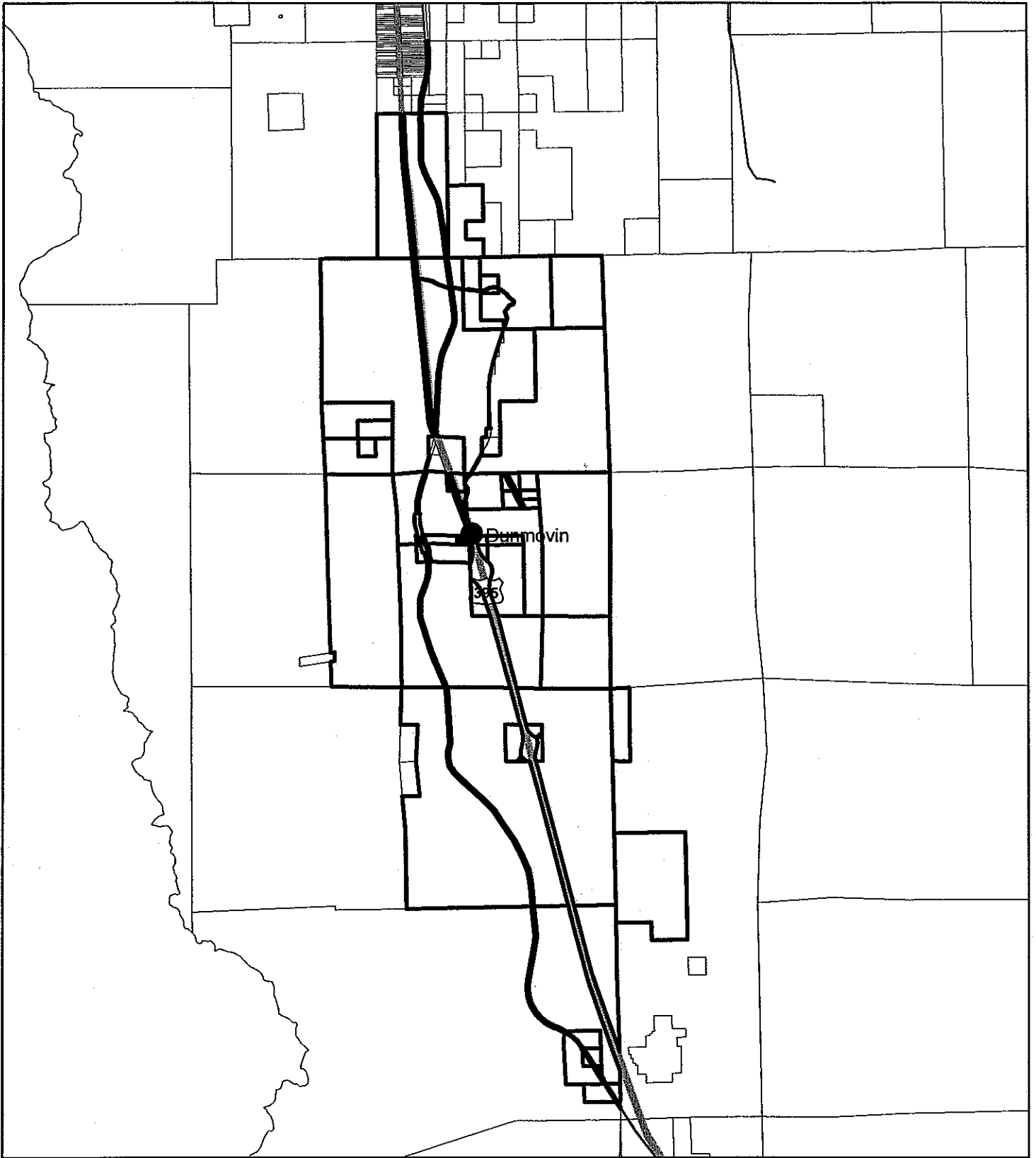
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



0 5,000 10,000 20,000 Feet

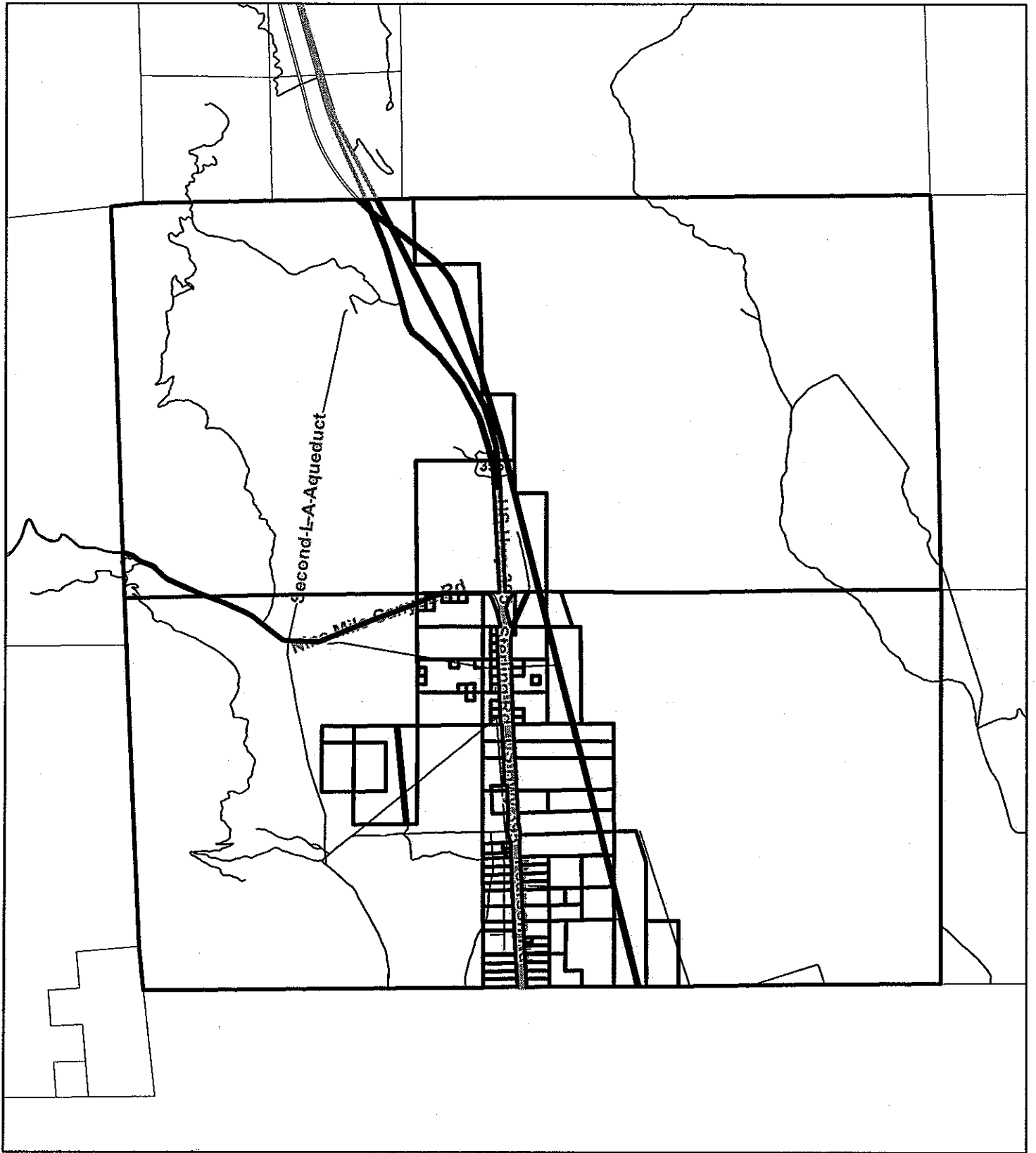
Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Owens Lake and Keeler

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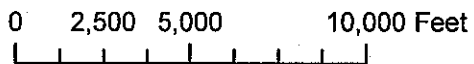
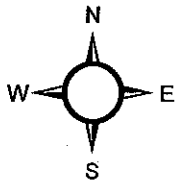


Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Rose Valley

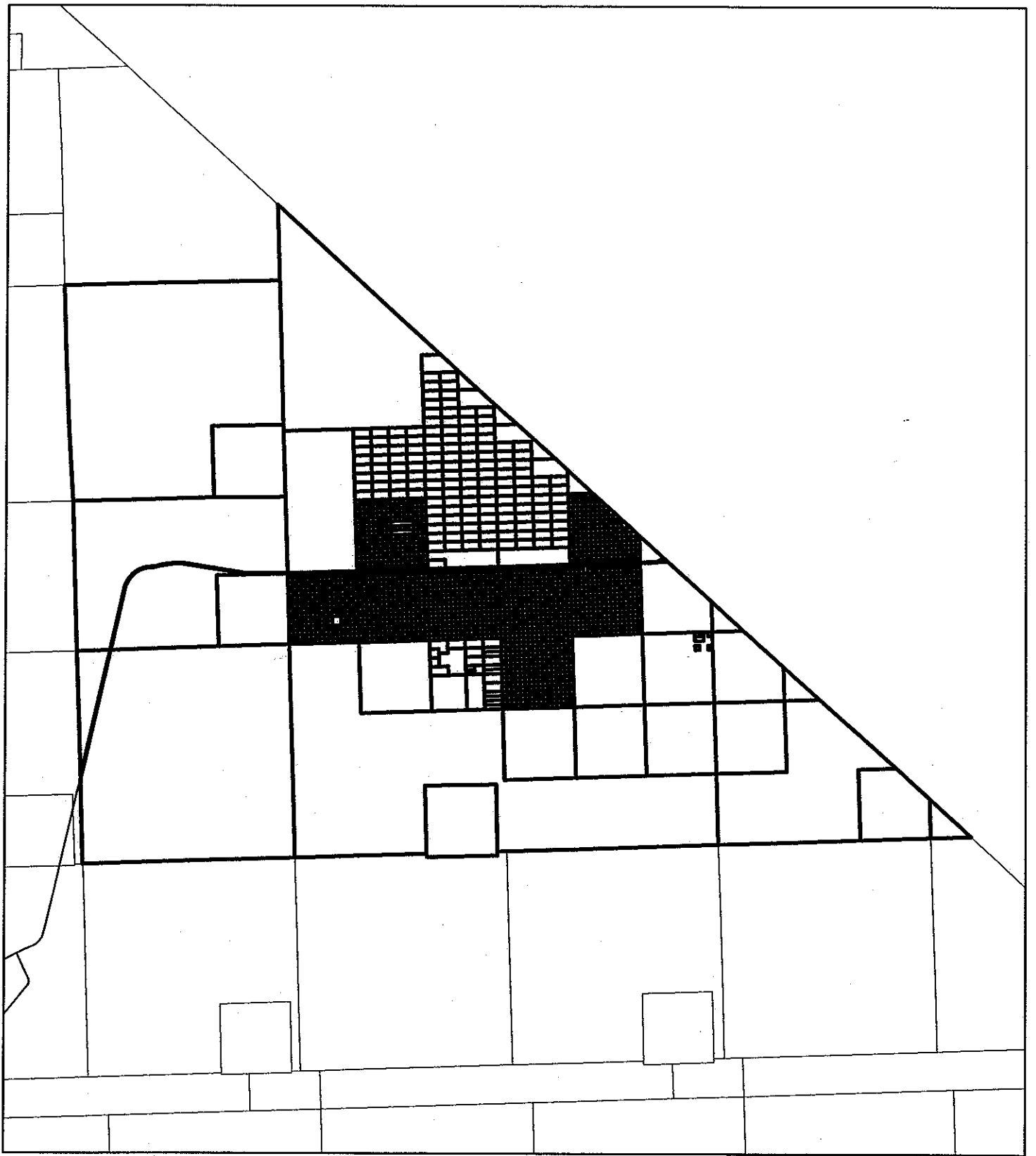
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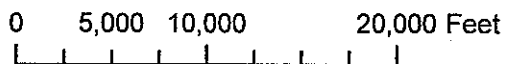
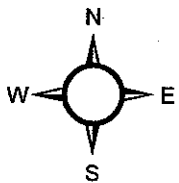
Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Pearsonville



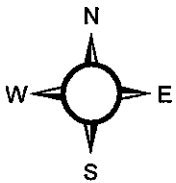
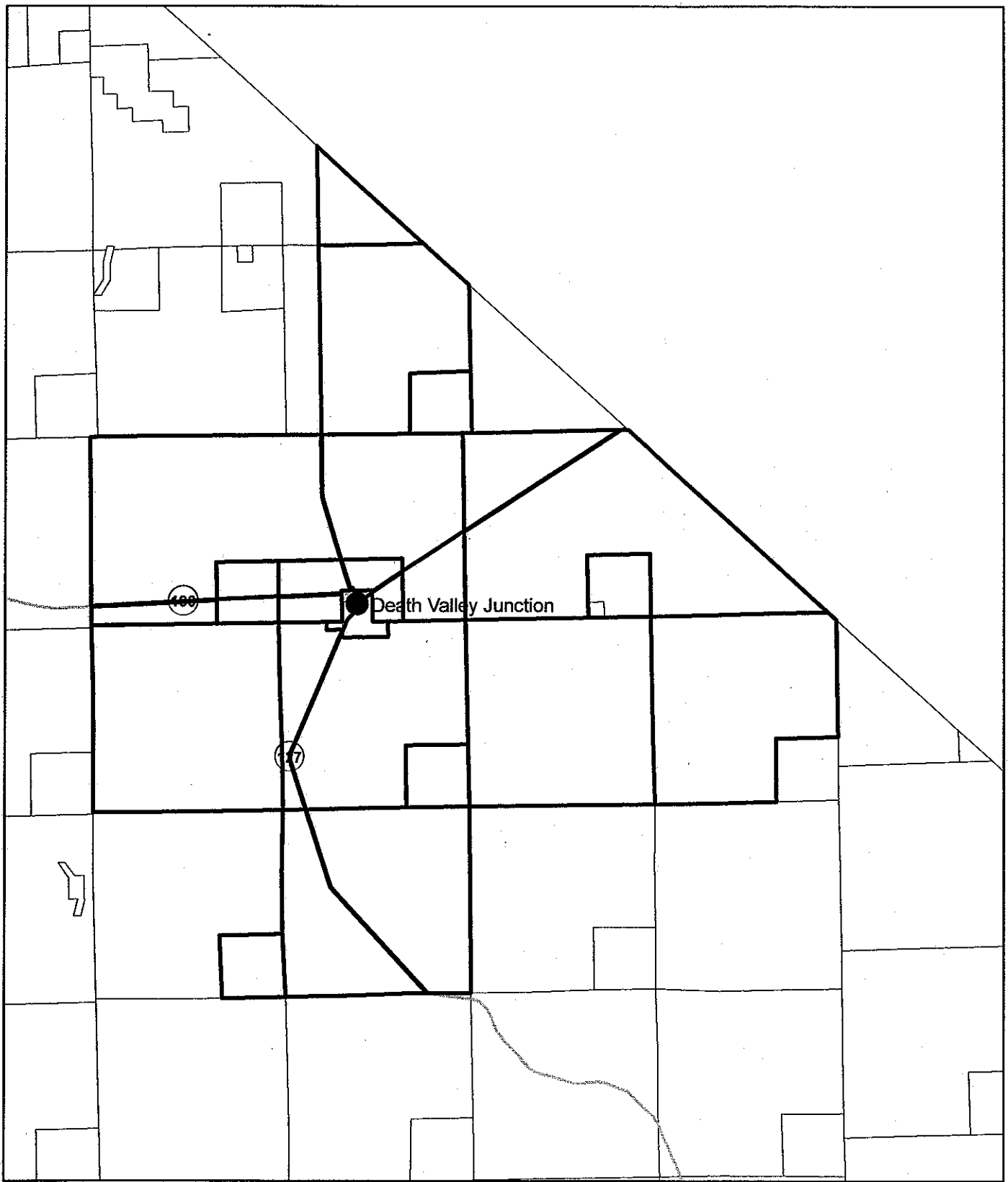
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



**Renewable Energy GPA
Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary
Charleston View**



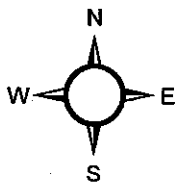
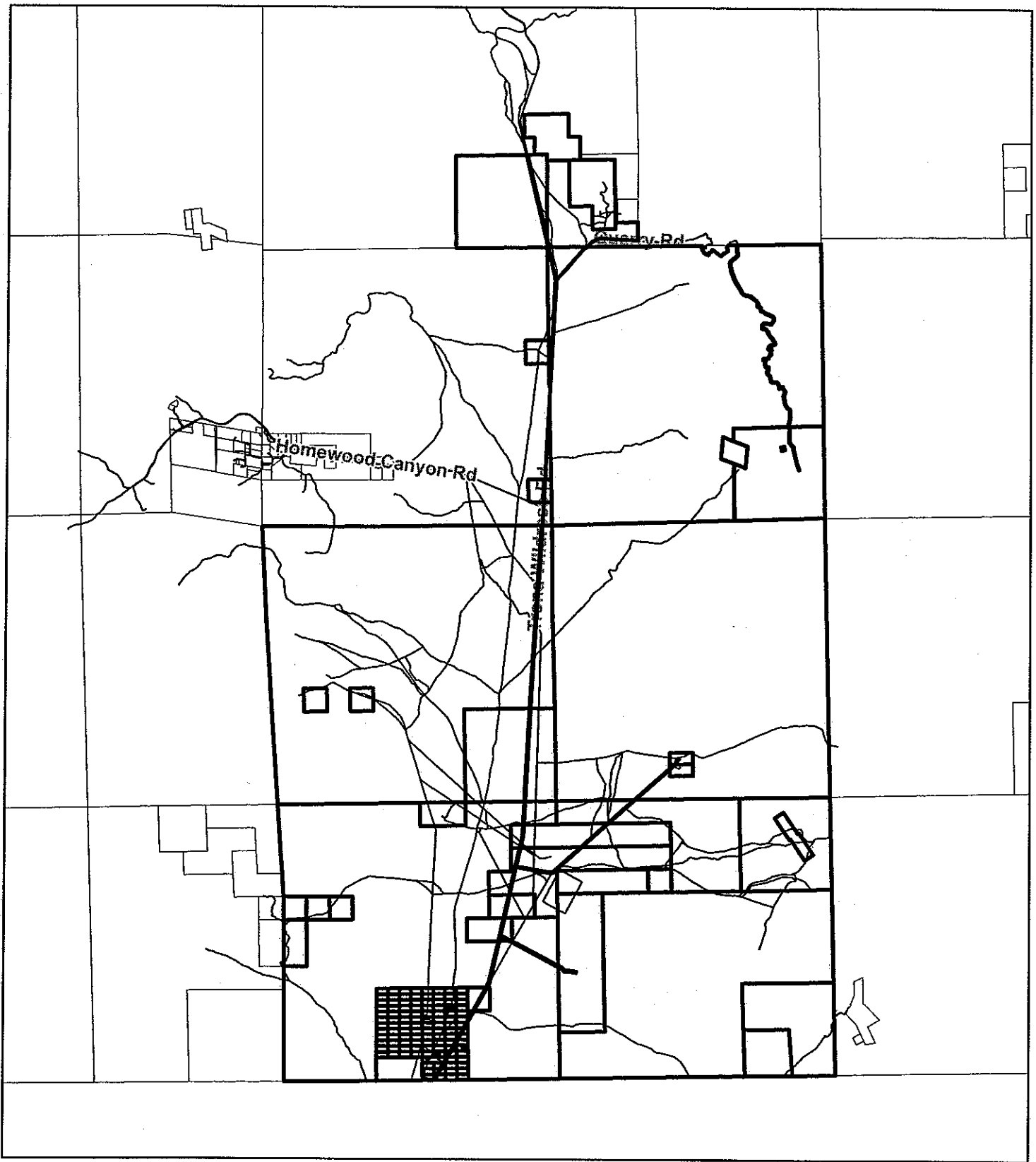
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



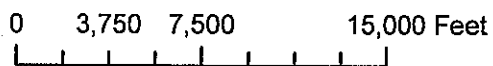
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Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Death Valley Junction

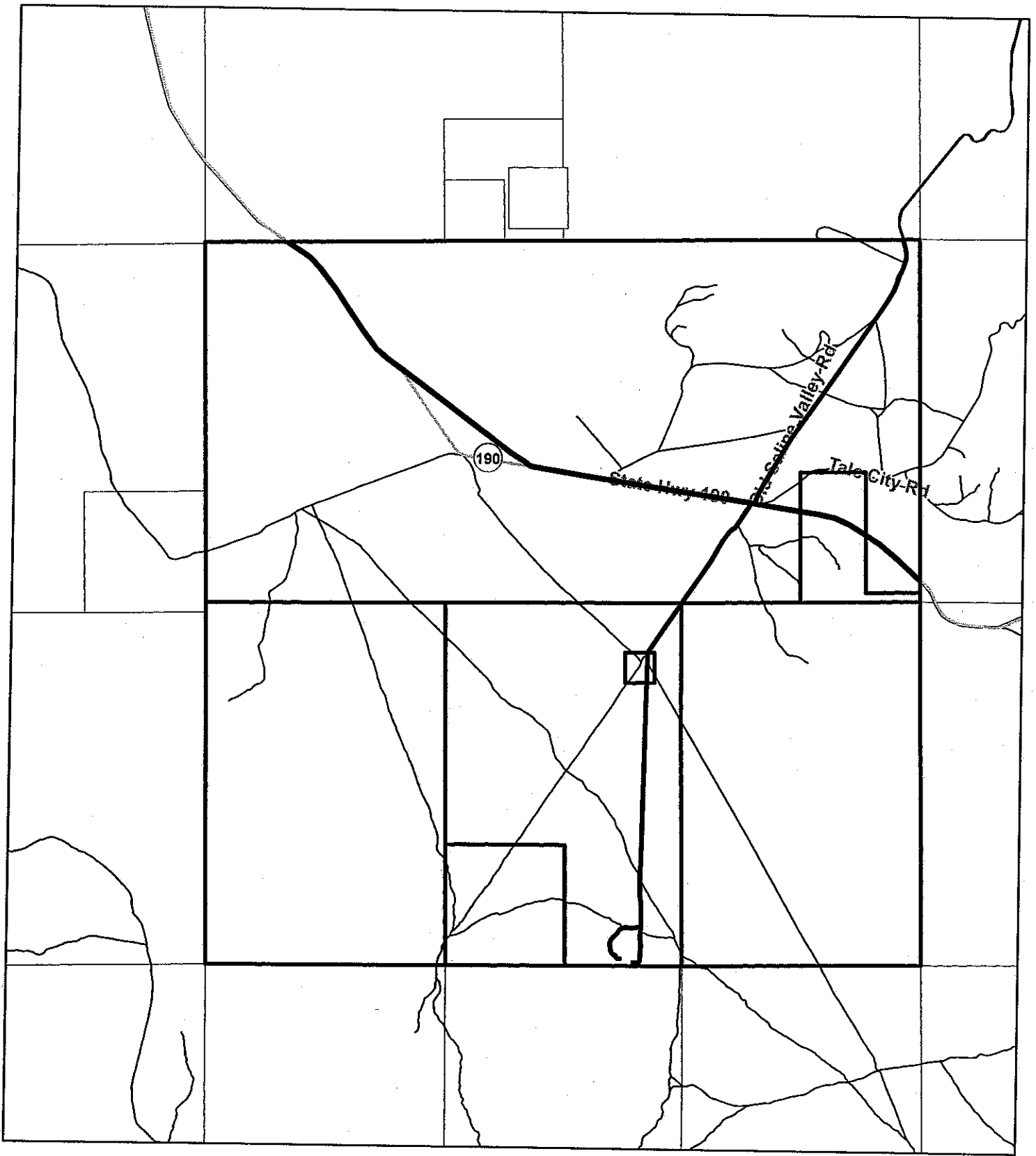
Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



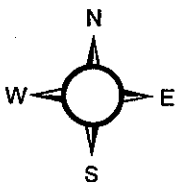
Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Trona



Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010

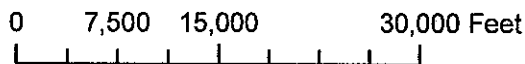
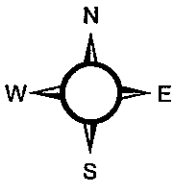
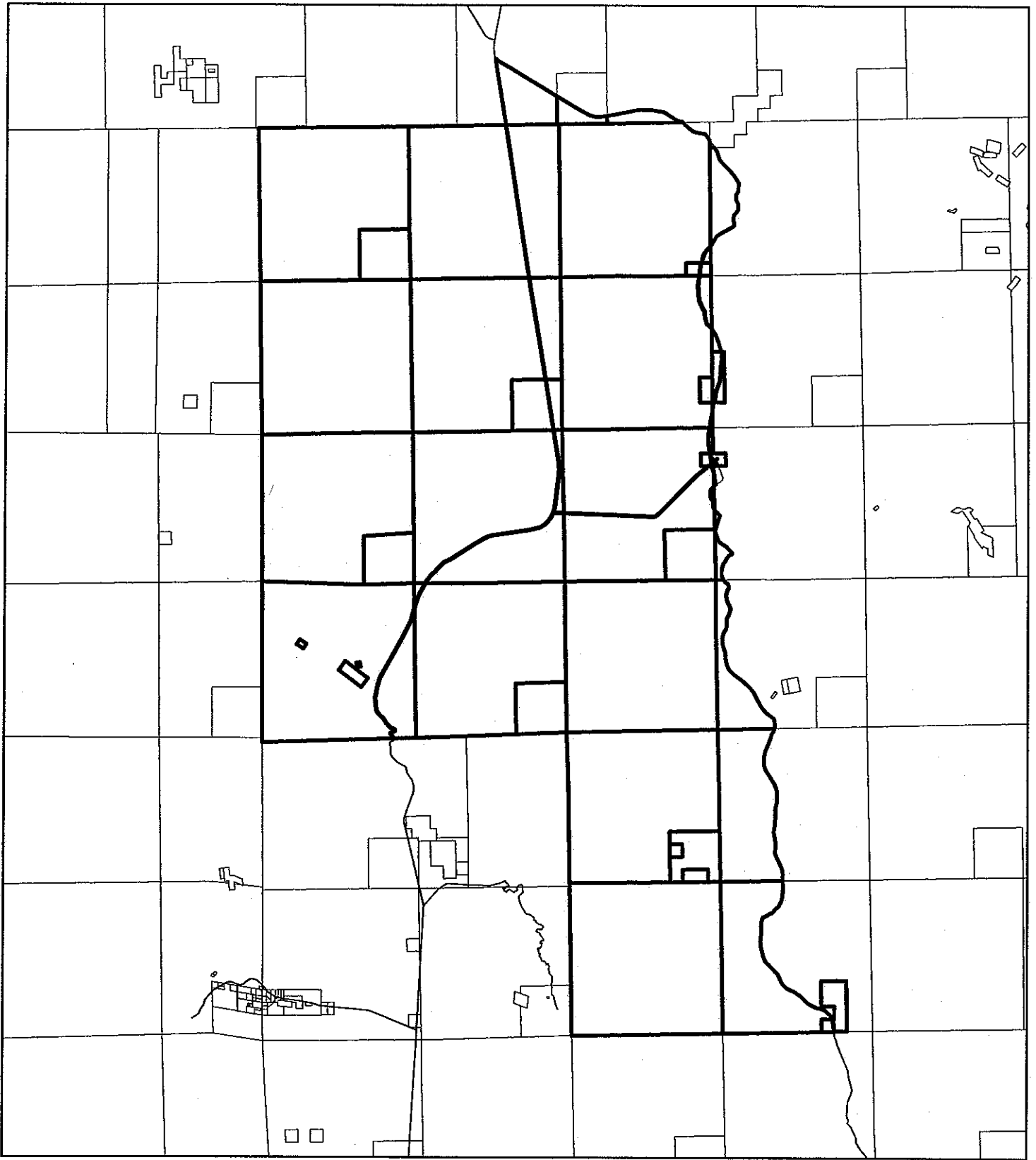


Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Centennial Flat



0 2,500 5,000 10,000 Feet

Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



Renewable Energy GPA Preliminary Draft Overlay Boundary Panamint Valley

Prepared by Inyo County Planning Department
September 2010



Inyo County

Land Use Element Diagram 32 Renewable Energy Land Use Designation Overlay

