

East County Community Action Coalition

July 2009, Issue No. 5.

www.EastCountyAction.org

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Move over Corporate Lobbyists & Politics... its time for the "Rule of Law"

Finally. The long awaited time is drawing closer. This month, we are finally crossing over from the world where politics and corporate lobbyists reign, into the realm of the "rule of law" (at least on the issue of the Sunrise Powerlink).

That is because, this month, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) finally answered the rehearing request filed by the Utilities Consumer Action Network (UCAN). Under federal law, UCAN and others must first exhaust their administrative remedies before being able to file suit in federal court.

As expected, the CPUC, under political

pressure, will not grant a rehearing. This means that UCAN will be soon be able to move the discussion forward, and into the federal courtroom. This is one of the main events that we have all been anxiously awaiting.

Likewise, the EC-CAC, Protect Our Communities Foundation and Backcountry Against Dumps, are preparing for federal court on their appeal of the Bureau of Land Management Record of Decision.

The past few years have been a challenge, as we have

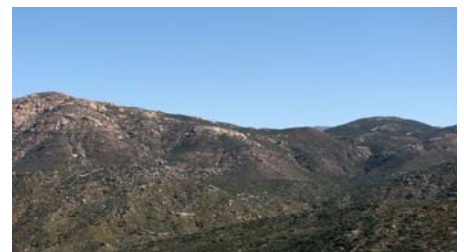


been working within a system in which lobbyists rule; in a place where the ones who regulate the monopoly are appointed by the very politicians who receive donations from those that are regulated. The connections run deep, and the deck has been stacked against us.

But now. the tides are turning, and its time for the laws of land to be heard an upheld!

Forest Service Decision Pending

The Forest Service is expected to be making its decision on the Sunrise Powerlink later this year, and possibly this month. See the article within which explains why the Sunrise Powerlink is not compliant with the Forest Service Plan, and must be rejected if the Forest Service does not want to be in violation of federal laws. See page 2 for the full article.



UPCOMING EVENTS

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The Forest Service and the Federal Law— Why the Forest Service will be in violation of federal law if it approves the Sunrise Powerlink

The Sunrise Powerlink project violates the Forest Plan

It conflicts with:

- Fire Prevention Standards
- Land-use designations
- Visual Resource Standards
- Special Use Standards
- Riparian Conservation Area Standards

It violates:

- Federal Land Policy Management Act
- National Environmental Policy Act
- Endangered Species Act
- National Historic Preservation Act

The Cleveland National Forest is required to:

- Amend the Forest Management Plan
- Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement
- Provide an opportunity for Public Comment

By Laura Cyphert

July 1st marked the 100th birthday of the Cleveland National Forest, however the day passed with little celebration, as the anniversary arrived as Governor Schwarzenegger is discussing plans to close the national forest, and convert previously protected lands into a national energy corridor; a clear violation of the Forest Service Plan.

The forest plan for the Cleveland National Forest was last revised in 2005, and specified how land and resources are to be overseen for the next decade, including the management of roads, trails and recreation.

The Forest Service Plan is a legally binding document, and must be compliant with

federal laws. These laws are not optional, even if some agencies choose to ignore them. In fact, last month, a federal judge ruled that federal agencies violated the Endangered Species Act by developing plans for national forests in California without adequately addressing the impact on endangered species. This ruling could potentially have an impact on the Sunrise Powerlink project. Furthermore, it sends a clear message that federal laws can not be ignored by the Forest Service.

Federal laws require, among other things, that the Forest Service perform adequate environmental and scientific analysis, and pro-

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Japatul Valley in Alpine is part of the Cleveland National Forest, and is protected by the Forest Plan.

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vide public notice and comment periods. The “southern route” which crosses through the Cleveland National Forest and many forest communities, received only cursory environmental review, which is nowhere near the standard required by the law. In addition, the Forest Service is required to address the conflicts that exist between the project and the Plan.

For example, the Project would be built next to the “scenic overlook” along Inter-

state 8 freeway, and it would create new roads in the forest in areas that are restricted to motorized vehicles. This will also increase the forest fire risks as visitors will have new access to areas previously only accessible by foot, and all at a time when the forest service may be reducing its number of rangers and other forest personnel.

Please join the ECCAC in encouraging Will Metz to follow the laws and reject the Sunrise Powerlink, and do the right thing for San Diego and our national parks.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Cleveland National Forest is under pressure from the Governor to approve the project; the Governor has recently listed the Cleveland National Forest on the list of parks to consider for closure. Word on the street is that Will Metz could lose his job if he does not approve the Sunrise Powerlink.



Please write to Will Metz to encourage him to stand strong, and not cave in to political pressure.

The Economics of the Sunrise Powerlink—the other “green” issue

By Dawn Schwartz

While we all have heard a steady source of reports addressing the significant environmental impacts of the Sunrise Powerlink, there has been far less attention on the other “green” issue which is equally devastating for San Diego, and that is the economic issue.

The economic issue is one of the compelling arguments against the Sunrise Powerlink, which rings true regardless of political persuasion, and stands

to directly impact each San Diegan and the ability for San Diego to have a “green” future, in both senses of the word.

We all agree that our region needs energy. Where we disagree is the best model for transmitting that energy. The choices are to keep it firmly in the hands of the utility monopoly, with a proven record of lack of corporate responsibility, or invest in decentralization of our energy into locally owned generation to meet our region’s needs and maintenance of our current lines. The economic argument is clearly on the side of local generation, balanced with the use of our existing transmission lines.

First of all, the costs of an additional new 123-mile energy corridor to import energy to a distant consumer is extremely expensive. Just the infrastructure alone is currently estimated to cost \$2.0 Billion dollars; up from the \$1.0 Billion dollar estimate that SDG&E



started with in 2005.

SDG&E already has some of the most expensive energy in the country. This project is predicted to add an additional 9 percent increase to our current utility bills, and that figure is based on earlier cost estimates. In fact, in a recent article in the [North County Times](#), it was predicted that San Diego would see a 27 percent increase in our utility bills by 2020; all at a time when we could instead be realizing the benefit of “renewables”.

Secondly, while Imperial County will undoubtedly benefit from selling energy to San Diego (as will Indonesia, Russia and Mexico), this model locks San Diego

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What are the cost estimates for the Sunrise Powerlink? Watch the estimates grow...

Dec 2005—\$1.0 Billion

Sept 2006— \$1.3 Billion

April 2007—\$1.4 Billion

April 2008—\$1.5 Billion

April 2009—\$1.9 Billion

June 2009- \$2.0 Billion

December 2009—?

December 2010- ?

Source: San Diego Union Tribune articles on the Sunrise

“Other Costs” of the Sunrise Powerlink

- **Renewable Firestorms** - The public record states that the project will significantly increase the likelihood of catastrophic wildfires. The Cedar Fire in 2003 cost San Diego over \$2 billion dollars.

Regional Dependence on imports—Sunny San Diego has to import its water and now we will be locking ourselves into importing electricity, instead of developing a thriving self sustaining economy with local renewables.

Depressed Property Values - The project will create a 123 mile long corridor of depressed property values and uninsurable homes, which will decrease property tax revenues.

Higher energy costs—The project will increase the cost of electricity. UCAN estimated a minimum 9% increase (back when the project cost much less). In a recent NC Times article, increases were projected



Dorothea Lange / Corbis

ratepayers into long-term dependence on other regions and foreign fossil fuels. San Diego is uniquely positioned to not be dependent and develop a truly green renewable economy. Instead of paying Sempra and SDG&E to make our region more dependent on them, we could invest that money into local generation. Think about this as a choice of “teaching us to fish”, or “selling us the fish”. Obviously, it is a better long-term economic choice for our region to capitalize on our unique natural renewable advantages, such as our sunshine in Sunny San Diego and wind potential from Santa Ana winds to generate our own region’s electricity. We will not prosper if we lock ourselves into dependence.

(Just look at what our dependence on imported water has done to our region).

In addition, we are missing out on the economic boom that could happen locally if we invested that money into local contractors, which would also return that money into our local economy. This is far better than a one-hit wonder that will bring in contractors from other areas.

There are also the indirect costs that will be caused by the project, which greatly exceed the direct costs of the project. There are the costs of the predicted firestorms that will re-

sult. Not only do firestorms take human lives, they have a great economic cost. All of San Diego ends up paying the higher insurance premiums, and the costs from lack of productivity every time a firestorm rages and businesses in San Diego slam to a halt. At a time when our budget to fight fires is under attack, the last thing we need are more fires which we can’t afford to

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The Economic Cost to San Diego of Catastrophic Wildfires

The following is a recap of the costs of our most recent catastrophic fires::

Fire	Year	Fire suppression Cost	Homes Lost	Avg Loss	Property Loss	Total Cost
Cedar Fire	2003	\$ 31,000,000	2232	\$ 600,000	\$1,339,200,000	\$1,370,200,000
Harris Fire	2007	15,600,000	461	600,000	276,600,000	292,200,000
Witch Creek Fire	2007	18,000,000	1141	600,000	684,600,000	702,600,000
Rice Canyon Fire	2007	6,500,000	206	600,000	123,600,000	130,100,000
Poomacha Fire	2007	20,600,000	138	600,000	82,800,000	103,400,000
Horno Fire	2007	700,000	0	600,000	-	700,000
TOTAL		\$ 92,400,000		\$3,600,000	\$2,506,800,000	\$2,599,200,000

Note: Fire suppression costs and structures lost are from Cal Fire published sources. Costs exclude the increase in insurance premiums, businesses closures, and other indirect costs. Some estimates of the actual economic loss are much higher. For example, the San Diego Business Journal November 2007 article estimated the actual cost of the Cedar Fire to be above \$2 Billion.

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fight.

Another economic cost is the loss of our natural resources (forests, scenic areas, etc) which impacts our quality of life, and impedes our ability to attract talent and businesses to our region.

There are many other compelling arguments that demonstrate why the Sunrise Powerlink is a bad choice for anyone who wants a strong economic future for San Diego. And while there are equally significant environmental reasons to oppose the Sunrise Powerlink, we need to recognize that this is not strictly an environmental issue. Our ability to have a prosperous San Diego economy will be largely impacted by the course we take in addressing local energy policy.

Dawn Schwartz is a business owner in San Diego.



“When evaluating the costs of the Sunrise Powerlink, the costs of the predicted firestorms should absolutely be included in the equation. These decisions should not be made in vacuum,” said Dawn Schwartz.

Donate Today to the ECCAC Legal Fund

Make a Difference

EAST COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION

Your dollar is one more vote to STOP the Sunrise Powerlink

www.EastCountyAction.org

Should utility regulators be political appointees?

Because SDG&E is a monopoly, it is regulated by the state. The only problem is that the regulators are political appointees, and the politicians who do the “appointing”, receive contributions from those that are regulated. In addition, the California Public Utilities Commission has many connections to SDG&E and Sempra, and vice versa.

In February 2008, the Los Angeles times published a story about Public Utilities Commissioner Timothy A. Simon soliciting donations from companies he regulates. The article states that there is not a law prohibiting regulators from raising money from those they oversee, even though they set utility rates, adjudicate complaints, and have broad power to regulate the behavior of the utility companies.

You can find the full article at this link:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-puc20feb20,0,5269194.story>

DID YOU KNOW?

The California Public Utilities Commissioners are appointed by the Governor.

The Governor receives financial support from the utilities and its affiliates.

Two of the Commissioners issued their support for the Sunrise Powerlink before the Environmental Impact Report was even completed.

Dissenting CPUC Commissioner speaks out against approval of Sunrise Powerlink

As mentioned in our lead story, the CPUC denied UCAN's request for a rehearing. Following the denial, one of the CPUC Commissioners, Dian Gruneich, authored her dissent to the Order Denying Rehearing on the Sunrise Powerlink.

In a three page brief, Commissioner Gruneich noted that the approval of the Sunrise Powerlink and environmental and economic justification were based on "fundamental and fatal inconsistencies" in the Sunrise Decision.

The brief states that, "the re-

cord shows that Sunrise could easily carry existing fossil-fired generation and facilitate the development of new fossil-fired resources outside the state.

Existing transmission lines will connect Sunrise to out-of state resources, not only in the Southwestern U.S. but also to two existing gas fired plants totaling over 1,000 MW of capacity in Baja, California in Mexico. Thus, the risk that Sunrise will increase, rather than decrease, Greenhouse Gas emissions is real and significant."

Gruneich states that the justification to approve Sunrise hinged on the line carrying renewables.

The current project does not mandate that SDG&E carry any renewables on the line.



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