

SAN DIEGO COUNTY SUPERVISOR

DIANNE JACOB

PUBLIC COMMENTS



Jennifer Stone - ASST. to Supervisor
 Sunrise Powerlink Draft Environmental Impact Report
 Public Meeting
 February 26, 2008

Thank you Commissioner Gruenich and Judge Weissman for holding this and other public hearings in communities most impacted by this line.

I represent the people of San Diego County's Second District, which encompasses the eastern portion of San Diego County. My district includes many communities affected by San Diego Gas and Electric's Sunrise Powerlink proposal including Ramona, Julian and Santa Ysabel, as well as many communities along Alternative Route D in the southeastern part of the region.

The County of San Diego is finalizing its formal comments on the Draft Environmental Report (EIR) and will submit those technical comments before the April 11, 2008 deadline. I have reviewed the Draft EIR, in particular its executive summary.

I remain steadfastly opposed to the project in its entirety, including the Preferred Route and Alternative Route D. As the Draft EIR points out, there are cheaper and less destructive ways to meet future energy needs.

If speakers here tonight seem especially upset, it's because this area is still reeling from the massive firestorms of last October, fires likely started by SDG&E power lines.

In addition, the region has endured SDG&E's controversial Sunrise campaign for more than two years. This divisive effort has pitted rural communities against urban communities and tried to turn northern communities against southern communities.

Fortunately, many of us have seen through SDG&E's propaganda. SDG&E has presented the CPUC's decision as a choice: approve Sunrise or suffer rolling blackouts.

Yet, as the Draft EIR thankfully indicates— and as expert after expert has testified— Sunrise is a false choice. The EIR's top two alternatives clearly show that this region— its economy and its landscape— are better served by local, not imported, generation.

In commercials and glossy brochures, SDG&E's impressive public relations machine has boiled down the pitch for Sunrise into a snappy soundbite. SDG&E says this: "Sunrise will bring us the three Rs: renewables, reliability and reduced costs."

Unfortunately, SDG&E overlooked a forth and more important R: reality.

Here's the reality about renewables: There is enough capacity on the existing Southwest Powerlink to bring wind, solar and geothermal energy from the Imperial Valley into this region without building Sunrise.

SDG&E's own testimony reveals that the utility can meet California's renewable mandate without building Sunrise.

The unproven Stirling Solar Dish project—the cornerstone of SDG&E's renewable claims—has been delayed again. The company has not filed an application for construction with the California Energy Commission. Worse yet, Stirling officials have testified they will move forward with a type of technology that has long suffered from hydrogen and engine-seal leaks.

Finally, if SDG&E is as committed to renewable energy as it claims, why—last summer—did the company lobby against increasing the State's renewable mandate?

Here's the reality about reliability: A massive extension chord through our fire-prone Backcountry does not equal greater reliability. It equals perilous danger.

In my discussions with SDG&E, the utility used the 2003 Cedar Fire as an interesting argument for Sunrise. SDG&E said that Sunrise was needed because if the existing Southwest Powerlink were to go down in a fire, Sunrise could ensure reliability.

SDG&E officials downplayed the likelihood of the region having two massive fires at the same time. That argument was debatable until October 2007. It turned out SDG&E was right. We didn't have two massive fires at the same time. We had seven!

The Southwest Powerlink went down in the Harris fire. And, had Sunrise been built, it would have been out of service too because of the path of the Witch Fire.

Here's the reality about reduced cost: Repeatedly, we have seen the alleged financial benefits of Sunrise drop dramatically because of SDG&E's own miscalculations, math errors and faulty assumptions about power plants. First it was \$447 million, then \$204 million, then \$129 million—less than one quarter of the line's original cost savings estimates.

The Utility Consumers Action Network and other energy stakeholder groups have done some remarkable research into the cost-effectiveness of upgrading existing infrastructure and investing in solar— proposals that have largely been ignored by SDG&E.

It's time for SDG&E to retire claims about the three Rs. The facts don't support them. The region needs to turn its focus to the three Es— existing infrastructure, emerging technologies and efficiency measures.

The State of California is standing at the threshold of a whole new era in energy development. In my mind, Sunrise is really a battle between the dying past and the promising future.

California, with its Million Solar Roofs campaign and its investments in energy research, is blazing trails when it comes to renewables. The State and its Governor have put its money where its mouth is. That investment is paying off.

This month, a story in *NY Times*, describes California as the world's "next big solar market and its entrepreneurial center." An economist said of California: "We're at the dawn of a revolution that could be as powerful as the Internet revolution." A venture capitalist said companies are just starting to blossom from venture funding and, "through innovation and volume, prices are coming down."

Change is scary and SDG&E is likely protecting an old way of doing business.

Yet the financial sector and the energy sector are all saying the same thing: hulking lines and massive steel are antiquated concepts. Distributed generation, self-reliance and new green technologies are here to stay, whether SDG&E likes it or not. Imported power— in Sunrise's case, much of it from fossil-fueled plants— is a thing of the past.

By approving Sunrise, California would be building a billion dollar monument to the past. It will be outdated before it's even finished.

By turning down this line, the Commission sends an important message to the San Diego region: San Diegans need to create in-basin generation and become self-sufficient and safer from fire.

With your help, we can force our utility to do the right thing.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak this evening.