

January 1, 2021

Rob Peterson, CPUC
C/o Tom Engels
Horizon Water and Environment, LLC
266 Grand Avenue, Suite 210
Oakland, CA 94610

Re: Opposition to SE-PLR-2, Templeton - S. River Route Alternative

Dear Dr. Engels,

I am writing to express my opposition to the S. River Route Alternative which would construct at least 20 massive transmission poles and lines along South River Road within the property boundaries of Santa Ysabel Ranch ("SYR").

WILD FIRE DANGER: First and foremost, transmission lines of this type have been proven to create a fire hazard as evidenced by the 2018 and 2019 Camp and Kincadee fires which caused devastation to the communities in which they occurred. Both fires were determined to be caused by PG&E transmission lines of the same type proposed for the S. River Route Alternative and PG&E was found liable for the resulting damages. The S. River Route Alternative (SE_PLR-2) and the Templeton Substation is the only site combination that sit entirely within the HIGH FIRE HAZARD ZONE. With this knowledge, it would be unconscionable and irresponsible, if not criminal, for PG&E to put SYR and the surrounding area at a higher fire risk when other proposed routes are available. PG&E would be liable for any fire damage caused to SYR by its transmission lines.

Many existing factors unique to SYR contribute to its high wild fire risk. Adding the proposed transmission lines will substantially increase the fire danger to SYR and surrounding areas. A fire could be ignited during construction. According to the Draft Environmental Impact Report ("DEIR"), section 4.9-38 "any accidental ignition from construction equipment or the electrified 70.kV power line once operational could have significant effects on the surrounding rural residential community along South River Road and surrounding areas". Having advance knowledge of this danger, PG&E's installation of such transmission lines along S. River Road would be irresponsible.

In the event of a fire on S. River Road, evacuation of SYR would be extremely difficult. Two of the three main exits and two emergency exits from SYR flow onto S. River Road. Residents of all 146 lots plus the many visitors and workers (an average of 100 non-resident vehicles per day) would have to evacuate through the single-lane at the Hanging Tree Ln. gate. This would also negatively impact the ability for emergency vehicles to respond.

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Santa Ysabel Ranch has a massive oak tree forest with mandated protections by the County of San Luis Obispo for visual mitigation to neighboring properties. Each sub-divided lot and open space within the community has oak trees that are numbered and catalogued by the County with strict rules dictating under what conditions a tree can be removed. A steep hill of protected Blue Oak forest between S. River Road and the upper ridge of SYR would mean that fire would climb very quickly, spreading to more homes and impacting evacuation.

SYR residents and Homeowners Association have undertaken extensive and expensive measures to mitigate the fire danger within SYR. Each year we comply with CAL-Fire mandates for wild grass mowing, tree trimming and any other recommendations to reduce our wild fire risk. Installing PG&E transmission lines along S. River Road would add a measure of danger well beyond our control, one which we could not mitigate.

On a personal note, my residential homeowner's insurer refused to renew my policy for 2020-2021 citing the high wild fire risk as the reason. In looking for a replacement policy, several main stream insurers refused to consider insuring my home for the same reason. Farmers Insurance offered me a California Fair Policy, which is anything but fair. Allowing the S. River Route Alternative to proceed in an already high fire danger area would impact many residential homes and further limit our ability to obtain insurance coverage.

HERITAGE OAK TREES: SYR along S. River Road is lined with large Heritage Oak trees, all of which have the protection of the County of San Luis Obispo and have been numbered and catalogued. As a condition during the development of SYR, the developer was required to mitigate the removal of trees for roads and infrastructure by planting oak trees along S. River Road. Installing the massive transmission poles would require removal of many of the large old and established trees as well as the ones planted to mitigate the effects of development. Removal of such trees would negatively impact the environment on many different fronts.

WILDLIFE: SYR and S. River Road is a known wildlife corridor and migration path. We have Golden Eagle nests within SYR. The eagles and their young have been photographed in their nests by residents for four of the past five years. Golden Eagles are monogamous and may remain together for several years and possibly for life. I have a pair of resident Golden Eagles that rest on an oak branch in my back yard for hours at a time. We also have a number of Hawk and visiting Bald Eagles. All of these magnificent birds would be endangered by high power lines on S. River Road. Construction of the project would result in the permanent disruption and loss of an important wildlife corridor.

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ENERGY NEEDS: The energy required for Paso Robles 1107, is small enough (.53MW) that it can be accomplished with battery or thermal storage. Templeton has no capacity for substantial residential or commercial growth, and a power line on S. River Road is contrary to the California policy targeting "non-wire" alternatives. All power lines supporting the electric needs of SYR are underground. The high cost of damage to our neighborhood, our wildlife and our fire safety compared to the low energy need would not be a prudent decision.

For the sake of public safety and wildlife preservation, please do not allow PG&E to install the proposed transmission line along S. River Road. Thank you for your time and consideration of this highly important matter.

Sincerely,

