

**OPENING STATEMENT OF DIANE CONKLIN FOR THE MUSSEY GRADE
ROAD ALLIANCE BEFORE THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES
COMMISSION, SAN DIEGO, CA IN THE MATTER OF A.06-08-010**

MONDAY, JULY 9, 2007

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING,
1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, SAN DIEGO, CA**

COMMISSIONER GRUENEICH, YOUR HONOR,

**TODAY IS A MOMENTOUS DAY FOR THE MUSSEY GRADE ROAD
ALLIANCE, THE GRASS ROOTS CITIZENS' ORGANIZATION I REPRESENT
IN THESE PROCEEDINGS.**

**THE ALLIANCE HAS BEEN INVOLVED FROM THE VERY OUTSET IN THIS
ISSUE – THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC
COMPANY AND ITS PARENT CORPORATION SEMPRA SHOULD BE
GRANTED A CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND NECESSITY
BY THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO BUILD A HUGE TRANSMISSION LINE
THROUGH COUNTRYSIDE AND COMMUNITIES ALONG ITS 150-MILE
MARCH FROM THE DESERT TO THE SEA.**

**FOR COMMUNITIES LIKE MUSSEY GRADE, THE CONSEQUENCES OF
GRANTING PERMISSION WILL BE FELT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.
THE SCAR ON THE LAND, THE WASTE OF RATEPAYERS MONEY, THE
VERY INAPPROPRIATENESS OF THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OLD ENERGY
TECHNOLOGY BEING FOISTED ON THE PUBLIC WHILE NEW ENERGY
TECHNOLOGIES ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING BORN - SEEMS VERY
WRONG.**

THAT IS WHY THE ALLIANCE IS INVOLVED IN THIS MOMENTOUS STRUGGLE – TO HELP THE COMMISSION COME TO THE RIGHT DECISION. THE STAKES ARE SO VERY HIGH AND MISTAKES CANNOT BE EASILY CORRECTED.

THE ALLIANCE IS BUT A SMALL PART OF A HUGE GRASS ROOTS AWAKENING ACROSS SAN DIEGO COUNTY THAT IS AS IMPORTANT AS IT IS RARE. PEOPLE ARE UNITING FROM THE COAST TO THE DESERT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT TO SEE THIS LINE – A GASH ON THE COLLECTIVE INHERITANCE OF OUR CHILDREN – BE ALLOWED TO PLOW ITS WAY THROUGH STATE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVE AFTER OPEN SPACE PRESERVE AFTER OPEN SPACE PRESERVE JUST TO MAKE PROFIT FOR A CORPORATION.

THOSE OF US IN THE BACK COUNTRY WHO SUFFERED THROUGH THE LARGEST WILD FIRE IN THE HISTORY OF CALIFORNIA – THE CEDAR FIRE IN 2003 – WHEN 15 PEOPLE DIED AND SOME 2,200 HOMES WERE DESTROYED - ALSO KNOW THAT WE DON'T WANT ANOTHER BACK COUNTRY FIRE CATASTROPHE. THIS IS THE SAFETY ISSUE.

AND WE BELIEVE THAT THE PEOPLE OF SCRIPPS RANCH, RANCHO PENASQUITOS AND FURTHER WEST TO LA JOLLA DON'T WANT TO SEE

ANOTHER FIRE COMING THEIR WAY, RIIPPING THROUGH THEIR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES.

THE CEDAR FIRE ONLY STOPPED GOING TO THE COAST BECAUSE THE WIND CHANGED. THE WIND CHANGED AND THE COAST WAS SAVED.

THAT IS AN IMPORTANT POINT IN OUR TESTIMONY. THE ALLIANCE TESTIMONY IS ATTEMPTING TO GO WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE. TO WAKE THE COMMISSION UP TO THE FACT THAT THERE ARE ON THE GROUND REALITIES THAT CAN'T BE PAPERED OVER. THE REALITY IS THAT -- UP TO NOW -- THE COMMISSION HASN'T TAKEN FIRE VERY SERIOUSLY. FIRE WAS JUST WHAT IT IS. AN ACT OF GOD, INEVITABILITY IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. AND THAT'S JUST WHAT SDG&E'S FIRE EXPERT SAYS IN HIS REBUTTAL TO OUR TESTIMONY. HE SAYS REGARDING THE THREAT OF FIRE: "WELCOME TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA."

BUT FIRE IS MORE THAN AN UNWELCOME MAT WE CAN'T GET RID OF. FIRE IS A DAILY REALITY IN THE BACK COUNTRY AND IS BECOMING A GREATER AND MORE PROFOUND THREAT AS WE SUFFER THROUGH DROUGHTS THAT SEEM TO NEVER END. THIS YEAR WE GOT ABOUT SIX INCHES OF RAIN WHERE I LIVE ALONG MUSSEY GRADE ROAD. OLD

**TIMERS WILL TELL YOU THAT WE USED TO GET 16 INCHES AND MORE.
BUT NOT NOW.**

**AND SO THE ALLIANCE IS CONCERNED – VERY CONCERNED – WITH
THE THREAT OF FIRE BEING INCREASED BY PUTTING HUGE,
INCONGRUOUS OUT OF PLACE ELECTRICAL TOWERS THROUGH SOME
OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BUT ALSO MOST RUGGED LAND IN THE
COUNTY. THE ALLIANCE EVIDENCE WILL SHOW THAT POWER LINES
DO CAUSE FIRES. THEY MAY NOT HAPPEN VERY OFTEN, BUT THEY
HAPPEN --- AND WHEN THEY DO, IF THE CONDITIONS ARE RIGHT AND
THE WIND IS BLOWING, THEN YOU HAVE A CATASTROPHE ON YOUR
HANDS. NO BALANCING ACT WILL MAKE THAT CATASTROPHE LESS
OF A CATASTROPHE TO THE PEOPLE WHO DIE AND THE ONES LEFT TO
MOURN THEM.**

**WE KNOW BECAUSE WE SAW IT HAPPEN BEFORE OUR VERY EYES. NOT
MANY LIFETIMES WITNESS A GREAT CATASTROPHE. BUT WHEN ONE
STRIKES, IT LEAVES A DEEP IMPRESSION.**

**EARLIER I MENTIONED THE WIND. THE WIND IS CRUCIAL IN THE
ALLIANCE TESTIMONY. THE EVIDENCE WILL SHOW THAT WIND
MAKES FOR A BAD SITUATION – CAUSING TRANSMISSION LINE FAULTS
-- EVEN TOWER COLLAPSES. AND WIND DRIVES FIRES. THE CEDAR**

FIRE INCUBATED FOR HOURS IN THE MOUNTAINS UNTIL THE WIND PICKED UP AROUND 10:30 AT NIGHT. THEN ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE AND IT WAS TOO LATE.

THE ALLIANCE TESTIMONY WILL SHOW THAT WIND IS THE KEY TO THE PROBLEMS OF GREAT FIRES – AND TO POWER LINE FIRES. THE EVIDENCE WILL SHOW THAT POWER LINES ARE THE ONLY IGNITION SOURCE THAT IS MORE LIKELY TO OCCUR DURING HIGH WINDS AND THAT POWER LINE FIRES IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY WERE 19 TIMES LARGER THAN THE AVERAGE.

THE EVIDENCE ALSO WILL SHOW THAT THERE IS A THRESHOLD, WHERE THE WIND IS GUSTING AROUND 30 MILES PER HOUR, BEYOND WHICH POWER LINE FAULTS BECOME MORE FREQUENT. WE WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT AT ABOUT THAT SAME THRESHOLD, EFFECTIVENESS OF FIRE FIGHTING INITIAL ATTACK DROPS FROM 98 PER CENT TO AROUND TWO-THIRDS. THIS COMBINATION IS WHAT MAKES POWER LINE FIRES SO DESTRUCTIVE.

WHILE THE EVIDENCE WILL SHOW THAT OUR CALCULATIONS ASSUME THAT THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD BE NO MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO START A MAJOR FIRE THAN ANY OTHER POWER LINE, WE HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT THIS LINE WOULD PASS THROUGH SOME

OF THE MOST DENSELY VEGETATED AND WINDIEST AREAS IN THE COUNTY – FOLOWING THE VERY PATH OF THE CEDAR FIRE WHICH IS GROWING BACK AS WE SPEAK.

WE ON MUSSEY GRADE, IN RAMONA, ALONG WITH COMMUNITIES ALL ALONG THE LINE IN THE BACKCOUNTRY OF JULAN AND SANTA YSABEL TO THE SURBUBAN SCRIPPS RANCH LIVE IN THE SANTA ANA WIND PATTERN. THE SANTA ANA WINDS BLOW FROM EAST TO WEST – RIGHT THROUGH OUR COMMUNITIES – IN A FUNNEL OF MOUNTAINS AND CANYONS TO THE SEA. THE TESTIMONY WILL SHOW THAT MILES AND MILES OF THE POWER LINE SDG&E WANTS IS PLANTED IN THE PATH OF THAT FUNNEL THAT CARRIED THE CEDAR FIRE HALFWAY ACROSS THE COUNTY.

THEN THERE IS THE ISSUE OF WHO PAYS IF THERE IS A FIRE SOMEDAY. THIS LINE IS SUPPOSED TO BE GOOD FOR 40 YEARS OR SO. I AM 60 THIS YEAR, SO I WON'T SEE ITS DEMISE. BUT THIS PROJECT WILL BE THREATENING TO START A CATASTROPHIC FIRE FOR YEARS TO COME WHEN MANY IN THIS ROOM WON'T BE AROUND. THAT'S SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT. WHAT COULD WE BE SADDLING OUR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES WITH FOR THE FUTURE? ESPECIALLY IN AN ACKNOWLEDGED GLOBAL WARMING WORLD – WHICH NO COMPANY CAN AIR-CONDITION US OUT OF – IT IS CLEAR THAT WE

SHOULD PONDER WHAT WE ARE DOING IN LIGHT OF NEW CONDITIONS NEVER BEFORE FACED BY MODERN MAN.

WHO PAYS? OBVIOUSLY SDG&E SHOULD PAY. BUT WHAT SHOULD THEY PAY? OUR EVIDENCE WILL SHOW THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF OPEN SPACE PRESERVES AND PARKS WOULD BE EXPENSIVE AND RATEPAYERS WOULD PAY FOR IT – PAY TO RESTORE WHAT THE COMPANY DESTROYS. IN FACT, IT IS NOT CLEAR EXACTLY HOW EXPENSIVE IT WOULD BE – BUT CERTAINLY IT IS NOT EVEN CONTEMPLATED TODAY BECAUSE, WELL, FIRE IS AN ACT OF GOD, RIGHT?

THERE IS ALSO THE INCREDIBLE DAMAGE THAT FIRE BRINGS WITH IT TO LAND THAT IS BURNED TOO MANY TIMES IN TOO SHORT A TIME. WHOLE AREAS OF SAN DIEGO, IF THEY BURN TOO FREQUENTLY, CAN CHANGE FROM ONE KIND OF LANDSCAPE – SAY CHAPPARL OR COASTAL SAGE – TO DRY, WEEDY GRASSES THAT ARE EVEN MORE FLAMMABLE AND MUCH LESS DESIREABLE IN EVERY OTHER WAY.

THE MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE HAS SUBMITTED 50 PAGES OF TESTIMONY AND 10 APPENDICES CONTAINING SCIENTIFIC ANALYSES AND COMPRISING ONE OF THE LARGEST BODIES OF TESTIMONY OF ITS KIND EVER SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION. WE HAVE ALSO

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY ON COMMUNITY VALUES AND PLAN TO DO MORE IN THE PHASE 2 RESPONSE TO THE EIR. OUR TESTIMONY RE FIRE RISKS WILL SHOW THAT THE MANTRA SDG&E HAS IN ITS CORPORATE HEAD IS NOT THE THREAT OF FIRE TO US; IT'S THE THREAT OF FIRE TO THEM AND TO THEIR LINES. THREATS TO THEIR LINES, AS OUR TESTIMONY WILL SHOW, IS NOT THE ISSUE. THE THREAT IS FIRES STARTED BY THEIR LINES AND THAT ENDANGER US.

OUR TESTIMONY WILL SHOW THAT 87 POWER LINE FIRES IN THE SDG&E SERVICE AREA OCCURRED IN 35 MONTHS DURING 2004-2006 FROM TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION LINES. NINE OF THESE WERE STARTED BY THE BIG LINES. OUR TESTIMONY WILL ALSO SHOW THAT UNDER DIFFERENT CONDITIONS – WIND CONDITIONS – FIRES LIKE THESE COULD HAVE BECOME CATASTROPHIC EVENTS.

OUR TESTIMONY WILL SHOW THERE IS A GAMBLE INVOLVED IN THIS DECISION BEYOND THE ISSUE OF THE LINE ITSELF.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO OUR TESTIMONY AND CONCENS. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROJECT SINCE DECEMBER 2005. THAT'S A LONG HAUL FOR VOLUNTEERS. HOWEVER, IT MAKES IT WORTH IT WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO TALK TO YOU IN THIS SETTING. BECAUSE THE

COMMISSION ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION, WE SAY “OKAY WE’LL PARTICIPATE”. IT ISN’T EASY. BUT WE DO IT BECAUSE WE CARE AND THE OPPORTUNITY IS THERE. WE THANK YOU HEARTILY FOR THAT AND FOR YOUR CAREFUL AND INFORMED CONSIDERATION OF OUR EVIDENCE. THE LARGER ISSUE AT HAND - OUR PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY AND THE RIGHT TO LIVE UNDISTRUBED IN OUR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES - DESERVES NOTHING LESS.

THANK YOU.