

CUSP Statement to BOS 9/27/06

My name is Laura Copic and I am here today representing both the Carmel Valley Planning Board and Communities United for Sensible Power (CUSP), an organization made up of communities from the ocean to the desert. This organization opposes SDG&E's transmission line proposal as does the Carmel Valley Planning Board and many other planning groups and citizen's groups in the City and County. In fact, I realize that there won't be a lot of time for public input today so I would like to ask those in the room who oppose the powerline to please raise your hand so that the board can recognize you. I am also submitting many letters and petitions from planning boards and other organizations opposing the line so that you know that I am speaking for many.

Our reasons for opposing this line are twofold. First, this "transmission first" strategy appears to be in contradiction to both the California Energy Action Plan (EAP) and San Diego Regional Energy Strategy which stress a loading order maximizing energy efficiency, demand reduction, distributed generation and other in-county generation and renewables **before** transmission as preferred strategies to attaining our future energy needs. Second, this transmission line would be a visible, audible blight upon our state park and local preserves as well as a fire and health hazard to nearby residents.

When evaluating utility proposals like this, we need to keep in mind that, as profit making entities, Investor Owned Utilities have the goal to maximize shareholder value NOT ratepayer value and these two goals are often at odds. This was all too apparent with Sempra's manipulations of the power market during the California energy crisis. SDG&E must also serve the interests of this parent company.

Adding to this conflict of interest, this powerline allows SDG&E to avoid using or supporting in-county energy resources that are already available from its competition. Our understanding is that SDG&E can recognize a substantial profit on any infrastructure the California Public Utility Commission authorizes it to construct. However, the company gets no mark-up for buying power from third parties, such as those that own the existing Encina or South Bay power plants. Therefore, SDGE has a large monetary incentive to squeeze out other power suppliers, which is probably why they won't sign long-term contracts to modernize the coastal power plants even though in-county generation is recognized as a preferred energy solution.

We believe there are more efficient, local alternatives that will better add reliability and renewables to our energy mix and that have fewer harmful impacts on our parks, preserves and communities and that approving this project will squelch the momentum and incentive to pursue these superior alternatives.

Which brings me to our second point of opposition: With this project, SDG&E is proposing 150 miles of industrial and destructive transmission towers, lines, cables and road through supposedly protected open space and habitats such as Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, Boulder Oaks Preserve, Del Mar Mesa Preserve, and the Los Penasquitos Preserve. In other places such as Scripps Ranch, Rancho Penasquitos, Carmel Valley, Torrey Hills and San Diego Country Estates, the preferred route would be constructed in neighborhoods,

close to homes and community gathering places and only a couple of those impacted communities have been chosen to receive the “privilege” of having their community or preserve dug up for undergrounding of the line.

Impacts to these communities would include enormous construction impacts, decreased property values, increased EMF exposure, increased wildfire risks, habitat destruction, collision risks posed by low flying military aircraft and last but certainly not least the viewshed destruction in our treasured shrinking open space.

With this proposal, SDG&E is simply doing their job to make money for stockholders. Their incentives are clear. However, it is decidedly unclear why other elected officials and business organizations have jumped to support this proposal with little or no due diligence, before the project has been vetted technically by anyone other than SDG&E and before the CPUC has begun their examination of the project or published an Environmental Impact Report. In fact, while supporters of the project are pushing for an accelerated timeline and a rush to judgment the Commission’s own Division of Ratepayer Advocacy has filed a protest to SDG&E’s application, raising red flags and highlighting inconsistencies. They suggest the application is inaccurate and/or incomplete and they ask for appropriate time to gather more information and investigate independently the claims made by the utility. With this background in mind, we truly appreciate the time and consideration this board is giving to the project today and their diligence in seeking more information from other sources.

We think there is already ample reason to oppose this powerline and we hope the Board of Supervisors will do so. If you still have questions, however, we encourage you to continue to become fully informed before you make a decision on this project. We urge you to be cautious and careful in your evaluation -- and to look out for your constituency by following regional energy policy. Please examine this project to see if it is truly the best solution for our future energy needs or simply the only solution SDG&E and SEMPRA are willing to offer. We are all owed an in depth examination of the project and all alternatives, including non-wire alternatives as required by the Public Utility Code. Only in this way can we ensure that this time it is our public officials - and not the likes of Enron – that are “The Smartest Guys in the Room”.