

**Back Country Against Dumps
East County Community Action Coalition
The Protect Our Communities Foundation**

For Immediate Release, July 9, 2009

Contact:

David Hogan, The Protect Our Communities Foundation, 760 809-9244

Stephan Volker, Attorney, 510 496-0600

Donna Tisdale, Back Country Against Dumps, 619-766-4170

Laura Cyphert, East County Community Action Coalition, 858-627-1426

**Groups to Cleveland National Forest:
Protect People and Nature, Reject Sunrise Powerlink**

SAN DIEGO, *Calif.*— An attorney for three community and environmental groups has put the Cleveland National Forest on notice that it must reject construction of the Sunrise Powerlink transmission line project across the forest. In a letter sent today to Forest Supervisor William Metz, the groups describe in detail the numerous legal conflicts between the powerlink and the forest's overarching management plan. The letter also calls on the Forest Service to combine consideration of the powerlink with an interrelated pending decision, a new Forest Service permit for miles of SDG&E's existing power lines on the forest.

The Sunrise Powerlink transmission line through southern San Diego County was approved by two state and federal agencies in December and January 2008. Those approvals are widely considered to be flawed and appeals have been filed by the three groups sending today's letter and others opposing the project. Many other agencies must also provide additional approvals for the project to proceed. Cleveland National Forest Supervisor William Metz is currently considering whether to allow the powerlink to cross miles of the forest and whether the project will follow the terms of the forest's management plan. Metz is also separately considering whether to renew expired permits to SDG&E for all existing power lines on the forest.

"The fundamental problem with the location of the powerlink on the Cleveland National Forest is that the project would cause enormous harm to the forest, yet powerlink environmental review documents treated this area as an afterthought," said the groups' attorney Stephan Volker. "The Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan is supposed to be a blueprint to conserve forest resources. Yet we found page after page of gross conflicts between the powerlink and the management plan."

"Forest Supervisor Metz needs to step up and do the right thing by conducting the legally required environmental and other reviews for the selected route that SDG&E, the BLM, and the Public Utilities Commission all failed to do", said

Donna Tisdale of Back County Against Dumps. "This is a matter of law, public trust, and personal responsibility."

"One of our greatest concerns is the potential for the powerlink to ignite another Cedar or Witch Creek inferno or interfere with firefighting," said Laura Cyphert, President of the East County Community Action Coalition. "The powerlink can't be allowed to shove aside the forest plan promises to reduce the threat of wildfire."

"The Cleveland National Forest is here to protect natural resources and nature-based recreation opportunities for the people of San Diego," said Denis Trafecanty, President of The Protect Our Communities Foundation. "It's not here to provide a path of least resistance for massive industrial projects with little public benefit like the powerlink."

The Sunrise Powerlink is a major new fossil-fueled electrical transmission line proposed by San Diego Gas and Electric for construction from the Imperial Valley to central San Diego County near Poway. Like a dead-end freeway with local off-ramps, the powerlink would consist of a larger capacity 500kV line to a remote rural area east of Alpine, smaller 230kV lines continuing on to central San Diego, and plans by SDG&E to extend the larger capacity "freeway" lines to greater Los Angeles through wilderness and communities. SDG&E's claims that the powerlink would carry renewable energy is greenwash – In fact, the powerlink would provide a highly profitable connection between SDG&E parent company Sempra Energy's enormous natural gas infrastructure in northern Baja California and the southern California market.

Please visit The Protect Our Communities Foundation website to see the letter and a summary of conflicts between the forest plan the powerlink:

<http://protectourcommunities.org/>

The Protect Our Communities Foundation is a non-profit community organization dedicated to the promotion of a safe, reliable, economical, renewable, and environmentally responsible energy future for San Diego County.

<http://www.protectourcommunities.org>

Backcountry Against Dumps is a community organization comprising numerous individuals and families residing in the eastern San Diego community of Boulevard who are directly affected by the southern route of the powerlink and the destruction of nearby federal land for inappropriate wind energy development.

The East County Community Action Coalition ("ECCAC") is a coalition of community groups with the common goal of preserving rural quality of life and natural resources in eastern San Diego County. www.EastCountyAction.org

###