

East County Community Action Coalition

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www.EastCountyAction.org

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- **May 9, 2009**—50 mile benefit run to Stop the Sunrise Powerlink (page 6)
- **May 30, 2009**— Save El Monte Valley cook-out fundraiser (page 5)
- **TBD**—Property Owner Workshop. Learn your property rights before they are gone.
- **TBD**— Camping in the historical El Monte Valley under the shadow of El Cajon Mountain
- **TBD**—Your event or fundraiser

Send your newsletter submissions

and event

announcements to:
Info@EastCountyAction.org

Know your legal rights!

Property Rights Workshop sponsored by ECCAC

The East County Community Action Coalition (ECCAC) has received recent reports from our community that SDG&E has been aggressively confronting property owners for access to property and to rush eminent domain procedures.

Some residents have even reported that SDG&E “special agents” have come to



their property and threatened arrest and jail if homeowners refused to allow surveyors on the property.

In response the ECCAC will be hosting a

free (donation only) legal workshop to help community members learn their legal rights before they are lost.

If you have a property that is directly impacted by the approved route and you have received notice of pre-eminent domain proceedings, this workshop can help you know your rights.

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Earth Day 2009 in Balboa Park

On April 19, 2009, San Diego celebrated Earth Day in Balboa Park. ECCAC participant, Carveacre Residents Against the Powerlink, sponsored a Stop the Sunrise Powerlink booth, overflowing with posters, signs, information, raffle items and volunteers made a huge impact.

Thank you Carveacre community for getting the booth and making this happen, and for volunteers from all our communities that showed up, provided

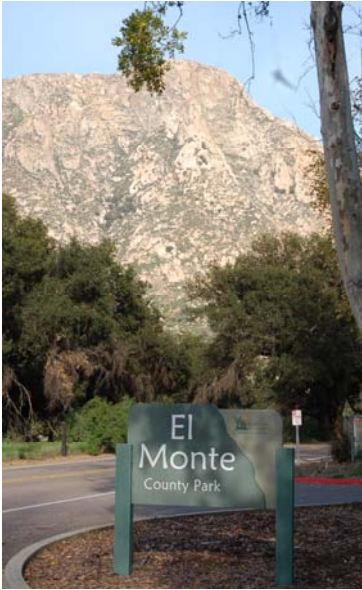
posters, raffle items, and did an outstanding job. We had over 10 passionate volunteers, collected donations, obtained petition signatures from over 300 people, and made some valuable



connections. Together we can!

River of Tears on El Monte Valley

By Laura Cyphert, resident of El Monte Valley



The El Monte Valley in Lakeside, is one of San Diego’s back-country gems. It’s most recognizable feature is El Cajon Mountain, (nicknamed “El Cap”) which is a 3,000 foot granite monolith jutting up from the river valley floor. An estimated 200,000 San Diegans visit this valley annually for a variety of recreational pursuits, including hiking, cycling, boating, fishing, paragliding, rock climbing and horse back riding.



El Monte Valley view of El Cajon Mountain (El Cap)

Did you know?

There are two nesting pairs of Golden Eagles on El Cajon Mountain which the project environmental impact report states will be killed as a result of this project. Collateral Damage which SDG&E is willing to accept.



While El Monte Valley is just 15 minutes from the City limits, this valley still retains the pristine views that were once gazed upon by the Kumeyaay people, whose ancestors lived on these lands. In fact, the area that is now known as El Capitan Reservoir and El Monte Park was formerly the location of a thriving Kumeyaay village.



Paraglider’s view of El Monte Valley from Blossom Valley jump site

In 1932, the City of San Diego built the El Capitan dam, and in the process forced out the Kumeyaay

families that lived in the valley. To this day, the Kumeyaay people recount this tragedy as the “River of Tears.”

“I was six years old, and I can still remember watching the remnants of the Indian houses floating down the river,” recounts an 82 year old valley resident who has lived in the valley her entire life.

To this senior citizen and others who now reside in this valley, the pre-history of this region has not gone unnoticed. Most properties in the valley have numerous historic cultural sites, including remnants of the villages that once stood here.

The planned route of the Sunrise Powerlink blazes right through this historic valley, crossing over cultural sites and directly across the face of El Cajon Mountain.

When an SDG&E-hired archeologist was recently asked (last week) if SDG&E had surveyed this area for cultural sites, he said that his understanding is that this is planned for “sometime” in the future, though he was not sure when.

Surveys of cultural impacts are required as part of a complete environmental impact report, which means they should have been completed long before the route was even considered for approval.

The lack of consideration of cultural impacts is shocking to the people of this valley.

“If they had done the proper surveys and consultations before this route was approved, we would have raised these and other concerns,” said Milt Cyphert, valley resident.

Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians File Appeal

On March 23, 2009, the Viejas Bank of Kumeyaay Indians filed their appeal against the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM) challenging the agency’s “Record of Decision” on the Sunrise Powerlink. The appeal states that SDG&E’s proposed transmission line will impact sacred Native American cultural and religious sites, among other noted impacts. In addition, the appeal states that the BLM failed to (meaningfully) consult with the Viejas Band on the impacts of the project, as required by Federal law, before approving the project.

This appeal brings the number of BLM appeals to at least three. On March 21, 2009, the Protect Our Communities Foundation, ECCAC, and Back Country Against the Dump filed an appeal against the federal Bureau of Land Management, and on March 11, 2009, Kathryn Rhodes and Conrad Hartsell, MD of Pt Loma filed their appeal.

El Monte Valley-continued from pg 2



SDG&E contends that there was public notification of the project, adding that it was only required to notify homeowners within 300 feet of the line.

Because the route runs through an undeveloped “designated scenic corridor”, there were few homeowners to notify. In addition, because there were no known on-site surveys until AFTER the approval, there were far less chances, risks, and opportunities for residents to discover that a project was in consideration.

“Cultural impacts are just one of the significant impacts they failed to consider,” adds Milt Cyphert.

“They also failed to consult with the local fire ju-

risdiction. Our local fire department is concerned because this project limits the ability of firefighters to fight fires in the valley, and it significantly increases the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire.”

“If the proper procedures had been followed and they had still decided to plow over our cultural and natural resources, and subject us to renewable firestorms, that would have been unfortunate, but *perhaps* legal. However, the way they did this, bypassing our community and short-cutting the required process, is no different than what the City of San Diego did to the Kumeyaay people in 1932”.

“Not much has changed,” said Milt.



To join the Save El Monte Valley group please contact Laura at info@ Save El Monte Valley.com

Sempra Celebrates at Annual Meeting



Sempra Energy (SRE), the parent company of SDG&E, announced in March 2009 that it sees earnings next year growing 15% from this year's estimate, putting 2010 expectations above Wall Street's. Much of the earnings, says Sempra, will be tied to construction of SDG&E's \$2 billion Sunrise Powerlink transmission line. While utility customers will pay for the new line, SDG&E will earn a guaranteed 11.5% rate of return for operating it, under federal regulations.

The Utilities Consumer Action Network estimates that this will be a 9% rate increase for San Diego ratepayers. Meanwhile, SDG&E could earn \$1.5 billion over the life of the project, according to regulatory estimates.

Twice Burned *by Katrina Russell*

At a recent ECCAC meeting I learned some news that I found to be completely disturbing. The gal sitting next to me mentioned that she was finally about to get a manufactured home on her property after losing her home in the Cedar Fire in 2003. Only now she could not get Home Owners Insurance. The reason given to her was that she was in a High Risk Fire Zone and additionally, **“due to the proximity of the Sunrise Powerlink to her house.”**

As I listened to this news I could feel my mouth hanging open – in shock and disgust. Soon I realized that EVERY person at my end of the table had lost their home in the Cedar fire – just as I had. While the notion that those of us who have already gone through such life-changing loss were the same ones who were in the fire path again was not new to me, however this news renewed my anger.

know now, and remembering that LIVES were

lost in the Cedar Fire, it made me so angry that some of the same people would support a project which it is known will increase the likelihood of another catastrophic fire. That is unfathomable to me. It would be one thing if we had NO other options and it was for the greater good of the community – however this is NOT the case. All of this selective memory of the horrendous impacts of the fire is something we must NOT allow to continue.

My children are all now young adults and I know, just like for myself – on a hot day, when the wind is up and we smell a fire, our stomachs tighten and we have to struggle to find composure...DO NOT FORGET

I started thinking...remembering, that after the fire, our elected officials were quick to come to the news cameras to tell us all that there would be investigations to see where the break-downs occurred during the Cedar Fire. We were led to believe that “they” cared.

But knowing what we



I urge everyone to please share the information about this project with your children.

Katrina Russell is resident of Chocolate Canyon in Alpine, and has been an instrumental member of our community coalition.

Thank you Katrina for all you do.





Tickets on Sale Now

SUNSET the Sunrise POWERLINK

Fundraiser at Hazy Meadows Ranch

in scenic El Monte Valley, Lakeside

**Call today to
reserve your
tickets**

May 30, 2009

1 to 4 pm

Hazy Meadow Ranch

Win Prizes in the Opportunity Drawing

Live Music, Raffle, Pony Rides, Hayrides, Rodeo Roper and more

Tickets on Sale Now!

Call Pam at 619-442-5354

Or email muscat54@gmail.com

Fundraising has never been so much FUN !!!

Running for a Cause

Back in April 2007, Denis Trafecanty of Santa Ysabel ran to keep the Powerlink out of the Anza Borrego Desert State Park, finishing a 50-Mile Benefit Run in just 13 hours, 0 minutes and 30 seconds. This was just one of the racing events that Denis joined in order to raise funds and awareness about the Sunrise Powerlink. When SDG&E changed the “preferred” route to the Southern Route, Denis did not put away his running shoes.

“I’ve done a lot of running during my lifetime, but I only started 26 years ago when I turned 40. The training is very healthy for mind and body, and the 100 milers are healthy for your mind. I’m a fairly intense competitor, even though I’m slowing down as I get older,” says Denis.



Throughout the three years that Denis and his wife Glenda have been fighting against Sunrise Powerlink, they never wavered from the basic opinion that the line was not needed in north county or south county. When the CPUC and SDG&E suddenly picked the Southern route, Denis states that many from the media attempted to get him to declare his efforts in north county as “successful”, but he did not feel that way.

“Many from north county have backed away from the fight and I’m doing my best to bring them back into the fold. The fight is not over”. Denis warns north county residents that, “once this line is in the Southern county, it will be headed for the north through Santa Ysabel, Mesa Grande, Warner Springs and on up to Los Angeles. The fight is not over.”

On May 9, 2009, Denis will participate in a 50-mile benefit run in an effort to obtain per mile pledges to support our cause. Info on the run can be found at www.pct50.com. The run route goes past areas which are on the approved “Southern route” for the Sunrise Powerlink.

You can support Denis and help STOP the Sunrise Powerlink by pledging a donation to the Protect Our Communities Foundation towards his run. Please email Denis at denis@vitalityweb.com or contact Laura at 619-390-8119 to make a pledge or for more info on pledges.

Thank you Glenda and Denis for all you have done, and all you continue to do!

Donate Today to the ECCAC Legal Fund

We believe in Community

TOGETHER WE CAN

Your dollar is one more vote to STOP the Sunrise Powerlink

www.EastCountyAction.org

Legal workshop – Find out your property rights

Continued from page 1

We are currently assessing the number of participants, and will then determine the time and location.

The workshop will give impacted property owners a chance to meet with an attorney

and find out answers to common questions, such as:

- Can I refuse to allow SDG&E surveyors on my property?
- Are they required to give me advance notice of their visits?
- How will they determine the value of my property which they seek to take by eminent domain?
- Is the price negotiable?
- What if the lines make my parcels un-usable?
- What if I agree to their terms and then the Sunrise Powerlink

Project is terminated?

- And many more.....

Because time is of the essence, we plan to have this workshop this month.

This workshop is FREE because everyone deserves to know their legal rights.

Donations to underwrite this event are needed, welcomed and appreciated!

If you are interested in participating, please notify Laura at info@eastcountyaction.org or call 619-390-0900 and leave a message.

URGENT NOTICE

PLEASE report to ECCAC any disruptive activities by SDG&E, including ground moving or disturbances such as helicopters near Golden Eagle sites or in Big Horn Sheep territory.

DONATE TODAY



Sponsor a Newsletter

You or your community or organization can sponsor a newsletter. For sponsorship information, please contact Laura at

Info@EastCountyAction.org

Our legal options expand with every \$1 donated.

Please make checks payable to:

**Protect Our Communities Fund
c/o ECCAC
13465 Camino Canada
Ste 106-PMB 256
El Cajon, CA 92021**

The Protect Our Communities Foundation is a qualified 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation.

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Newsletter submissions needed— please send to info@eastcountyaction.org. Are you interested in being the editor for the ECCAC? We need your help.

Volunteers are needed for upcoming events. Please email for more info.