

East County Community Action Coalition

Fall 2009, Issue No. 6.

www.EastCountyAction.org

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LEGAL UPDATE

An important announcement regarding our federal lawsuit is expected before the end of the year. Look for our press release!

Send your comments to the editor:

Info@EastCountyAction.org



Reflections on the year 2009

2009 has been a year of triumphs and tragedies for the East County of San Diego. At its start, the year brought forth the realization that somewhere along the way, East County residents had lost their fundamental right to have a voice in their own community. As we heard the news of the Sunrise Powerlink, we were bewildered and angry that others from

outside our community would approve a project that would knowingly "significantly increase the likelihood of catastrophic firestorms." We were still recovering from our last two major firestorms, and it was illogical beyond comprehension that anyone would



consider that to be an acceptable cost.

Yet instead of outrage and defeat, the East County residents decided to do something about the powerlink. Community members of all political persuasions gathered

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Last Call for 2009 Donations

During 2009 the ECCAC, along with its coalition partners, The Protect Our Communities Foundation and BackCountry Against Dumps, have spent well over \$150,000 on legal fees to Stop the Sunrise Powerlink. We have made great progress in 2009, but 2010 will be our "defining moment". We need your help to finish this fight strong. Thank you for your support and generous donations. We could not do this without you.



Donate online at www.ProtectOurCommnities.org or mail checks payable to The Protect Our Communities Foundation c/o San Diego Foundation 2508 Historic Decatur Rd San Diego, CA 92106

We can not do this without you

Protect Our Communities Foundation is a qualified 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation

2009 in review — continued

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together in groups of hundreds. We held town hall meetings, and had rallies. We raised money, hired an attorney, formed coalitions, and demanded answers from our elected representatives. We wanted to know why East County was not informed or involved in the public debate on this project? Then we learned that for years, SDG&E had sworn in public testimony that there was no feasible way the Sunrise Powerlink could be routed through East County. It was only after the last public participation hearing on the Powerlink, that SDG&E suddenly changed its mind. The CPUC accepted a \$1.1 million dollar “fine” in exchange for our community being silenced. And then the CPUC approved the route without any significant public input on the suddenly declared “superior southern route”.

We concluded that our only option was to take legal action, so we located a very well regarded attorney, who has a proven track record on these issues. In March 2009, our attorney filed our appeal against the Bureau of Land Management Record of Decision. In July 2009, he drafted a letter to the U.S. Forest Service outlining why approval of the project through forest service land would violate the law.

Despite our growing and united voice, there were those who sought the silence us. SDG&E’s public relations army told San Diego that this project was for the “greater good”, bringing green renewable energy to 600,000 homes in San Diego, and that we were just NIMBYs that were concerned only with our own back yards. But when we pulled back the curtain, we saw that the puppet master was SDG&E and Sempra energy, and the energy was not green, and the “greater good” was the financial wealth of the few shareholders in exchange for the devastation of real human lives, communities and the environment.

We came to realize that the fight against the Powerlink was not only a fight to save our communities from the predicted firestorms, but also a fight for truth and justice, and for the accountability of corporations who would deceive in order to further their own agenda. It was also a fight to hold those politicians accountable, who would accept financial gain in exchange for silencing an entire community.

While 2009 events were a remarkable demonstration that East County could stand united across party lines, 2010 will be our defining moment. This next year we will either defeat the Sunrise Powerlink, or we will go down a path of no return. With the hard work of those in East County, and the support of our coalition members across the region, we can make this the year that we secure a brighter future. Lets finish strong East County!

Thank you for all the supporters who have joined the coalition and continue to stand behind the strength of our community.

Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!



This photo depicts the Powerlink on the planned route through El Monte Valley in Lakeside. El Monte Valley is the only designated scenic corridor in Lakeside and a well known community landmark. This poster became a well known symbol of the fight against the Sunrise Powerlink.

Year in Review in photos



Assemblyman Joel Anderson “opts out” of taking a position on the Sunrise Powerlink

Assemblyman Joel Anderson donations from Gas & Electric Utilities include:

- Pacific Gas & Electric
- Sempra Energy
- Edison International
- San Diego Gas & Electric

You can do your own research and follow the money at this link to www.followthemoney.org

Or paste the following into your web browser:

`http://www.followthemoney.org/data-base/StateGlance/contributor_details.phtml?c=96197&b[]=E1600&b[]=E1620`

In October, the East County Community Action Coalition, along with the Protect Our Communities Foundation, met with Assemblyman Joel Anderson to request that he take a position against the Sunrise Powerlink, and other related projects. Anderson declined the request, and stated candidly that he would rather “leave those types of issues to the experts.”

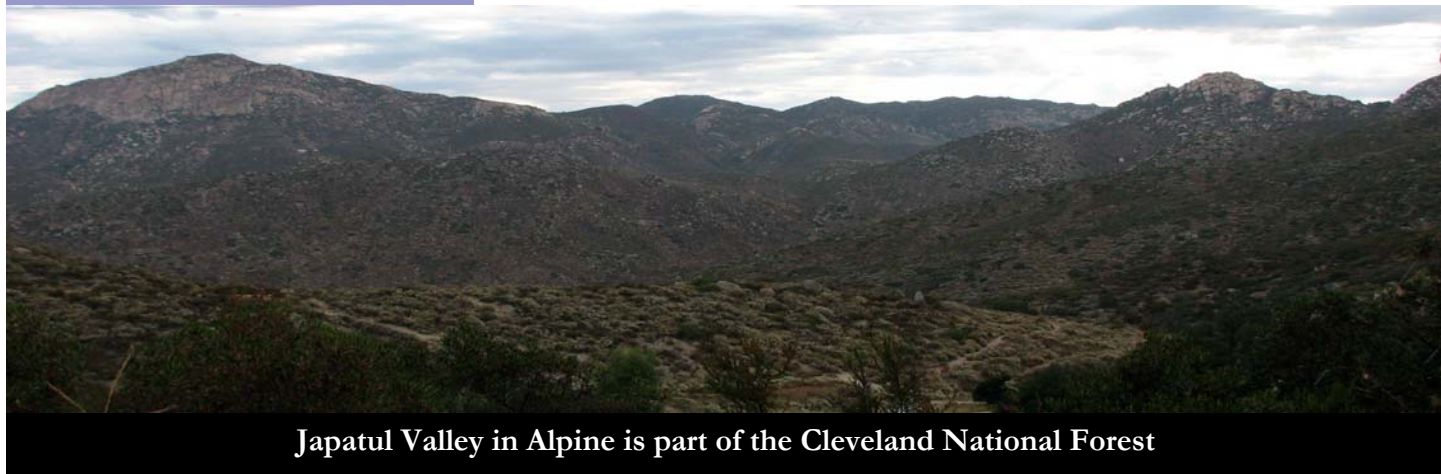
As we left the meeting, I scratched my head as I pondered the concept of a state representative for East County, leaving such a significant issue in his district “to the experts”. Who might these mystery experts be, I wondered?

My suspicions were answered this past month when the news broke that Joel

Anderson was being accused of receiving illegal campaign contributions from none other than SDG&E, and an El Cajon developer, Hamann Construction. With a simple google search, the connection between these three became evident. I noticed that Joel Anderson’s office is located in the same building as Hamann Construction. Then I saw that Hamann received an award of nearly \$230,000 from SDG&E during 2009 to build a renewable energy project in Otay, and that it stands to benefit from other awards if the Sunrise Powerlink is built.

And then a search of the watchdog site www.followthemoney.org revealed that Joel Anderson,

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Japatul Valley in Alpine is part of the Cleveland National Forest

To Contact Assemblyman Joel Anderson:

Assemblyman Joel Anderson, 77th District
500 Fesler Street, Suite 201
El Cajon, CA 92020
(619) 441-2322



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while “opting out” of taking a position on this issue, had not opted out of taking money from the gas and electric utility providers, even receiving donations from utility companies that do not even operate in San Diego County.

While Anderson has stood behind East County on some significant issues, such as his bill to extend disaster relief for Cedar Fire victims, he has failed to take a stand on an issues that will “significantly increase the likelihood of catastrophic fires” in this same

Cedar fire area.

While the ECCAC is committed to remaining a non-partisan organization, we must not allow corporations that are only motivated by maximizing profit to buy the silence of our representatives; and that holds true for representatives from all parties.

Please join the ECCAC and let Anderson and other representatives know that we demand an ethical government and a voice for our district.



McCain Valley . Photo credit Bill Parsons

Thank you to those elected representatives who have given us a voice

Congressman Duncan Hunter

- Wrote letter to U.S. Forest Service

Congressman Bob Filner

- Wrote letter to Secretary of Agriculture
- Wrote letter to Secretary of the Interior
- Wrote letter to the U.S. Forest Service

County Supervisor Dianne Jacob

- Consistently vocal opponent against the Sunrise Powerlink

Copies of these letters can be found on The Protect Our Communities Website

Perspectives on the Democratization of Energy — Editorial by Laura Cyphert

While we are embroiled in our local fight over the Sunrise Powerlink, there is a much larger debate occurring at the state and national level. It is a debate over “centralized” versus “decentralized” energy, and understanding these differences is key to understanding the forces that are pushing for the Sunrise Powerlink, and other similar projects.

“Centralized energy” is a model in which the energy for our nation is controlled by the government through large regulated mega-corporations, and is “shipped into” major population centers through hundreds or thousands of miles of

interconnected transmission lines.

“Decentralized energy” is a model in which the energy transmission is decentralized in numerous locally sited sources of energy; where the grid is inter-connected, but not centralized under the control of a mega-power company. In the decentralized model, there is no need for extensive transmission lines, and the energy that communities use is generated locally. The decentralized system is backed up and supported by a centralized grid, but it is not wholly dependent on it.



this system is more reliable, and that it builds economically strong communities. In addition, because communities are cost control motivated versus profit motivated, there are more incentives to keep the costs low and energy affordable. They also point to the fact that many of these mega-power companies are owned by multinational corporations who have no allegiance to the United States, such as SDG&E’s parent company, Sempra Energy.

These arguments aside, there is one fact that neither side can contest. That is the fact that advances in renewable energy are making it increasingly more viable for ordinary citizens and communities to free themselves from the grid, and generate their own electricity.

Now is the critical hour where we must decide if we will go the route of giving power to the few and hope it will “benefit the many”, or will we realize the true democratization of power in America?

Proponents of centralized energy, state that it is more reliable. Yet, there are significant concerns that a centralized system would make our country more vulnerable to terrorist acts against the grid. The fears surrounding Y2k at the turn of the century were largely fueled by the vision of the country suddenly losing electrical power.

Proponents of decentralized energy state that

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Centralized vs. Decentralized—Dollars and (good) Sense

- **Profit-driven versus Cost-control driven** - Public utility companies are in this business to make money. Consumers are motivated to control costs. Therefore, a consumer controlled system (decentralized) will inherently reward cost reductions, whereas a utility controlled system will inherently reward higher costs (and profits).
- **Rate structures are based on costs to provide energy**—The current centralized system allows utility companies to set rates based on costs plus a profit. The more the cost, the more the profit, since it is based on a percentage of costs. This is one more incentive that drives up the cost of energy.
- **Greater risk of price manipulation** - The centralized system increases the risk of supply manipulation to artificially inflate the cost of energy. (Enron)



In addition, as more states are supporting feed-in tariffs, this is becoming even more viable.

Those that look to the future of energy are excited about the prospects of what this could mean for our communities. They imagine a future in which we are no longer beholden to a mega-utility company to obtain our power, and a world in which we are not dependent on foreign fossil fuels.

There are many recent examples of corporate abuse of the control of energy. When one considers the actions of Enron, and the artificial price inflation which held a nation captive, it is clear that power held by the few can be economically dangerous. Under the decentralized model this type of fraud would not be possible. Instead our local communities could be the producers of energy instead of just the consumers and debtors, at the mercy of the “producers”.

What it comes down to, is that

today’s battle over centralized power versus decentralized power is a battle of those in power to remain in power, at a time when they are at risk of losing profits and control.

If the mega-utilities are successful in building these mega-projects across the United States, importing power from afar into the dependent communities, then the cost of building this infrastructure will outweigh the economic argument or necessity to also build a decentralized energy system. Our fate will be sealed, despite what is in our community’s and nation’s best economic interests.

In the short term, these power companies are enticing local politicians and contractors with the lure of short term profits to help build these mega-projects, such as the Sunrise Powerlink. The lure of money is

sweet, particularly in tough economic times. Yet, those who share in the short term profits are helping to build the machine that seeks to enslave their own communities.

While we consider the national and regional battle over these two visions for our energy future in America, we can see that each model brings with it distinctly different future for the United States. Now is the critical hour where we must decide if we will go the route of giving power to the few and hope it will “benefit the many”, or will we realize the true democratization of power in America?

Forest Service to Make Decision on Sunrise Powerlink

To Contact the U.S. Forest Service:

Will Metz, Forest Supervisor

Email: wmetz@fs.fed.us

Phone: 858-673-6180;

*William Metz
Cleveland National Forest
10845 Rancho Bernardo Rd. Ste 200
San Diego, CA 92127*

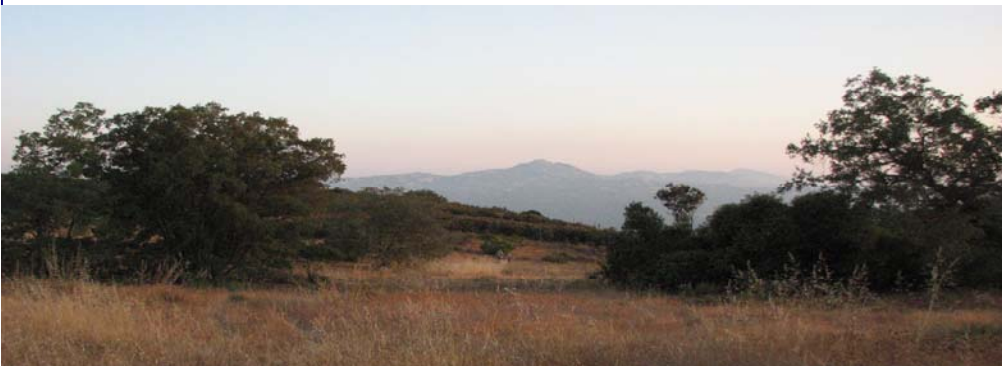
As many of you may remember, last spring SDG&E stated that the U.S. Forest Service was expected to issue their "approval" of the Sunrise Powerlink through the Cleveland National Forest by June 2009. All spring, the ECCAC and its many coalition members sent letters to the forest service asking Will Metz, Forest Supervisor, to reject the project. In July, our attorney sent a

lengthy letter to Metz outlining the legal reasons that approval of the plan would be a violation of federal law. (A copy of this letter is available on the Protect Our Communities website).

It is now nearly the end of the year, and the Forest Service has not yet issued their opinion, despite SDG&E's confidence that their approval was merely a rubber stamp.

The Forest Service is keeping a tally of letters it receives for or against the plan. This is our time for action. Please take the time to write Will Metz and tell him to reject the Sunrise Powerlink through forest land.

Please take action today to contact Will Metz, and then find ten other people to also contact Will Metz. If we all do our part, our voice will be heard!



The Sunrise Powerlink project violates the Forest Plan

It conflicts with:

- Fire Prevention Standards
- Land-use designations
- Visual Resource Standards
- Special Use Standards
- Riparian Conservation Area Standards

It violates:

- Federal Land Policy Management Act
- National Environmental Policy Act
- Endangered Species Act
- National Historic Preservation Act

The Cleveland National Forest is required to:

- Amend the Forest Management Plan
- Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement
- Provide an opportunity for Public Comment

About the East County Community Action Coalition

The East County Community Action Coalition (ECCAC) was formed in March 2009. We are a coalition of community groups, individuals, and organizations that together represent over 78,000 individuals. The mission of the ECCAC is to provide and promote coordinated community action on East County issues. The ECCAC believes that the Sunrise Powerlink project, as approved by the California Public Utilities Commission on December 18, 2008, will significantly and irreversibly reduce the quality of life for of East County communities, and will have lasting and irreversible negative impacts on our region for generations to come, including but not limited to catastrophic and recurring firestorms. The ECCAC opposes the Sunrise Powerlink Project, in its current form, and supports cleaner, more reliable alternatives to power generation for this region. The ECCAC is committed to forming an effective east county coalition for coordinated community action.

Thank you for you for your support.

To join the ECCAC visit www.EastCountyAction.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Volunteers needed for 2010 events

We expect 2010 to be a busy year. The ECCAC is seeking a list of volunteers who are available to help organize events and fundraisers, and to write articles for our newsletter.

Email Info@EastCountyAction.org for information about volunteering.



Newsletter submissions needed—please send to info@eastcountyaction.org.

Sponsor a Newsletter

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

Sign up for Free Fire Alerts

East County Magazine is offering free emailed fire alerts. You can sign up on their site at www.EastCountyMagainze.org