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San Diego Chapter

January 15, 2010

Dr Jerry Pell
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE-20)
US Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585
Jerry.Pell@hq.doe.gov

RE: Scoping comments on Energia Sierra Juarez Transmission Line EIS (DOE/EIS-0414)

Dear Dr. Pell,

Please address the following issues in the environmental review and analysis of the Energia Sierra Juarez Transmission Line (ESJ):

1. The ESJ project is considered an indirect action (out of state) related to the Sunrise Powerlink transmission line. The understatement of the significant and cumulative impacts of ESJ proposed cross-border wind/transmission project was the basis for the recirculated Draft EIR/EIS for the Sunrise Powerlink.

2. Sempra Energy's extensive multi-billion dollar LNG infrastructure in Baja can use the Sunrise Powerlink and ESJ cross-border connections to move existing and future fossil fuel energy produced in Mexico from imported LNG. LNG has a significantly higher GHG footprint than domestic natural gas, as much as 25%, due primarily to the energy needed for liquefaction and transport.

3. The proposed Sunrise Powerlink decision (October 31, 2008) by the CPUC's Assigned Administrative Law Judge(s) concluded that the Sunrise Powerlink was not needed to meet SDG&E's renewable portfolio standard (RPS) obligation of 20 % by 2010; that assuming a 20 % RPS, the line was not justified economically and would potentially generate significant ratepayer costs; that the line would have many significant and immitigable impacts on the environment; and other alternatives to the line would meet SDG&E's eventual reliability needs more economically and with fewer significant and immitigable impacts on the environment.

4. Sempra has stated they will not build ESJ if the Sunrise Powerlink does not get built. Sempra's ESJ project page (http://www.semprageneration.com/esj.htm) states that CALISO has indicated

that the Sunrise Powerlink or other new transmission is needed to deliver new energy above 80 MW.

5. Sempra relates ESJ to the Sunrise Powerlink, and the Sunrise Powerlink is currently the subject of several legal challenges at the state and federal level, including alleged violations of NEPA, CEQA, ESA, FLPMA, NHPA, APA, etc.

6. The County of San Diego has asked the CPUC to supplement the Sunrise Powerlink EIR/EIS or to amend the Sunrise Powerlink Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity to ensure that impacts from groundwater extraction and grading for access roads and fly yards, not previously analyzed due to post decision finalization of route specifics, are properly analyzed and managed. Letter to CPUC from County DPLU Director (October 7, 2009).

7. ESJ is also reliant on SDG&E's proposed ECO Substation, which is considered a connected action to the Sunrise Powerlink. The proposed ECO Substation is also the subject of protest by community groups and others.

8. The fragile cross-border area, impacted by ESJ, the Sunrise Powerlink, the ECO Substation and Tule Wind projects, has already been scientifically identified by the Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative as significant and globally rare Mediterranean Mosaic with critical wildlife corridors / linkages that are the subject of ongoing conservation efforts.

9. The significant and cumulative impacts from these multiple projects in the area will impact Designated Critical Habitat and occupied lands for Peninsular Bighorn Sheep, Quino Checkerspot Butterfly, and Arroyo Toad.

10. Other impacted species include but are not limited to the California Condor and Golden Eagles. Industrial wind turbines stand an average 500 feet tall with blades that spin at approximately 200 mph. Introducing turbines into their foraging and nesting areas could result in increased mortality to these protected birds.

11. Due to the significant and cumulative impacts from the introduction of multiple large scale industrial facilities, including visual resource impacts to Anza Borrego State Park and multiple Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Area's, the CPUC and BLM have determined that a joint EIR/EIS review will be needed for Sempra's 1,250 MW ESJ project, the ECO Substation in Jacumba and Boulevard, and the proposed 200 MW Tule Wind project proposed for Boulevard's McCain Valley.

12. According to CPUC staff, a proposed 160 MW wind energy project to be built on tribal land, a joint effort of SDG&E, Invenergy and the Campo Kumeyaay Nation, may be included in the aforementioned joint NEPA/CEQA review if enough information is forthcoming in a timely manner. This project is also tied to the Sunrise Powerlink and ECO Substation and will require more 138 kV transmission lines through the same impacted human and natural communities.

13. The Sunrise Powerlink FEIR/EIS and documents for the other related energy projects repeatedly state that the increased threat of wildfire in a high fire danger zone is Class I

and immitigable. Industrial wind turbines, new power lines, substations and transformers all represent the introduction of new ignition sources. Malfunctioning energy infrastructure was partially to blame for the devastating 2007 firestorm in San Diego County.

14. Increased threat of wildfire and other significant and cumulative project impacts put at risk the currently intact cross-border habitat and wildlife corridors that are targeted for conservation based on their high value.

15. These multiple projects also represent significant and cumulative impacts to biological resources and water quality and quantity with respect to both surface and groundwater resources in an area that is wholly dependent on groundwater with no access to any alternative sources of water in the event of catastrophic events.

16. ESJ is a controversial export-only project, which is now one of the targets of protest from various Mexican political and environmental groups who perceive American corporate interests as exploiting Mexican resources at the expense of the Mexican people. Some of Baja California is powered by dirty diesel generators that could be replaced with clean wind power from the La Rumorosa area, but power from the ESJ project is not meant for Mexico. Just like San Diego and other cities, Baja cities could and should increase retail and wholesale distributed generation where it is consumed, as is outlined below.

Alternatives to ESJ and the Sunrise Powerlink

Dropping energy consumption, increased energy conservation and efficiency requirements and increased mandates for LEED and net-zero buildings are sharply reducing the need for ESJ and other large-scale remote projects that require new, destructive and expensive transmission infrastructure. Some relevant reports are listed below.

1. The *San Diego Smart Energy 2020: The 21st Century Alternative* by Bill Powers of Powers Engineering, *see* http://sdsmartenergy.org/smart.shtml, was included in the record of the Sunrise Powerlink CPUC/BLM review process. *San Diego Smart Energy 2020* demonstrates an estimated 5,000 MW potential for in-basin retail/wholesale renewable energy.

2. *San Diego Smart Energy 2020* and other public testimony throughout the CPUC's Sunrise Powerlink proceedings, and the resulting 11,000 page EIR/EIS, were the basis for the ALJ's proposed decision concluding that the Sunrise Powerlink was not needed.

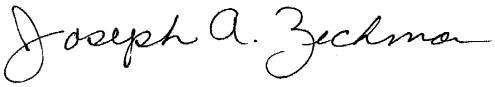
3. Ever-advancing technology and dropping prices make thin film PV even more cost competitive than just a few years ago when *San Diego Smart Energy 2020* was prepared. See Bill Power's recent testimony on the Ivanpah Solar project and the PowerPoint presentation from Black and Veatch for the December 9, 2009 CPUC workshop on connecting urban solar to existing substations (at page 11).

4. The USEPA in its comments on the Solar Energy Development PEIS (September 8, 2009) stated that wholesale and retail distributed generation deserves further consideration. It notes that an estimated 27,000 MW potential has been identified with small-scale projects near existing

power substations throughout California. It further states that distributed generation benefits include fewer environmental impacts than large scale projects, reducing generation costs through reduced line loss, reduced congestion, reduced peak demand loads, which enhance the efficiency, reliability and operational benefits of the distribution system and improve the overall security of our energy supply.

We thank you for consideration of our comments. Please include them in the scoping process and add our name to the serve list for the ESJ project and the release of the EIS.

Respectfully,



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cc: Carolyn Chase, Chair, San Diego Chapter of the Sierra Club