

November 3, 2010

Dr. Jerry, Pell NEPA Document Manager
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
OE-20
US Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Sir:

I am writing in regards to the Energia Sierra Juarez U.S. Transmission Line Project DEIS. There are some areas of concern that I would like to address.

1) Visual Impacts: States Permanent Moderate long-term adverse impacts, after project construction is completed. I would argue that it would be Major from a resident standpoint. I moved to the area because of the visual beauty and the open panoramic views. The community also relies on these views for the tourist trade which is the Majority of the economy for local business. The area is also applying for Dark Skies recognition for Amateur Astronomers and the business that support them. The FAA lighting would affect this status. The existing power towers that have now installed the lighting have contributed to light pollution in the area more would just increase it to the point that the application would probably be null and void.

2) Biological Impacts: States that Mountain Lion habitat is low per USFW discussion no surveys were conducted. Two Mountain Lions have been sited in the area one's range was from Boulevard to Inko Pah and the other from the Desert to McCain Valley. I know that two lions have GPS collars and are monitored. DEIS states Big Horn Sheep low and not in the area. Big Horn Sheep have been photographed and seen in the area. Photographs were submitted at the Boulevard DEIS hearing by a resident in attendance. The Biological impacts would change when cumulative impacts taken from past, present and future projects. San Diego has a very unique environmental ecology not found anywhere else in the world. You can go from one eco environment to another within six miles and find different species of plants and animals where you would have to travel fifteen hundred miles or more elsewhere in the United States to experience. In my humble opinion a two to three week biological survey is not adequate to ascertain environmental impacts. San Diego County's environment is very fragile and impacts could be very dramatic and devastating to the ecology.

3) Fire and Fuels Management: 3.9.1.3 Fire Fighting Services states Station 48 is staffed by One full time firefighter and four volunteers. This is not correct. The station number is 47 and currently has no staffing paid or volunteer. In the last year the station may have had staffing 14 days out of 365 days. Fire Hazards would increase as a result of these projects. Many of these communities do not have full time paid fire departments and rely on Volunteers and Reserves. Some communities do not even have any staffing of there fire stations due to lack of Volunteers and Reserves. San Diego County is in a fire prone environment and has suffered through many large wildfires note 2003 and 2007. To add more projects, would increase the threat and potential to start wildfires, whether they be 3 percent or 100 percent will unnecessarily submit the citizens to the potential loss of life and or property. The environment would also suffer from the increase numbers of wildfires. Many of the projects have stated proudly that there project has a low fire potential start stated in percentages. I ask, what is an acceptable casualty rate? I would hope your answer is that we should have no casualties. These projects also present new problems to firefighting resources both on the ground and aerial. This would create life safety issues to firefighters and would require different tactics be deployed to fight the fire. This would allow the fire to become larger and potentially more devastating.

4) Socio Economics: DEIS states Minor Short Term adverse impacts to property values due to visual impacts. The visual impacts would not be short term so I do not understand how property value decrease would be short term as the main value is the visual aesthetics. The DEIS does not address the probable increase of Fire Insurance to residents due to increased fire risk.

5) Environmental Justice: DEIS states No disproportionately high or adverse impacts to low-income or minority populations are anticipated. If higher Fire Insurances rates occur this would impact low income and minority renters due to increased rent costs. The area has a very high low income and minority population per capita than other areas of the County. These families also rely on tourist to sell there crafts and items that they produce from cottage industries. This group would also be affected from the diminishing tourist trade due to the visual impacts from the project.

6) Cultural Resources: DEIS states that Minor potential for impacts to unknown cultural resources. San Diego County is very rich with Archaeological Resources. The project area is in an Archaeological District. The Boulevard Jacumba area has many recorded sites with new ones being found continuously. These sites are both historic and pre historic sites with some being multi component. Old Highway 80 is now a Historic Highway and is also part of the tourist attraction to the area. I question whether the impacts would be considered Minor when the cultural resource is unknown. Could a potential site discovered during construction be significant or is it assumed that it would be insignificant before discovery?

In the past, projects have promised benefits to the communities because of the construction showing little to no actual benefits to the community. The project completes the company leaves most times with damage to the roads, property damage, and lost business due to construction. The area is already economically depressed, low income families, and higher unemployment than other areas of the County. These projects would further exacerbate the struggling communities trying to recover. This project will be out of Country and would not help the unemployment and would potentially result in outsourcing jobs. In these times trying to reduce our dependency for foreign energy, it seems we are moving towards more foreign dependency. The list of projects shown in DEIS for cumulative impacts missed the Border Patrol Station in Boulevard, The Border Fence, Truck Haven Geo-Thermal project, and the numerous other planned Solar Projects on BLM land. In the past these lands were held by BLM to protect habitat. Now it seems the Federal Government is in the energy business, on lands that were previously hands off.

In conclusion, I hope you take the comments stated into serious consideration and also look at the cumulative impacts of past, present, and future projects as a whole and not individually when determining the total impacts. Lastly, it is my hope that you would look at all the impacts on the communities in the project area that are struggling to come back from previous project impacts. We truly are a David fighting a Goliath. There are better alternatives such as, roof top solar on existing structures situated on already disturbed ground and small wind generation at the same. We are told to move away from creating companies too big to fail and here we are creating one with government help. I can only hope that you will not overlook all aspects and that we do not create another Gulf Oil spill scenario because of lack of due diligence and prudence. Thank you for your consideration of these comments and allowing me to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

Mark Ostrander /s/