

**Pell, Jerry**

---

**From:** Aqsurf@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, November 01, 2010 7:37 PM  
**To:** Pell, Jerry  
**Subject:** Energia Sierra Juarez DEIS Comments

**AARON QUINTANAR**

1946 Sixth Avenue, San Diego, CA 92101  
Telephone: 619.231.5923 Email: Aqsurf@aol.com

---

November 1, 2010

Dr. Jerry Pell  
Principal NEPA Document Manager  
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE-20)  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585

I am writing you to express opposition to Energia Sierra Juarez U.S. Transmission's (ESJ) application for a Presidential Permit to build a cross-border transmission line between the U.S. and Baja California, Mexico (OE Docket Number PP-334).

Department of Energy is required to determine whether a project described in a Presidential Permit application is in the public interest. This determination is based on an examination of environmental impacts, reliability of the U.S. electric power supply system, and other relevant factors. The direct and indirect environmental impacts will be significant/non-mitigable if the ESJ project is approved. The ESJ project's impacts must be considered cumulatively, this is to say that all related project impacts including projects located in Mexico must be considered in the analysis. Alternatively, the Department of Energy is required to consider the impacts in the U.S. from connected actions in a foreign country. The connected action in Mexico that will have direct and indirect environmental impacts in the U.S. is Sempra Energy's proposed Energia Sierra Juarez wind energy project (ESJ-Mex).

The ESJ-Mex industrial energy project includes a 700,000-acre general project area and proposes the construction and installation of up to 1,000 wind turbines, 900kms of roads, substation(s), transmission lines, and maintenance facilities. Mexico's environmental ministry, Secretaria de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) granted the wind project a conditional approval. The approval's legal standing is tenuous at best and subject to legal challenge. It is in fact a request for additional information disguised as a conditional approval. SEMARNAT attached sixteen (16) conditions to the approval, ten (10) are evidence of fundamental deficiencies in the environmental assessment submitted by Sempra's ESJ-Mex. It is clear that the document analyzing the environmental impacts for the ESJ-Wind would not meet CEQA or NEPA standard. This is a critically important fact because all of the energy generated by ESJ-Mex is destined for California. The California Public Utilities Commission shall not be permitted to authorize any ESJ-Mex power purchase agreements because the Mexican sited projects do not meet CEQA standard. If the Presidential Permit application is approved, it would in effect be approving a transmission line to nowhere in violation to the public interest.

The ESJ project and connected actions in Mexico will result in harmful impacts on the U.S. Federally listed Peninsular bighorn sheep. Bighorn sheep populations require wide tracts of land in order to maintain meta-population genetic connectivity, and provide food and water. Critical lands have been identified on both sides of the border in the Jacumba/Jacume region. The ESJ Draft Environmental Impact Statement identifies critical habitat and known populations as being 2-miles away from the project site. Recent sightings and photographs of bighorn sheep in the ESJ project area seriously call in to question this conclusion. Additionally, connected actions in Mexico (ESJ-Mex) will impact U.S. bighorn sheep populations due to a decrease in genetic diversity, decreased habitat, and a loss of critical migratory pathways.

The Jacumba/Jacume region along with the Sierra Juarez mountain range are known habitat for federally protected bird species and serve as a critical migratory bird pathway. The region is the historic habitat of the California condor. Current conservation efforts are succeeding and therefore the inevitable extension of habitat will include the region. The region is also known habitat for federally protected Golden and Bald Eagles. Wind turbines and electrical transmission lines are known hazards to eagles, condors, and other raptors. This is especially true for juveniles who are attracted to new structures within their ranges and habitats. The environmental assessment submitted and approved by SEMARNAT failed to adequately account for internationally listed avian species, migratory pathways, avian impacts, or international treaties (Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act). A Presidential Permit should not be granted to the ESJ project when fundamental connected actions in Mexico have not been fully vetted and will result in serious impacts on U.S. species that transcend geographic boundaries.

The ESJ project described in the Presidential Permit and its connected actions will severely and negatively impact a globally recognized biodiversity region. Habitat fragmentation due to ESJ and its connected actions will result in the breaking up of natural habitats into small isolated patches. The creation of small patches produces edge effects whereby ecosystem processes begin to breakdown. The probability of wild fires will greatly increase.

Finally, it is important to recommend project alternatives such as the deployment of in-basin decentralized renewable energy, i.e. solar. This would move forward President Obama's goals of creating new domestic jobs, decrease dependency on foreign energy sources, and effectively eliminate harmful impacts to the region's extremely valuable wildlands and wildlife.

Sincerely,  
Aaron Quintanar