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Opposition to Fountain Wind

I have been involved in renewable energy development and operation in Shasta County for over 35 years, and have been involved with the CEC regarding numerous projects. Shasta County has long been a leader in renewable energy development in CA, having more biomass power and hydro power than any other county. In all that time, there has never been a project that has engendered the type of negativity that Fountain Wind has. Typically, this County has been split between those seeking development of any type and those opposing any development. Both sides have come together on this project to create almost universal opposition. This is not the project that the CEC should get behind to override local government agencies.

There are numerous reasons for this opposition. We had the misfortune of approving a smaller wind project on Hatchet Ridge perhaps 25 years ago, and it has proven to be more unsightly and obtrusive than most people thought it would be. We simply do not need a repeat of this with larger towers and a larger physical footprint. If you look at other major wind development sites in CA, such as Palm Springs, Tehachapi, Altamont Pass, you find that these are unforested sites with little other commercial use. In the Fountain Wind case, the area is heavily forested, highly scenic, and heavily used for recreation by both citizens and Native American Tribes. This project is a massive affront to the citizens of Shasta County.

The project will clearly be a hazard to aerial firefighting in that area, as no pilot, in heavy smoke, would risk hitting a tower while delivering retardant. Fires, on a large scale, are a given up here, and we need no artificial impediments to aggressive aerial attacks.

This project has been thoroughly vetted at the County level, given every opportunity to make its' case that it should be approved. I attended the first hearing before the Planning Commission which lasted nearly 10 hours and resulted in a 5-0 vote against the project. The range of opposition was impressive, led by the Pit River Tribe which have used these very lands for sustenance and cultural activities for centuries. The reasons for opposition were valid then, as they are now.

This is simply the wrong project for the CEC to flex its newly authorized muscle to approve over local objections. It is simply the wrong project in a very wrong location. The most scenic location in all of Shasta County is simply not the place for massive wind towers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.