

DOCKETED

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Forestry impacts

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

April 26, 2024

Mr. Leonidas Payne, Project Manager

California Energy Commission
Environmental Office, 715 P Street, MS-154
Sacramento, California. 95814

Subject: Opposition to the Fountain Wind Project in Shasta County

Dear Mr. Payne and members of the California Energy Commission:

I am writing you to express my strong opposition to the proposed Fountain Wind project in Shasta County. I am a California Registered Professional Forester and I have worked as a consulting forester in Shasta County since 1981. Many of my landowner clients effected by the proposed project had their homes and property burned by the Fountain Fire in summer of 1992. This fire started on Buzzard Roost Road near Round Mountain and burned all the way to Burney in three days. The fire burned 65,000 acres and heavily damaged the communities of Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, and Moose Camp. Though great expense by timber industry and small private landowners the area has recovered 32 years later to become an attractive forested landscape with resource values for wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetics. Native American culture, timber production, water quality, and carbon sequestration from the Conifer tree growth.

After the fire I worked with 25 to 30 forest landowners that were burned and I found that Native American cultural sites were common in the area of Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek and Mose Camp. Nearly all landowners had one or more significant sites and several had 10 to 15 sites. The entire area of the proposed project is covered with Native American cultural sites important to the Pit River Tribal groups.

The applicant's consultant, Stantac, has stated that the conversion of 510 acres of timberland will not result in any impacts. This area is highly productive forest land providing wood resources and wildlife habitat. It also sequesters carbon in the growing conifer trees to reduce carbon in the atmosphere. The likely hood of a future wild fire caused during construction or project operations could burn several thousand aces of productive timberland in one day as well as several mountain communities. The highest and best use of this land is timber production along with the other resources provided by a healthy growing conifer forest.

In the Stantec response to the CEC on August 31, 2023 states, "The applicant does not anticipate a significant number of new wind projects that combined with the proposed project would result in cumulative impacts to timberlands." In my opinion, this statement is incorrect. If this project is approved in Shasta County in direct opposition the County zoning ordinance, Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors decision, and opposed by local citizens, this type of project can be approved by the CEC any place in the forested areas of the state that has a good wind resource. This leaves open many locations in the Sierra and Cascade mountains of California for future projects. The Fountain Wind project and Hatchet Ridge project in Shasta County will be only the beginning for these large wind projects in the future. Wind farms have a major impact in forested landscapes and high fire hazard areas in California. These energy projects are better compatible and of less resource impact in desert areas, foothill grass lands, oak woodlands and off shore in the Pacific Ocean.

As a forester who has managed forest lands all over Northern California, I cannot agree that if this project is approved it will be the last wind energy project developed in the California mountains forested areas. The Stantec statement that there are no future cumulative impacts is not correct. The Fountain Wind project if approved, will set a precedent for future projects in forested areas of California.

In closing, I feel strongly that Shasta County has done more than their share of energy production facilities in the state. We have several hydro projects in the Pit River drainage, Shasta dam, Whiskeytown dam, multiple small private hydro facilities, and several wood burning generation facilities at saw mill, and stand-alone plants in Anderson and Burney. Two new biomass power plants in the Burney area have been recently approved by the County Planning Commission and are under construction. Shasta County is heavily invested in protecting our natural resources and local economy. The long-term effects of the proposed Fountain Wind project are a negative impact on the environment, the Native American Culture, forest management, and is a very high fire risk for future major wild fire damage in the county. I have lived and worked in Shasta County since 1974. This project would be the largest manmade negative impact to our way of life and to the natural resources that would occur over the time I have lived and worked in the forested areas of Shasta County.

This simply is the wrong project in the wrong location. The project should not be approved as planned or in Shasta County.

Sincerely,

James D. Chapin
Registered Profession Forester, 915