

DOCKETED

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Fountain Wind and the Fountain Fire, a young girl's perspective

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

September 26, 2023

To: Drew Bohan, Executive Energy Director, California Energy Commission
Leonidas Payne, Project Manager, California Energy Commission
Mr. Eric Knight, Manager, Siting and Environmental Branch

Subj: Fountain Wind and the Fountain Fire, a young girl's perspective

Dear CEC Staff,

My name is Naomi Kibbe and I was 12 years old when the Fountain Fire broke out on the hill just north of my family's ranch south of the small town of Round Mountain. My younger brother saw the smoke and rode his bike home as fast as he could to tell our mom, who called it into 911. Over the next week, as the fire ripped through our community, then through Montgomery Creek, Moose Camp and over Hatchet Mountain Ridge and into the outskirts of Burney I saw and experienced things that I hope no young person ever experiences. I want to share some of those experiences with you in the hope you will understand what it is like to live through a catastrophic fire and the trauma it brought to me, my family, and my community for years afterward. I do this in the hope that you will move to protect the citizens of the county by denying the Fountain Wind project and supporting the ban that Shasta County has put in place to prohibit such projects.

I loved growing up surrounded by the beauty of the mixed conifer forests of Shasta County. From the moment my brother saw the smoke, our family was uniquely involved in many aspects of the fire. My mom and other neighbors bravely fought the fire before the firemen and air support could arrive. As the winds shifted, our small valley became a safe base of operations for the whole community. The helicopter base was in a neighbor's green pasture, and fire chiefs used our home phone daily to communicate. School friends, church friends, and their families dropped by at all hours traumatized and with their own harrowing evacuation stories. Everyone was shocked at how quickly the fire was moving and wondering if their homes, animals, and businesses would survive. We daily took food and drinks to the exhausted firemen and served any friends who needed a hot meal, even though our power was out and my mom was cooking over a Coleman stove.

We ourselves were evacuated eventually in the middle of the night. Ash was falling, hot winds were blowing, our animals were running crazy. It was scary and traumatic, despite the community of friends who rallied around us.

Although our home and property were spared, most of our friends' homes were not. All but five families in our church lost everything. Being late August, teachers at the local public schools also lost everything and many school outbuildings were burned. When we most needed the simple rhythms of school, learning, and friendly teachers, we did not have them. The first day of

school was post-poned and staff scrambled to not only put back together their own personal lives but to repair damage to the school property. It was traumatic on staff and students alike.

For months afterwards, volunteers poured into our community every weekend with dump trucks, backhoes, and other large equipment. Our family served alongside them cleaning up the remains of people's homes and lives, one devastating story at a time.

I still had my family and my home, but even I had nightmares of fires for months on end. My heart still breaks as I think of the loss and devastating changes that one fire brought to our community.

I remember my Dad saying that in 50 years I would be able to bring my own children back and the forest would look similar to what it was before the Fountain Fire. My parents still live on our family ranch near Round Mountain. Although I now reside in eastern Washington, my husband and I and our three children, along with my brothers and their families visit our family ranch and broader community as often as possible. Thanks to the hard work of private landowners and timber companies, now 31 years later, the replanted forests are beginning to fill out the once-devastated landscape. There is still more growth needed but beauty is beginning to return.

It concerns me greatly that an energy company from Texas could be allowed to put my family's ranch and the homes and livelihoods of so many others who live in the intermountain area in danger once again. One wildfire is all it takes to devastate a community for an entire generation.

Based on my own experiences as a young girl and now a woman who lived through the Fountain Fire, I respectfully ask you to not approve this project. Rather, I ask that you support the decision of the Shasta County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors by denying this project and upholding the ban on industrial windmills in Shasta County. Future generations of young people will reap the benefits of living and working surrounded by some of the most beautiful forests in northern California.

Respectfully,

Naomi A. Kibbe
Spokane, Washington