

**DOCKETED**

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# SHASTA COUNTY

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## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**Mary Rickert, District 3**

1450 Court Street, Suite 308B  
Redding, CA 96001-1673  
(530) 225-5557  
(800) 479-8009  
FAX (530) 229-8238

Chair David Hochschild  
California Energy Commission  
715 P Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Hochschild:

I am writing you regarding the Fountain Wind Project that is currently before the California Energy Commission (CEC) for review of an opt-in application submitted by Fountain Wind LLC (ConnectGen). I am the Shasta County Supervisor representing District 3, which includes the area where the project is proposed to be located. As the elected official serving District 3 as a member of the Shasta County Board of Supervisors, I can speak on behalf of the County and my communities that the project is universally opposed by residents, businesses, and other organizations throughout Shasta County due to the significant adverse impacts with respect to wildfire hazards, aerial firefighting, viewshed, water quality, biological resources, Shasta County's economic base, and Tribal cultural resources.

The Fountain Wind Project was previously reviewed by Shasta County in an extensive permitting and environmental review process that resulted in the Shasta County Planning Commission denying the project. This project was reviewed again on appeal and denied by the Board of Supervisors of which I participated in and voted no. Despite the CEC not having any jurisdiction over the project, as has been demonstrated in our comments to you in the docket, CEC staff continues to process the application and has reached out to County staff for a site to hold a meeting on the project at the end of November. There has been no public discussion from the CEC Commissioners on jurisdiction, who ultimately have the authority to not assert jurisdiction over the project, or any other direction to set a public meeting to discuss the legal comments that have been raised and the outcry by the communities I represent. This is untenable.

This 205-megawatt wind project would consist of 48 extremely large wind turbines and other facilities proposed on 1,600 acres of Shasta County timberlands in a very high fire hazard severity zone. In addition to other environmental impacts, the Pit River Tribe, who the County fully supports, has detailed the tremendous and irreversible impacts the project would have on it and its Tribal cultural resources and has called into question the integrity and transparency of ConnectGen. Numerous comments have been filed by my constituents opposing the project. None of the comments that have been filed are "me-too" letters or from people that oppose development or renewable energy. Instead, detailed comments have been filed by experts living in the area describing impacts on aerial firefighting, by lawyers and ranchers who live adjacent to the site, and even personal stories from those who lived through the horrendous Fountain Fire.

It has come to my attention, quite disturbingly, that ConnectGen has proposed a so-called "community benefits agreement" to the Community Foundation of the North State to try and satisfy one of its primary obligations under its application, a foundation I previously sat on the board of directors for. The agreement proposes to give \$2.8 million to the Foundation over a 17-year period to be used by the Pit

River Tribe and programs and activities in the Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, and Burney areas of Shasta County. The Pit River Tribe recently filed comments that it “vehemently opposes any association with this financial arrangement” and “vehemently” objects to the misleading claims by ConnectGen suggesting that the Tribe has consented to receive these “community benefits.”

As the County Supervisor that represents the Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, and Burney communities, and the official who speaks with these communities daily and understands their concerns, I can state on their behalf, and without qualification, that the Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, and Burney communities “vehemently” oppose this financial arrangement and will not accept any “blood money” through the Foundation or otherwise be bought off by ConnectGen. Not one organization in the communities I represent will accept funds from the Foundation associated with this project. When the developer proposed a similar community benefits agreement during the time the project was reviewed and denied by the County, no community organization agreed to sign a community benefits agreement or accept money.

I agree with the Pit River Tribe that ConnectGen’s community benefits proposal calls into question their veracity and ethics because they do not indicate whatsoever that no community organization will accept the money and have not done so the first time around. As a former Foundation board member, I very much understand their process for accepting donations. Even though ConnectGen places its agreement on Foundation letterhead, there is no indication that the Foundation is even negotiating the agreement, and even if it were, it would need to be approved by the Foundation’s board. In other words, if the board hasn’t approved an agreement, there’s no evidence of negotiating an agreement, and more importantly, the Pit River Tribe and the Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, and Burney communities won’t accept the money . . . **there is no community benefits agreement.** Therefore, the application should not have been deemed complete by CEC staff, and it must be withdrawn or denied.

I implore you as Chair of the CEC and your fellow Commissioners to seriously consider the jurisdictional and community benefit objections, and the comments that have been raised by my constituency who will be the victims of this project and future wildfires caused or exacerbated by it, and direct your staff at a public meeting to stop reviewing the application and reject it outright. You have a legal and moral imperative to do so and not be taken in by the false claims of the applicant.

Very truly yours,



Supervisor Mary Rickert  
District 3, Shasta County