

DOCKETED

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Fountain Wind fire safety

Additional submitted attachment is included below.

Mr. Leonidas Payne, Project Manager

California Energy Commission, Environmental office

Dear Mr. Payne and Staff,

Thank you for coming to Anderson and holding the Fountain Wind scoping session on November 28, 2023 and hearing our concerns over this project.

At the meeting, ConnectGen's fire experts testified that the presence of 650' turbines would not preclude the use of aerial attack within a wind farm area. This testimony was in direct opposition to the testimony of two retired CDF pilots who stated that to try to fly within a wind farm area is an "accident waiting to happen." The image below is of a Boeing 737 dropping retardant on the Fawn Fire, September 24, 2021, just north of Redding. The Fawn fire burned 8,578 acres and nearly into the town of Shasta Lake City. Had there been a 650' tower on the ridge below this aircraft, it is hard to imagine that this drop would have been made and the town of Shasta Lake saved. As the pilots have testified, wind, smoke and terrain all contribute to the hazards of air attack. How can we possibly believe that 48-650' towers with whirling blades and associated air vortexes would not impede effective air fire suppression?



ConnectGen's experts further testified that with the 19 miles of 20' wide new roads and 19 miles of improved roads along with 687 acres of new fuel breaks and a new water dip tank, the Fountain Wind project area will be more fire resistant and better equipped to stop a fire than at present.

I doubt it. The image below shows a portion of the Carr Fire burn scar just to the west of Redding in 2018. As is evident in the photo, the numerous roads were no deterrent to the fire which burned, in this case, through scattered blue oaks, gray pine and shrubs. A shaded fuel break is visible in the upper right of the photo which had no impact in stopping the fire.



Below is another example of how ineffective a well-maintained road is in stopping a catastrophic wildfire, in this case, the Carr Fire near the town of French Gulch.



There were many roads in towns of Paradise (Camp Fire) and Greenville (Dixie Fire) - all to no avail. People in the town of Paradise were burned alive on well-maintained paved roads, in familiar surroundings with street signs, because the nature of the fire was something most of us cannot even imagine unless we have experienced it. They had more ways out (Skyway, Pentz Road, Neal Road, Clark Road [SR 191]) than we do and still many died. These towns also had parking lots, city parks and other open spaces and still the towns were destroyed and people died.

Various water sources were also available, not just one storage tank. From the city limits of Paradise to Lake Concow is about 2 miles, Magalia Reservoir is a mile away, Kunkle reservoir is about a mile away, the northwest branch of Lake Oroville is less than two miles away, Paradise Lake is 3 miles away, and still the town burned and people died.

I share these thoughts and images to tell and show you what we experience here in Shasta County and to emphasize that the fire safety points ConnectGen makes are of little or no value in stopping a major fire. Aerial attack is critical to stopping a fire in our and other counties as quickly as possible so it does not become a Fountain, Camp or Dixie Fire. If you approve this project, you will effectively create a no-fly zone from Round Mountain to Hatchet Ridge, as testified to by the pilots. Once done, there will be no way to use aerial attack to keep a fire small. The result, as one of our Fire Safe Council members said, when the fire comes, it will become catastrophic and "people will die."

For the sake of the citizens of Round Mountain, Montgomery Creek, Moose Camp, Burney and indeed all of Shasta County, if you have the authority, please do not approve this project.

Your respectfully,

Steve Kerns

Shasta County Planning Commissioner, District 3 and former fire fighter on the Fountain Fire