

Docket Optical System - Deny request to rezone open space for Quail Brush Power Plant

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Subject: Deny request to rezone open space for Quail Brush Power Plant

To: E. Solorio, California Energy Commission
 Members of the Santee City Council and Mayor of Santee
 San Diego City Planning Commission
 Members of San Diego City Council and Mayor of San Diego

Re: The Proposed Quail Brush Power Plant

DOCKET	
11-AFC-3	
DATE	MAR 28 2012
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Dear Honorable Members of these Public Entities:

I attended the Quail Brush Power Plant information workshop hosted by the California Energy Commission (CEC) on March 22, Thursday evening, at Mission Trails Regional Park. I was there from 5:30 until around 10:00 PM, and was one of the speakers in opposition to this proposal. There were no speakers, among the 60 who had applied to speak, who supported this power plant that would loom over Mission Trails Regional Park's east end and the City of Santee.

This is apparently an unwanted project, other than those in the City of San Diego who are looking at its potential tax revenues, and the proponent and builders who wants to build it. The City of San Diego Planning Commission would have to amend the City's general plan in five plan categories to allow this plant to be built on land zoned as Open Space, including removing the 40 acres of land from the MSCP/MHPA. None of the five existing plan categories are compatible with using this land for a 22 acre power plant with eleven 100' high stacks that will dump tall plumes of natural gas waste emissions into the San Diego River Valley via Mission Trails Regional Park and the City of Santee.

A high school is less than a mile downwind from the proposed site in Santee, and many elderly people with more sensitive respiratory health live in Santee's dozen or so mobilehome parks. The plant would be visible from every part of the east half of Mission Trails Regional Park including Cowles and Fortuna peaks, and also from the western part of Santee. The plant would be heard also, and at night the lights and sound would permanently alter the night environment of the park just south across HWY 52, an area that was restored at great expense fifteen years ago. There are other reasons to cite for why this is a horrible location for this facility that I won't belabor, such as fire risks, that people spoke about passionately at the information workshop.

The proponent of this project is financing surveys for quino checkerspot butterflies, which, if found, will be related to the presence of their required forage plants, *Plantago erecta*. I do not know of any other specific California native plant issues on this site at this time, but I understand that this particular acreage must serve as the principle land bridge for wildlife to move from the Sycamore Canyon to

Mission Trails, because the Sycamore Canyon landfill now forms a mile-long barrier to wildlife, starting just north of this site. This leaves this property as the only intact wild plant habitat that wild animals could use and traverse between the landfill and HWY 52. For this reason, it is logical that the site should continue to sustain viable native plant communities sufficient to the objective of retaining viable animal movement corridors between these two regional nature refuges.

The Quail Brush power plant is intended to serve as a peaker power source, starting and shutting down, and it would emit nitrogen compounds at much higher rates than when at full operating capacity with every startup cycle. Wind direction would carry these compounds onto Mission Trails Park a good part of the time; or to Sycamore Canyon Park when the wind blows the opposite direction. Both areas could be damaged, if studies of nitrogen deposition from fossil fuel sources, that have proven damage to native plant ecosystems, are applicable to these public conservation lands.

The proposed loss of lands that are mapped as part of the MSCP is very undesirable. The multiple habitat conservation plans for San Diego have so far placed around half of the legislatively required acreage of land into protected status, so removing designated land would be a big step backward. My personal experience in landscape planning at the single family residential scale has shown the City of San Diego staff refused to rezone even 1/20 of an acre that was not native habitat (inaccurate mapping was the cause) to protect the accumulated acreages in the MSCP from being eroded. For the City to remove 800 times that amount of conserved land on this one proposed project would be a gross lapse in fair and equal treatment of applicants, as well as a violation of the public trust that this plan will preserve endangered species by consistently protecting mapped and designated habitat.

If some leaders of the City of San Diego still think rezoning open space for a power plant is a great idea, enough to warrant losing MSCP/MHPA land, they should stand by their values, and put it on open space in the heart of San Diego instead of approving it on a dab of City of San Diego land that is right next to Santee, miles from any San Diego residents who might complain. How about building one where San Clemente Canyon meets Rose Canyon by the I-5 and the La Jolla Parkway exit? I am (if you didn't guess already) suggesting this alternative sarcastically, to make the point that if the City of San Diego considers doing harm to its small neighbor, Santee, even if the harm was unintentional, that it deserves to be chastised, at the very least, by sarcasm. I am embarrassed to be a long-time San Diego resident under the circumstances, and ask that San Diegans avoid becoming a party to such an action.

The Cities of Santee and San Diego could instead be helping each other by uniting on a position to find investors to build one or more peak-demand energy storage facilities in the many industrial parks in the region, to serve all municipalities, and to develop incentives to install rooftop solar panels on the thousands of acres of available rooftops in both cities. Both would be more cost effective and would cause absolutely no conflicts with natural resource protection, public health, or our beautiful park land that we all enjoy and treasure, whether we are from Santee or San Diego.

The City of San Diego can stop the proposed Quail Brush power plant project. This project won't be built if the City of San Diego refuses to rezone the land. I urge the City of San Diego Planning Commission to deny the request to rezone the proposed property from Open Space to Industrial uses for the Quail Brush Plant when they re-hear the request in April.

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bcc: private parties' email addresses have been suppressed for privacy