

Community Says No to \$1.6-Billion Pio Pico Power Plant *Rally at Environmental Protection Agency hearing shows no need for SDG&E's dirty power plant*

San Diego – December 17, 2013 – Tonight local community organizations and residents from around the county rallied to ask the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to deny a permit for SDG&E's proposed fossil fuel power plant, Pio Pico, in San Diego. The hearing ironically falls on the 50th anniversary of the Clean Air Act, a federal law requiring the EPA to develop and enforce regulations that protect citizens from breathing hazardous and harmful air.

Ahead of providing testimony at the hearing, local groups including [Environmental Health Coalition](#), **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** and **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** organized a rally packed with more than 50 community members sporting signs, chants, speakers and a one-of-a-kind "SDG&E Giveaway Game Show" that highlighted the exorbitant cost that SDG&E customers are bearing from the utility's infrastructure failures as well as new excessive infrastructure, including \$1.6-billion for Pio Pico. Speakers at the rally, including local and regional residents and solar industry representatives, also stressed that the pollution impacts of the proposed power plant would harm environmental health, climate and goals for clean energy. After the rally, community members voiced their concern directly to the Environmental Protection Agency, which will soon decide to approve or deny a permit for the construction of Pio Pico. The Agency previously approved a permit but, after receiving appeals, is now reconsidering standards for particulate matter—a pollutant that can increase the number and severity of asthma attacks, and cause or aggravate bronchitis and other lung diseases.

"We have so much opportunity for clean, cost-effective energy resources like solar and energy storage," says Nicola Peill-Moelter of SanDiego350.org. "We shouldn't be moving backwards by wasting money on a polluting power plant that's expensive, entirely unnecessary, and damaging to our public and environmental health."

If the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grants the permit for Pio Pico:

- Chronic respiratory illnesses, including asthma, may increase in surrounding communities with more air pollution
- SDG&E customers will owe \$1.6 billion, to be paid through increased energy bills.
- Each year, the power plant will release air pollutants and greenhouse gases equivalent to the greenhouse gases produced by 129,584 gasoline-powered cars or burning 70 million gallons of gasoline.
- Climate change impacts will continue in San Diego, including an acceleration of wild fires, sea level rise, drought and heat waves.

Otay Mesa, an area where more than 80 percent of the population is people of color, is already heavily burdened with toxic pollution from an existing power plant and heavy truck traffic, currently ranking in the worst twenty percent of zip codes most burdened by cumulative environmental impacts in California. The region already fails to meet state standards for particulate matter—a primary cause of respiratory illnesses and asthma. Local environmental groups say the implementation of Pio Pico would be detrimental to the area's environmental health, threatening any hopes of a clean energy future or improved energy rates. "This area has been a pollution dumping ground for decades and the health and quality of life of our community suffers because of it," says Luz Palomino, San Ysidro resident. "We don't want another expensive, polluting power plant; we want clean air and energy built in our neighborhoods."

The local organizations and San Diego County residents delivered the same message to the EPA – San Diego's energy future should not be at the expense of our communities and there is a better, cleaner, cheaper way. The Agency is expected to make a decision on the permit in early 2014.

###

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION: Founded in 1980, Environmental Health Coalition builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use, and unsustainable energy policies. www.environmentalhealth.org

SANDIEGO350.ORG: An all-volunteer San Diego County organization, is concerned about climate change and its very real effects on our livelihoods, well-being, and the future for our children, works to increase awareness of climate change and advocate for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

SIERRA CLUB SAN DIEGO CHAPTER: Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. There are more than 700,000 members in 50 states, Puerto Rico and Canada. The San Diego Chapter was founded in 1948 and has more than 12,000 members. Serving San Diego and Imperial Counties, it strives to preserve the special nature of San Diego through education, activism and advocacy.