

## **San Diego Community Devastated at State's Approval of Pio Pico Power Plant**

*SDG&E locks customers into \$1.6-billion contract for unnecessary, fossil fuel plant in Otay Mesa*

SAN DIEGO, February 5, 2014 – Today the California Public Utilities Commission announced its approval of the new [power plant, Pio Pico](#), in Otay Mesa, despite the widespread and significant opposition from community groups and residents throughout San Diego County and the state. Environmental Health Coalition, which fights toxic pollution in communities south of I-8, and California Environmental Justice Alliance, its statewide alliance, expressed dismay at today's decision to build another hazardous power plant in San Diego's underserved communities. The organizations say the decision moves the region away from a healthier future and from climate goals outlined by the City of San Diego, other cities in the region, and the state, and is an example of environmental racism.

The hearing, held at the Commission's office in San Francisco, heard testimony from local residents and allies statewide in opposition to the power plant being built.

"By having this hearing in San Francisco, the Commission made it clear they really have no interest in hearing from the community most directly impacted by Pio Pico," says Roddy Jerome, resident of San Ysidro. "Now, SDG&E ratepayers in San Diego face financial and environmental burdens for at least the next 25 years and all Californians will feel this ripple effect on our climate, our health and our economy. The worst part is, it doesn't have to be this way."

### **The California Public Utilities Commission approval of Pio Pico means:**

- Chronic respiratory illnesses, including asthma, may worsen in the surrounding communities because of more pollution
- SDG&E customers will pay \$1.6 billion for construction and fixed-costs of the plant. Additional payment needed for fuel, startup charges, financing charges and some operation and maintenance costs.
- For each year of the 25-year contract, the power plant will release toxic air and greenhouse gases equivalent to that produced by 129,584 gasoline-powered cars or burning 70 million gallons of gasoline
- [Climate change impacts](#) will continue in San Diego and will contribute to the climate chaos impacting all Californians, including an acceleration of wild fires, sea level rise, drought and heat waves

Before construction on the plant can begin in Otay Mesa, an area identified by the state's environmental protection agency as already facing some of the worst pollution impacts in California, Pio Pico must obtain an air pollution permit from

the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Agency held a local hearing in December 2013 and plans to release a decision this spring.

"Better options exist, but the Commission is choosing, once again, to dump a polluting power plant in a low income community of color that already shoulders a huge burden of pollution from various sources," says Kayla Race, policy advocate with Environmental Health Coalition. "Solar rooftop panels could provide a clean energy solution for everyone, but clearly SDG&E is not interested in updating its archaic business models or protecting customers, otherwise Pio Pico would not even be on the table."

Environmental Health Coalition and California Environmental Justice Alliance recognize the Commission's negligent approval of Pio Pico as another example of San Diego's long-time trend of dumping pollution in South Bay communities and SDG&E's trend of refusing community needs to benefit its own profits. To learn more about Environmental Health Coalition's work, visit [www.environmentalhealth.org](http://www.environmentalhealth.org). For information on California Environmental Justice Alliance, please visit [www.caleja.org](http://www.caleja.org).

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION (EHC): Founded in 1980, EHC builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use and unsustainable energy policies. [www.environmentalhealth.org](http://www.environmentalhealth.org)

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE (CEJA): A statewide coalition of grassroots environmental justice organizations, CEJA pushes policies at the state, regional and local level to protect public health and the environment in low-income communities and communities of color. [www.caleja.org](http://www.caleja.org)