

Community Outraged at State's Proposal to Approve Pio Pico

SDG&E customers may be forced to pay \$1.6 billion for unnecessary Otay Mesa plant

San Diego – January 6, 2014 – Environmental Health Coalition, an organization that fights toxic pollution, expressed its outrage over a [proposed decision](#) circulated today by the California Public Utilities Commission, proposing to approve a new power plant, Pio Pico, in Otay Mesa. This announcement comes just three weeks after community members from around the county [rallied at a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency hearing in opposition to the power plant](#).

Local environmental organizations say the implementation of Pio Pico is unnecessary and detrimental to the area's environmental health, threatening hopes of a clean energy future and improved energy rates.

"The Commission's proposal is bad news for all Californians," says Strela Cervas of California Environmental Justice Alliance. "Pio Pico will have consequences far beyond our local community. With this needless power plant, San Diego and California fall backwards in the struggle against climate change and a healthy future."

If the California Public Utilities Commission approves Pio Pico:

- Chronic respiratory illnesses, including asthma, may increase in the surrounding communities because of more pollution
- SDG&E customers will pay \$1.6 billion for construction and operation of the plant
- 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, including an acceleration of wild fires, sea level rise, drought and heat waves

"San Diego air quality and climate challenges are only going to get worse if we continue to build power plants instead of invest that money in clean energy options such as solar panels," says Kayla Race, policy advocate with Environmental Health Coalition. "Better options exist, but the Commission is choosing the outdated, expensive and polluting way to do things at the cost of its customers—both for their health and finances."

Otay Mesa, an area where over 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. It currently ranks in the worst 20 percent of zip codes most burdened by cumulative environmental impacts in California. The region already

fails to meet state standards for [particulate matter](#)—a pollutant linked with a variety of health problems and known to increase the number and severity of asthma attacks and cause or advance various lung diseases.

"The proposal to build Pio Pico in Otay Mesa continues this area's legacy as the pollution dumping ground of the region," says Luz Palomino, San Ysidro resident. "The health and quality of life in our community has suffered for decades at the hands of pollution and we simply can't take any more. Why can't we have clean air like every other San Diego neighborhood?"

The Commission will hold a public hearing and final vote on the proposed decision as early as February 5 in San Francisco at the Commission's regularly scheduled business meeting. Public may attend and speak at the hearing and/or provide written comments to the [Commission's Public Advisor's office](#). Until then, local and statewide groups including Environmental Health Coalition, California Environmental Justice Alliance and Sierra Club stand with the community in opposing a 25-year sentence of breathing dirty air.

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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. <http://www.environmentalhealth.org>

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE: A statewide coalition of grassroots environmental justice organizations, California Environmental Justice Alliance pushes policies at the federal, state, regional and local level to protect public health and the environment in low-income communities and communities of color. www.caleja.org

SIERRA CLUB: The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization with more than 2.1 million members and supporters nationwide. In addition to creating opportunities for people of all ages, levels and locations to have meaningful outdoor experiences, the Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying and litigation. For more information, visit <http://www.sierraclub.org>