

SAN DIEGO COUNTY NEWS

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Environmental Groups Surprise Closed-Door Utilities Commission Meeting With Green Energy Stunt

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Supporters of a clean energy future in San Diego rallied on the beach in La Jolla asking the California Public Utilities Commission to deny SDG&E the rights to build more energy power plants in San Diego. Courtesy photo

LA JOLLA—Environmental groups surprised a closed-door “stakeholder” meeting of the California Public Utilities Commission at Scripps Institution of Oceanography Wednesday with a large solar energy display on the beach, positioned outside of the closed-door meeting room windows.

The creative stunt caught commissioners and government insiders off guard as they met regarding San Diego’s energy future. Activists called on the Commission to deny the proposal to build Quail Brush and Pio Pico fossil fuel peaker plants and to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to focus on efficiency and building clean energy facilities in the region and moving beyond fossil fuels.

The green energy display included a huge solar panel and banner on the beach in front of the Scripps building where the Commission held its “stakeholder” meeting, and activists marched around the building in front of the meeting-room windows. The environmental groups support a new energy pathway focused on energy efficiency efforts and clean renewable energy that create jobs and clean air, versus dirty fossil fuel power plants like those being proposed.

The groups, including Environmental Health Coalition, SanDiego350.org, Preserve Wild Santee, Sierra Club and Save Mission Trails, insist that the region needs a paradigm shift away from the old-school, centralized power model to an electricity system that uses smart grid technology, decentralized renewable energy and energy efficiency and conservation, which will reduce San Diego’s carbon footprint and shift San Diego to a modern clean energy era.

“We came together today to let the Commission know that the real stakeholders affected by these dirty power plant proposals aren’t in that closed-door meeting,” said Nicole Capretz of Environmental Health

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Coalition. "The real stakeholders are outside breathing the dirty air and emissions created by fossil fuels – and paying for it in their energy bills. San Diego wants to see more clean energy like solar and efficiency efforts to ensure a better future for everyone."

Combined, the two fossil fuel plants would increase power plant emissions by over 32 percent and overall greenhouse emissions by 2.3 percent in San Diego County. These are the equivalent of adding almost 160,000 additional vehicles to San Diego's roads each year. In contrast, local climate mitigation and adaptation planning efforts are working to reduce greenhouse emissions by about 15 percent by 2020 to meet statewide goals.

The Quail Brush plant alone would emit 201,587 metric tons of climate-causing greenhouse gas emissions a year and double the amount of fine particulate matter in the air. It is proposed in a designated open space area adjacent to Mission Trail Regional Park and upwind of an elementary school and residential area. Pio Pico is a 340 MW unit proposed in open space in Otay Mesa, and would emit 623,299 tons of greenhouse gases a year.

"SDG&E ratepayers should know that these dirty power plant proposals are more expensive than renewable energy options that ensure cleaner air and less greenhouse gas emissions," said Masada Disenhouse, San Diego resident and 350.org organizer. "We don't need more of the same climate change inducing energy production that will cost future generations exponentially more than what we see on our energy bills today."

Tomorrow, the groups will attend the Commission's hearing, which will approve or deny San Diego Gas and Electric's ability to enter into contracts with Quail Brush and Pio Pico. The groups will deliver the same message – that San Diego's energy future should be clean and efficient, not dirty and outdated.



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