

CITY OF
CHULA VISTA

OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

November 11, 2009

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
San Diego Division
9174 Sky Park Court, #100
San Diego, CA 92123

Re: South Bay Power Plant in Chula Vista

Dear Board Members:

For your information the following is an Op Ed statement prepared for the Union Tribune (Pub. Date 11/12/09) co-signed by fourteen South Bay elected officials. (See list of co-signors at end of article)

November 10, 2009 should have been a landmark day for South Bay communities and San Diego Bay. It should have been a day of celebration and speeches ushering in a new era of renewal for the Chula Vista Bayfront. The South Bay Power Plant operator, the regional water quality authority and the state energy agencies all promised that by November 10, 2009, the polluting clunker would have shut down its operation.

Sadly, it was not that day.

Instead, the water discharge permit to cool the plant, slated to expire on November 10, was indefinitely extended. In addition, the energy grid manager (California Independent Systems Operator) persistently designates the plan with "must run" status. Until this status is lifted, or the water permit is terminated, long-awaited plans for parks, hotels and economic development on the bayfront remain beyond reach.

As South Bay elected officials, we are united by our desire to remove the power plant from the Chula Vista Bayfront. This antiquated plant impacts our health, economy and environment. Permitted for up to 600 tons of deadly particulate matter, its pollution contributes to unhealthy air quality that plagues our children and seniors. Its inefficient technology (emitting one million tons of greenhouse gasses annually) costs San Diego rate payers \$35 million a year - for power that doesn't always stay in the region! It is a barrier to realizing our dreams of a beautiful bayfront and makes it impossible to attract quality developers.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board's own study shows that the plant's use of San Diego Bay water kills billions of fish larvae and millions of sea creatures when operating at full capacity. The hot water discharge contaminated with pollution during 50 years of operations has fundamentally altered the marine ecosystem in the South Bay. Only removal of the power plant and time will heal the Bay.

We know there are better alternatives. This is a perfect time to focus our attention on new strategies to meet our energy needs in a way that is local, more reliable, more sustainable, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Developing a green energy economy is a high priority now for federal, state and local governments. The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act has spurred unprecedented collaboration and innovation among diverse stakeholders in the energy field. Recent commitments of millions of dollars of stimulus funds will allow our region to finally get serious about reducing energy consumption, energy efficiency and renewable sources.

South Bay cities are working with SANDAG in applying for millions of dollars to start a region-wide, whole house retrofit program with incentives and rebates. Clean Tech successfully helped cities, school districts, universities and other public agencies in San Diego County receive \$154 million for clean energy generation. SDG&E has committed to spend \$280 million in three years on efficiency measures to achieve extraordinary energy savings.

We have waited and been reasonable, but our patience is running out. In 1999 the Port District, working with local elected officials, made a bold move to purchase the plant with the intent of tearing it down, and returning the site to public use by the year 2010. The state provided \$15 million dollars of public money to fund the plant's demolition at the end of the lease. The ten-year lease period allowed time for the bonds used for purchasing the plant to be paid off. The lease included conditions to assure that the lights stayed on in the South Bay Region. We are told by SDG&E that adequate energy generation and transmission are now in place to meet that goal.

So what happened? The ten year period expired on November 10, 2009. Otay Mesa Energy Center (OMEC) went on line officially on October 3, 2009 providing replacement energy generation to the region. The Port bonds to purchase the power plant are paid off. In addition, many peaker plants have been sited in the South Bay since 1999. Using the California ISO's and the State Energy Commission's own calculation formulas, our region has as much as 400 surplus megawatts without the South Bay Power Plant. Simply stated, this plant is no longer needed.

Now, we are asking the Regional Water Quality Control Board to take action at its December 2009 meeting to quickly end the damaging use of bay water to cool the power plant. (The water cooling permit was renewed in 2005, with no mitigation requirements and a promise not to seek renewal in 2009.) We are calling on the energy grid manager, California ISO, to eliminate the plant's "must run" designation. We are also calling on the Port District to initiate actions to decommission the power plant.

So, November 10, 2009 was not our day for celebration. But our day is coming. We are all united-local elected officials, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, community members, business and environmental organizations-it is time for the South Bay Power Plant to go.



Councilwoman Pamela Bensoussan

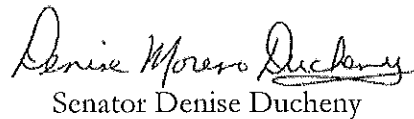


Councilmember Steve Castaneda

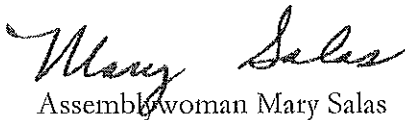
Co-Chairs of the Chula Vista City Council Energy Sub-Committee




Congressman Bob Filner



Senator Denise Ducheny



Assemblywoman Mary Salas




Assembly Member Marty Block



Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox



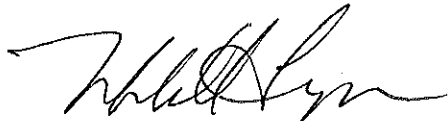
Coronado Mayor Casey Tanaka



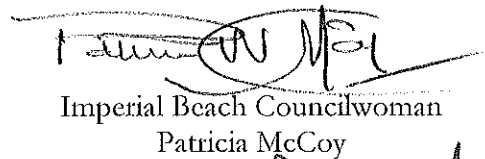
San Diego Council President Ben Hueso



Chula Vista Deputy Mayor Rudy Ramirez



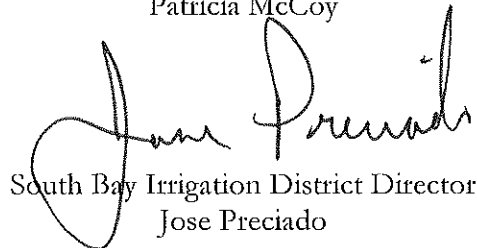
Chula Vista City Councilmember
Mitch Thompson



Imperial Beach Councilwoman
Patricia McCoy



Imperial Beach Councilmember
Jim King



South Bay Irrigation District Director
Jose Preciado

cc: RWQCB