

Paul Murphey - Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project

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Subject: Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project

To whom it may concern:

I would like to express my objections to the Eagle Mountain Pumped Storage Project. First, the field surveys done for this project are inadequate. Also, this project will have detrimental impacts on wildlife and water resources. Finally, the soundness of the whole concept of this project is questionable in the desert. The State Water Quality Control Board, FERC, and BLM should reject this project for these serious impacts to the environment of the Chuckwalla Valley and the Eagle Mountains.

The DEIR is inadequate due to the lack of thorough field surveys of the project site. Kaiser denied access to its property to field personnel for the project, and therefore current information about the biological resources of that property is unknown. This property could harbor threatened, endangered, or sensitive species such as the desert tortoise, bighorn sheep, or various bat species. This lack of information makes the DEIR incomplete and therefore invalid as a planning document. Until thorough surveys can be completed, any document presented by the project proponent should be rejected.

The surveys that were completed for this project showed abundant wildlife. First, much of the the proposed transmission line and water line travel through the BLM-designated Chuckwalla Desert Wildlife Management Area. This area has been protected for the desert tortoise, and should not be fragmented and degraded by these access lines. The field surveys found abundant evidence of tortoises along these lines, and especially in the vicinity of the proposed substation. The surveyors also found chuckwallas, burrowing owls, bats, badgers, and kit foxes in the area, as well as evidence of bighorn sheep. This is clearly a biologically sensitive area, and should be treated as such by the regulatory agencies.

This project will pump almost 10,000 acre-feet of water per year for four years and 2,000 af per year thereafter to maintain the storage reservoirs. This pumping could have significant impacts on surrounding springs and residential users of water in the area. The wildlife in this area, including bighorn sheep and countless other birds and mammals, rely on these springs, especially during the hot summer months. Any disruption of these water sources could kill hundreds or thousands of animals within Joshua Tree National Park. This is an unacceptable risk to take for energy storage. Additionally, the residents of Desert Center and Eagle Mountain could face reductions in their groundwater supplies due to this project, which is an environmental justice consideration due to the income levels of the local residents.

Finally, as we continue to try to build an economy around renewable energy, this project makes less and less sense. A refined "smart grid" will be able to deliver energy to where it is needed during off-peak and peak hours, and will not require expensive storage projects. Also, as electric cars gain more market share, renewable off-peak electricity will be used to charge these vehicles. Another consideration is the large amount of water loss due to evaporation from the reservoirs. The California Desert has some of the highest evaporation rates in the world, and this project is going right in the middle of it. Precious desert water will be lost so that an average of two megawatts can be doled out by this project. This is not worth the cost of this project. This project appears to be a ploy to make huge profits from ratepayers during high energy use and emergency periods. We need to move past this type of profiteering model and look to the new energy future.

Thank you for your consideration.

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