

California Rejects SoCal Power-line Project

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By the Center for Biological Diversity

The California Public Utilities Commission today rejected a controversial power-line project proposed in Southern California and instead approved a scaled-down proposal to upgrade existing substations. The new substation and high-voltage power lines would have cut through habitat for endangered species and a rural greenbelt that separates the cities of Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley. Reduced energy demand and fierce opposition from environmental groups and the local community led to a downsized project.

"California's regulators took a stand for the environment and for ratepayers today, finding a better alternative for this bloated power-line proposal," said Jonathan Evans, an attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity. "This decision is a great roadmap for energy solutions that protect wildlife and save money, starting with reducing demand through energy-efficiency measures."

The \$55 million Presidential Substation Project - named after the neighboring Ronald Reagan Presidential Library - originally included a new substation and a series of high-voltage power lines cutting across the Tierra Rejada greenbelt. The California Public Utilities Commission rejected that proposal, finding that "projected load growth has declined compared to the prior projections," and instead approved "System Alternative A," which upgraded two existing substations with higher-capacity equipment and additional circuits.

"Through the cooperative efforts of the cities of Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks and Moorpark, as well as potentially impacted residents, SCE and state decision-makers were forced to recognize there was a better, less impactful and less costly option than a new substation with more overhead lines and poles," said Janice Parvin, mayor of the city of Moorpark. "I'm pleased the aesthetics of the open space south of the city of Moorpark will not be degraded by those proposed facilities."

The cities of Moorpark, Thousand Oaks and Simi Valley, along with local citizens who formed the Substation Transmission Towers Opposition Project, objected to the project because of impacts to community farms and rural communities in the Tierra Rejada greenbelt, and the future of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

"The citizens of the Tierra Rejada Valley appreciate the efforts and dedication of the California Public Utilities Commission and staff during the five years of research," said Charles Cronin, cofounder of the Substation Transmission Towers Opposition Project. "The California Public Utilities Commission did a thorough review of the alternatives in order to provide the balance between energy delivery and the environment."

Conservation groups protested the original project because of its impacts on the Tierra Rejada greenbelt, an agricultural and open space area that includes critical habitat for endangered species such as the California gnatcatcher, Riverside fairy shrimp and yellow-flowering Lyon's pentachaeta. The greenbelt is also an important wildlife linkage that connects the Santa Monica Mountains to the south with inland ranges and the Santa Clara River to the north.

Less costly and less destructive substation upgrades were developed and analyzed during environmental analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act, which requires analysis and adoption of environmentally superior alternatives wherever feasible. By choosing the environmentally superior solution, the California Public Utilities Commission avoided the harms protested by the environmental groups and local communities and reduced project costs.

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 675,000 members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places. To learn more about the Center's work fighting the Presidential Substation Project click [here](#).