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Draft Environmental Impact Report Released for Sunrise Powerlink State Favors Local Energy Generation Over SDG&E's Devastating Project

SAN DIEGO, *Calif.*— State and federal agencies have dealt a stunning blow to San Diego Gas and Electric's proposed Sunrise Powerlink transmission line project with the release of a draft report that identifies local electricity generation as a far superior alternative to the Powerlink transmission line project. The release today of the 7,000 page draft environmental impact report by the California Public Utilities Commission and U.S. Bureau of Land Management marks the start of a 90-day public comment period and eight public hearings.

Today's draft report is the first official government analysis of harm that would result from the Powerlink and a review of possible alternatives. The report confirms that SDG&E's project would result in at least 50 "significant, unmitigable" impacts to nature and people. The report identifies and reviews two "environmentally superior" local energy generation alternatives, SDG&E's proposed project, twenty four transmission line route alternatives, and a no project alternative.

SDG&E's proposed Sunrise Powerlink project is a controversial, 150-mile-long electrical transmission line proposed for construction from the Imperial Valley desert to the north coastal city of San Diego that would cut across Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, the Cleveland National Forest, and through the heart of many other protected parks, preserves, and communities. Project costs are expected to exceed \$1.3 billion and would be borne by California ratepayers. Company documents reveal that the Powerlink is just the first phase of a plan by the SDG&E and parent company Sempra Energy to extend the line north to expand the California market for imported cheap, polluting fossil-fuel power from its Mexico power plant and others.

"This could be a death blow for SDG&E's project," said David Hogan, conservation manager at the Center for Biological Diversity. "The report confirms that the wasteful Powerlink would result in tremendous harm to nature, people, and property. Now is the best opportunity for the public to get involved and help hammer the last nails in the coffin of this terrible project."

Micah Mitrosky, conservation organizer for the Sierra Club's San Diego Smart Energy Solutions campaign, commented, "This report underscores there are smarter ways to plan San Diego's energy future than the unnecessary, fossil-fueled Sunrise Powerlink. This proposal would devastate the park, wreak havoc on local communities, and unravel efforts to reduce global warming greenhouse gases. The smarter alternative to boost our local green energy economy and free our region from depending on imported fossil fuels is 'San Diego Smart Energy 2020.'"

Joe Rauh, Co-Director of the Community Alliance for Sensible Energy said, "We urge the CPUC, our public officials and the Governor, to take a close look at this document. It is imperative that San Diego County's open spaces and local communities not be sacrificed for corporate greed. SDG&E's Sunrise Powerlink is a risky, multi-billion dollar boondoggle. We strongly believe that the smarter energy solution is to promote clean, local power."

Diana Lindsay, Vice-President Environmental Affairs for the Anza-Borrego Foundation and Institute said, "Under the guise of energy conservation through the use of renewables and solar energy, the Sunrise Powerlink would destroy one of the last wilderness preserves in California – Anza-Borrego Desert State Park – by directly impacting three wilderness areas and destroying a 90,000-acre viewshed of parkland. This is conservation in reverse. We need to be on the same team when it comes to conservation – protecting our pristine open spaces for the next generation to enjoy AND providing San Diego a long-term, make sense energy plan that uses renewables and solar energy."

The Center for Biological Diversity is a nonprofit conservation organization with more than 40,000 members dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

The Sierra Club is a nonprofit advocacy organization whose mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the Earth.

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