

Speak up against harmful testing that won't solve nuclear problem

Valerie Bentz, San Luis Obispo Tribune, 4-20-12

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I urge fellow Cambrians to submit comments to the California State Land Commission in objection to PG&E's proposed Central Coastal California Seismic Imaging Project. The goal of the project is to attempt to measure the three major earthquake fault-lines which run along our coast. The existence of these fault lines, especially after the continuing disaster at Fukushima, Japan, call into question the advisability of maintaining the Diablo Canyon nuclear power facility, operating near Avila. The proposed testing will do nothing to prevent an earthquake on any of these fault lines. The tests will instead produce a large amount of data about dangers that we cannot avoid when these earthquakes occur.

We should redirect the millions that will be spent on these seismic tests to help us move towards safe and sustainable sources of energy.

Here is how the environmental impact report for the project describes it:

“The offshore component of the Project would consist of operating a geophysical survey 29 vessel, its associated survey equipment, and support/monitoring vessels The survey would be conducted along the central coast from approximately Cambria to Guadalupe (including marine protected areas around Cambria and elsewhere). . . . 18 active air guns . . . would discharge once every 15 to 20 seconds.”

In other words, huge underwater canons would blast ear-shattering sounds under the water in an area from Guadalupe to Marin County. (These same measures are used to search for offshore oil reserves — coincidence?)

The environmental impact report indicates these tests would kill or injure marine mammals, including seals, dolphins, whales and otters. They could make them go deaf which would mean a lingering death. Already depleted fishing resources would be impacted. Seabirds would be affected as well, with little or no way of mitigating the impacts. Migratory birds would be affected as the tests would go on 24 hours a day and lights at night would be required. Air quality would be impacted and the project would contribute to climate change.

The proposed “mitigation” measures include flying a plane to look for mammals who may be getting in the way and employing a marine biologist to watch as the devastation occurs. I quote again from the Environmental Impact Report: “The Project would generate potentially significant environmental impacts on air quality, terrestrial and marine biological resources, greenhouse gases (GHGs), land use and recreation, and noise. Impacts to air quality, marine biological resources, and land use and recreation, remain Significant and Unavoidable even after all appropriate and feasible mitigation measures are applied. The EIR found Significant and Unavoidable impacts to fin, humpback and blue whales resulting from noise. Substantial impact on the Morro Bay stock of the harbor porpoise is also considered to be significant; based on this threshold, is Significant and Unavoidable. Project impacts on sea otters are also considered to be Significant and Unavoidable because of the proximity of the survey to sea otter habitat. The Project is also expected to have Significant and Unavoidable impacts on air quality and greenhouse gases. Significance thresholds for air pollutants are developed by taking into consideration the levels at which individual project emissions would result in cumulatively considerable impacts.” (www.slc.ca.gov, “information” tab “CEQA Updates” link.)

The ocean is our most precious resource. If the life of the ocean does not matter then neither do our lives. Some few persons stand to make lots of money from this outrageous project. PG&E will pass on the costs to us, the consumers. We and all life in the ocean and the land around us stand to lose. And for what?

The project will not prevent the next earthquake. And if it happens and Diablo crashes, so do we. Think of the economic impact of such a disaster. A recent issue of The Economist has on its front cover a statement that says the dream of nuclear power has become a nightmare. It is time to put our resources into safe energy and abandon nuclear power. Please write your comments against this outrage to:

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