

Seismic review panel returns to low energy

Matt Fountain, San Luis Obispo New Times, 2-28-13

A group of appointed scientists and industry experts tasked with scrutinizing Pacific Gas and Electric's efforts to map the geological landscape surrounding Diablo Canyon is back to tech talk.

It was the Independent Peer Review Panel's (IPRP) first meeting since the state Coastal Commission denied PG&E a permit to conduct controversial high-energy seismic surveys in Central Coast waters in November.

SLO County Supervisor Bruce Gibson is the county's representative on the panel, which also includes representatives from the state's Energy, Coastal, and Seismic Safety commissions, as well as the California Geologic Survey. Gibson has a professional background as a geophysicist.

At their Feb. 25 meeting in Sacramento, panelists came to an agreement on how they could continue to analyze already captured data and continue to work with PG&E on how the utility plans to proceed with determining the seismic risk surrounding the nuclear plant.

According to Gibson, the panel discussed the coastal commission's denial of the surveys and agreed that there would be no more discussion of high-energy surveys. Rather, the panel will review information already gathered by PG&E through its low-energy studies, which largely wrapped up more than a year ago.

Following that review—which could take a long time—panelists will be tasked to determine whether there are any gaps in their knowledge, and how best to address any gaps found, be it via seismic studies or another method.

After that initial discussion, participants spent most of the meeting receiving info from the Geologic Survey on the slip rate on the area's most significant seismic feature, the Hosgri Fault, located some three miles offshore from the plant.

"We're back to being fairly nerdy," Gibson told New Times.

He added that the body discussed scheduling regular quarterly meetings, with the next meeting expected in May.

The IPRP was established as a condition of the California Public Utilities Commission's approval of an additional \$47 million of ratepayer money for PG&E's seismic studies.