

# **SB County shouldn't fund Diablo Canyon study**

**Joseph Riloquio, Santa Maria Sun, 5-25-16**

Diablo Canyon Power Plant is the last remaining nuclear power plant operating in California. The plant lies just 30 miles up the coast from Santa Maria, well within the range of the radiation fallout should a meltdown occur. A radiation release could affect hundreds of thousands of people.

PG&E originally built Diablo based on the claim that there were no active earthquake faults in the vicinity. But since the licensing of the plant, four active faults have been discovered nearby: the Hosgri, San Luis Bay, Los Osos, and the Shoreline faults. The Shoreline Fault comes within just 300 meters of the plant. Despite the significant increase in seismic hazards, PG&E has continually failed to upgrade the plant adequately to withstand the seismic events that could occur.

A meltdown triggered by an earthquake, similar to the Fukushima disaster, is a real and dangerous threat at the Diablo Canyon facilities. Both reactors house extraordinarily dangerous amounts of radioactivity, and the radioactive plume would have crippling effects on the immediate areas, including the Santa Maria Valley and communities further downwind.

A new bill regarding Diablo, SB 968, is currently moving through the state Legislature. The bill was introduced by Sen. Bill Monning, who serves San Luis Obispo County but does not serve Santa Barbara County. SB 968 would require PG&E to produce an economic impact assessment, focusing largely on supposedly negative economic impacts on the SLO area if Diablo were to close. This study is one-sided, and does not consider the economic and environmental impacts should a meltdown or other accident occur, nor the benefits of transitioning to renewables.

Instead, the study will inevitably be used as justification for the continued operation of the plant, despite the failure to address the larger seismic and public safety issues. Moreover, this study is unnecessary; PG&E already conducted a study in 2013 that evaluated economic impacts should Diablo close. The results of that study, including job and tax revenue losses, are already available.

The fiscal impact of PG&E's study would be significant. In their analysis, the Senate Committee on Appropriations identified a cost of \$659,000, plus other unknown but significant costs. The committee also noted that PG&E would be allowed to recover these costs through the ratepayers, largely those outside of San Luis Obispo County. It's inappropriate for the people of California, Santa Maria, and Santa Barbara County, to foot the bill for this study, because economic impacts of a closure would have little to no effect outside the San Luis Obispo area.

Diablo Canyon will inevitably close at some point in the future, either in 2024/2025 as long scheduled, or at some other point. When that happens, the energy will have to be replaced, presumably with clean, energy from renewable sources. Preparing for this closure with the goal of transitioning to safe, clean, renewable energy is much more appropriate, and could produce a significant number of jobs and tax revenues. SB 968 needs to be amended to provide a more appropriate study, or should be stopped altogether.