Fact Sheet: Why Quail Brush Is Not Needed

SDG&E is proposing to contract for 450 MW of new peaking power plants, including the 100 MW Quail Brush plant. SDG&E states this capacity is needed to address a projected gap in local capacity on hot days and to ramp quickly to “fill in the gaps” for intermittent solar and wind output. Here are the facts about SDG&E’s claims:

- SDG&E’s peak load growth has been static for seven years, from 4,601 in 2006 to 4,643 MW in 2010 to 4,619 MW in 2012. In other years the peak load has been well below 4,600 MW. Claims by SDG&E/Cogentrix that peak load is rising are wrong.

- SDG&E has ample power generation reserves without San Onofre. SDG&E is required to maintain some reserve generation to assure grid reliability at peak demand. The requirement is 15 to 17 percent. SDG&E had reserves of about 24 percent during the hottest hour of the year on Sept. 14, 2012.

- San Diego County has a rooftop and parking lot solar potential of approximately 7,000 MW, far more than the peak load in SDG&E territory. To date only about 2 percent, 140 MW, of this capacity is being utilized. Local rooftop and parking lot solar is obvious alternative to new peaking power generation.

- The local solar resource is 98 percent available during the top 100 hours of demand. The CEC projects a reciprocating engine plant like Quail Brush will achieve 94 to 98 percent availability.

- The California Energy Commission (CEC) has already approved 850 MW of new gas-fired power plants for San Diego County in 2012, 550 MW Carlsbad Energy Center (June 2012) and 300 MW Pio Pico (September 2012). The CEC approves projects without any consideration of whether they are needed or not.

- The CEC rejected a gas-fired peaker plant planned for Chula Vista in 2009, the 100 MW Chula Vista Energy Upgrade Project, justified as necessary for peaking and fast ramp duty (just as Quail Brush is), for violating local ordinances. The CEC also stated that rooftop solar is a potentially viable alternative available at comparable cost to the peaker plant (pp. 29-30): [http://www.energy.ca.gov/2009publications/CEC-800-2009-001/CEC-800-2009-001-CMF.PDF](http://www.energy.ca.gov/2009publications/CEC-800-2009-001/CEC-800-2009-001-CMF.PDF)

- The CEC rejected in 2008 the Eastshore reciprocating engine peaker plant in the Bay Area, that was to use the same engines proposed for Quail Brush, for non-compliance w/local ordinances: [http://www.energy.ca.gov/2008publications/CEC-800-2008-004/CEC-800-2008-004-CMF.PDF](http://www.energy.ca.gov/2008publications/CEC-800-2008-004/CEC-800-2008-004-CMF.PDF)

- SDG&E is attempting to force the retirement of fully functional local power plants owned to create a need for the new peaking units. These plants include NRG’s 964 MW Encina Power Plant (Carlsbad), and nearly 200 MW of existing NRG peaker gas turbines. Encina can be retrofit to cooling towers to meet OTC requirements at 1/10th the cost of a new peaker plant.

- Peaking power plants do not create anywhere near the permanent job growth of rooftop and parking lot solar. Cogentrix says Quail Brush will create 11 permanent jobs. The state of California estimates about 150 permanent jobs are created for each 100 MW of local solar added (Air Resources Board, June 2010).

- Peaking power plants are not a deal for SDG&E ratepayers. The initial capital cost of Quail Brush will be $150 million. The amortized cost over 20 years, in current dollars, will be ~$600 million according to the California Energy Commission. This cost, which will be shifted to ratepayers, will translate into higher electricity bills.