

August 7, 2012

RE: August 8 Tule Wind: Recommend Denial – pattern of abuse of residents by wind industry and more

Dear Supervisors:

East County Magazine, a nonprofit award-winning publication, takes pride in informing people about the scenic beauty and attractions of East County. Our mission statement, however, focuses on two areas: protecting the voices of those whose voices are often under represented (such as the low income communities and Native Americans whose rights have been trampled by wind projects in our region) and promoting public safety (we operate the Viejas Wildfire Alerts).

I've previously written to you about fire/safety issues with Tule Wind.

In this letter, I bring to your attention the way that wind developers are utterly failing to address serious violations at their projects. Mitigation seems to be a joke that is not taken seriously all too often, leaving residents to pay the price while developers reap the profits.

Here are a few examples, including some gleaned from our own first-hand reporting for East County Magazine.

Iberdrola violates noise limits at existing wind project, fails to resolve problems for neighbors

An Iberdrola wind facility in Fairfield, New York has been measured to produce noise in excess of the allowable levels. Residents complain of agony from painful vibrations and noise akin to large airplanes that never leave in a once-quiet rural community. Iberdrola's "solution"? Issue noise-generating machines to residents to cover up the sound! It doesn't work; residents say they still can't sleep and some have abandoned homes. The town council there wisely retained an option to shut down the project if it fails to comply – and is threatening to exercise that option in September if Iberdrola can't comply with the law. But residents have been plagued with this for two years. The turbines Iberdrola wants to build in McCain Valley are even taller than in Fairfield, so we have absolutely no reason to believe they will be quieter; if anything they may be louder – in an area with campgrounds, people sleeping outdoors, as well as homes and outdoor enthusiasts. It's the wrong place for a noise industrial-scale project. Read more: [IBERDROLA'S ANSWER TO WIND TURBINE NOISE? GIVE RESIDENTS NOISE-GENERATING MACHINES](#)

Wind developer in Ocotillo destroys far more land than was allowed

The wild, wild west – a lawless place—is how I would describe Ocotillo Express wind site, where Pattern Energy has made horrific violations of the EIR and mitigation requirements, yet the BLM and other officials have failed to protect people, wildlife or the environment. A few examples:

Roads are limited to 20 feet wide, 36 during construction. Yet our photographers for ECM measured many roads 100 feet wide or more. Here is a photo of one that is 110 feet wide:



Here is what a single turbine hole looks like in Ocotillo, 238 feet wide, far bigger than the disturbance areas claimed, dwarfing the mountains behind



In McCain Valley, they are going to have to blast away the beautiful boulders that make the place special, so the destruction is permanent – no amount of “restoration” can ever make it whole again.



To beat the heat, Pattern over the past two weeks has begun working all night long, shining flood lights into the bedroom windows of nearby residents. Numerous complaints to officials have failed to stop this even though California law is very clear: this constitutes a nuisance. I know, because I had an identical nuisance involving a neighbor shining a floodlight into my

bedroom window and was successful in a legal action to halt it on nuisance grounds. Here are two photos, taken over a week apart, of the nightly nuisance our own photographer, Jim Pelley, has to look at through his bedroom window:



The wind developer in Ocotillo also made unauthorized changes to drainage despite warnings from residents that this would flood the town. It did—with a white chemical used for dust suppression that dries flammable! This has been left all over people's yards where kids play and the BLM refuses to order

Pattern to clean up its mess. See photo below; no that's not snow, it's contamination.



There are also indications that the aquifer, the sole source of drinking water, may be polluted by the wind project; photos show dark sludge floating in flooded turbine holes above the aquifer.



Dust has been a nightmare. Promises of dust suppression failed to be honored until residents not only complained, but staked out the project day and night with video cameras. The BLM refused to honor even this evidence, however. Only when media got involved did they finally fine Pattern twice for dust violations, but the last time was in June and dust problems continue in an area with deadly Valley Fever spores. These clouds have enveloped the town of Ocotillo at times:



The County Health dept. report on wind turbine health is a whitewash. There's no other word for it. Wilma Wooten ignored Manzanita tribal members who are ill and who a nationally known epidemiologist believes are ill due to the wind turbines at Campo. He measured stray voltage/ground current 1,000 times normal in the tribal hall, church and homes. Why didn't your Health Dept. talk to the people here who are sick living near turbines before concluding they pose no health problems? The same thing happened in Ontario and other cities where Wooten cited conclusions that were similar whitewashes, all based on literature, not sick people in their communities. Several hundred in Ontario, including many who abandoned their homes. Infrasound can cause pain in joints, ear pain, heart palpitations and loss of sleep, to name just a few health problems. That's well documented. The County's health report also falsely stated that Dr. Nina Pierpont's work (she's the author of Wind Turbine Syndrome) has never been documented in peer reviewed studies. In fact it has.

Tribal rights have been ignored as well. Native Americans paid to hire specially trained forensic dogs (trained on 5,000 to 8,000 year old bones) to check a small portion of the Tule Wind and Ocotillo Express Wind sites. They found over 50 sites where ancient remains are likely buried/cremated yet the projects continue to move forward. SDG&E has refused even to allow the tribes and dogs onto their substation land adjacent to this project, but I was present when dogs alerted on probably human remains in McCain Valley – confirmed by two separate dogs. Rock formations here were used as navigation guides for centuries and now face destruction, while the Indians' ancestors face desecration if Tule Wind is built.

The sad thing is these projects are not needed. I have interviewed national experts on energy, including leaders in solar, who say we could produce more power for less money in our region with rooftop and parking lot solar. Solar has dropped to less than half the price it was just a year or two ago. Instead of tearing up our public lands, mountains, deserts and rural communities we should support locally generated solar on roofs and parking lots, as well as small-scale vertical axis wind turbines that are around 30 feet tall and don't kill birds, pose fire dangers, destroy our wild and scenic places, or endanger entire communities.

Did you know that nationally, 40,000 acres of public lands are targeted for this destruction for big “renewable” energy projects – and that 50 of them are planned or proposed in San Diego and Imperial Counties alone? We are talking the total transformation of our East County region into a giant energy corridor. This will destroy property values. A realtor informed me that he’s been unable to sell a home near the Jacumba substation at all, even after dramatically lowering the price, because nobody wants to live near the popping, crackling high voltage lines. Many out here loath the Powerlink for destroying scenic views across the backcountry . Every wind project needs more of these. How much is too much for one region to absorb?

I found it ironic that your planners recently rejected a cell phone tower disguised as a cypress tree because they said it was too tall and out of character for one backcountry community –yet you are considering opening the door for wind turbines that are 500 feet tall (with the blade sweep included) – 5 at this project and hundreds with the upcoming wind ordinance. These are grossly out of character with rural, mountain and desert communities. Your current zoning rules make clear that skyscrapers in rural areas are inappropriate.

Please stand by those rules—and deny the MUP for Tule Wind. I also advise denying the cross-border power lines and substation for Energia Juarez, which will enable mass destruction of areas in Mexico as well as heighten pressure for new big energy projects in East County if the substation is built.

Finally, for those who have not seen what is at stake, here are photos of McCain Valley. It is the gateway and only entrance to designated federal wilderness areas and to Carrizo Gorge. Please keep these wild and scenic places wild.





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