

Sierra Club urges CPUC not to favor utilities in final SONGS decision

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San Diego Gas and Electric's (SDG&E) proposal to purchase power from a proposed \$2 billion gas plant to partially replace the energy generated from the shuttered San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS) has been rejected in a proposed decision by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) -- and environmental groups like the Sierra Club, EarthJustice and California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) couldn't be happier.



Transmission wires from the now-closed San Onofre nuclear power plant crossing Interstate 5 in California. Credit: Wikimedia Commons/Downtowngal

The groups, which oppose the proposed 600 megawatt (MW) Carlsbad plant, contend that SDG&E was moving through the approval process before it addressed the requirement to follow state policy as it relates to considering feasible, cost-effective clean energy resources before resorting to gas.

When SONGS retired, SDG&E was directed to replace the shuttered plant with at least 200 MW from clean energy resources and between 300-600 MW from "any resource," which could include gas or clean energy. With regard to 300-600 MW of energy need, the decision required SDG&E to issue an all-source request for offers (RFO) -- a procurement process that accepts and evaluates bids from all energy types -- to meet some or all of this need.

The proposed decision states that "...SDG&E's RFO has produced a robust number of offers for preferred resources and energy storage which could potentially meet some, if not all, of the 300 MW to 600 MW of SDG&E's...need."

Sierra Club and its partners hope the CPUC will ultimately reject the full proposal. A final vote expected as early as next month.



"From the beginning, we knew that 100 percent of San Onofre could be replaced with clean energy. The decision recognizes that clean energy is a viable option and must be allowed to compete against dirty fossil fuels," said Matt Vespa, senior staff attorney with the Sierra Club. "Looking ahead, we still need Commissioner Picker and the CPUC to uphold the decision. This is an opportunity for the Commission to regain public trust during a time when they have shown favoritism to utilities."

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