

**Steve Taffolla**

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**From:** Harrison, Michael <Michael.Harrison@mail.house.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 03, 2011 3:17 PM  
**To:** ECOSUB; catulewind@blm.gov  
**Subject:** public comment submission from Congressman Hunter  
**Attachments:** CPUC-BLM-energyprojects.022811.pdf

Please find attached public comment Congressman Hunter is providing to the CPUC and the BLM regarding alternative energy project being considered in East San Diego County. We would appreciate these comments being submitted as part of the official record for the consideration of these projects. Thank you in advance for your assistance. Please let me know if you have any questions or experience any problems opening the attachment, a hard copy is being provided via postal mail.

Michael Harrison  
Deputy Chief of Staff, Congressman Duncan Hunter  
1870 Cordell Ct, Suite 206  
El Cajon, CA 92020  
(619) 448-5201

*If you would like to receive e-mail updates from Congressman Hunter, please visit his website at [www.hunter.house.gov](http://www.hunter.house.gov).*

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**Lauren Coartney**

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**From:** Harrison, Michael <Michael.Harrison@mail.house.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 03, 2011 4:01 PM  
**To:** ECOSUB; catulewind@blm.gov  
**Subject:** Hunter public comment-FINAL  
**Attachments:** CPUC-BLM-energyjpts.FINAL.022811.pdf

I apologize, the previous public comment I submitted on behalf of Congressman Hunter contained an error so please disregard. Attached is the corrected FINAL version. Please let me know if you have any questions, thanks.

Michael Harrison  
Deputy Chief of Staff, Congressman Duncan Hunter  
1870 Cordell Ct, Suite 206  
El Cajon, CA 92020  
(619) 448-5201

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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0552**

February 28, 2011

Mr. Iain Fisher  
California Public Utilities Commission

Mr. Greg Thomsen  
U.S. Bureau of Land Management

c/o Dudek  
605 Third Street  
Encinitas, CA 92024

Dear Mr. Fisher and Mr. Thomsen:

I am writing to express concerns regarding the numerous energy and transmission infrastructure projects currently under review by state and federal agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), in East San Diego County and located in, and adjacent to, my congressional district. Several concerns regarding these projects have been raised by my constituents, many of which live in the rural areas where these projects will be located and causing direct and adverse impacts to their property and overall quality of life.

These concerns include the Draft Environment Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (DEIR/EIS) admitting Class I significant and immitigable impacts to air quality, noise, biological resources, visual character, fire fuels and cultural resources. Conversely, the noise impact analysis does not address the low frequency and infrasound emissions from industrial wind turbine projects that are placed too close to homes and farms, nor the increased threat of wildfires posed by malfunctioning wind turbines, inverters and transformers, and the expected increase in local fire insurance rates or total cancellation of policies some home owners have already experienced.

Let me begin by stating that I recognize the need for the exploration of alternative energy resources and I believe that the goal of energy independence for our nation should remain among our top priorities. At the same time, in pursuit of this important goal, I believe we must make every effort to ensure that these projects are developed in a manner that respects the residents of the community in which they are located, as well as their properties. Indiscriminate placement of these resources in pursuit of energy or financial gains fails to protect the very individuals that proponents of these projects claim to be serving.

Specifically, the Tule Wind project managed by Iberdrola Renewables, the Energia Sierra Juarez (ESJ) project by Sempra Generation and the ECO Substation and Sunrise Powerlink projects managed by San Diego Gas & Electric as currently planned pose a direct threat to environmentally, biologically and culturally sensitive areas in East San Diego County. Regardless of the validity of concerns consistently raised by current residents regarding fire, noise, traffic, public health and safety, loss of recreation, threats to cultural resources and the overall socio-economic impact these projects pose, these undertakings are seemingly provided an abdication from scrutiny simply because they are categorized as “green.” Taking into consideration that much smaller projects, posing a significantly lower level of risk, impact and cost than those currently being pursued have been denied outright by these same state and federal agencies, this process can only be characterized as a double-standard and disconcerting.

For generations, East San Diego County has been synonymous with a much-loved rural character epitomized by its wide open vistas. This is more than a pleasant view of mountainous and desert terrain with unique landscapes; it’s a way of life that deserves to be protected. The loss and degradation of visual resources negatively impact the wilderness experience that most outdoor enthusiasts seek when they visit or purchase property in East San Diego such as the McCain Valley and other impacted public lands in the area. Once altered as proposed, these areas and qualities will be irreversibly altered, never to be restored. The proposed location of all or part of the planned Tule Wind and Energia Sierra Juarez wind turbines and the identified cumulative wind energy projects will be highly visible from many recreational destinations and will result in reduced access. Additionally, substantive damage to Indian burial sites and other significant and irreplaceable cultural resources in both private and public lands will occur with little to no effort to protect them. Native American monitors have already informed my office that there exist many discrepancies between what has been reported for the proposed projects and what the actual physical impacts are on these locations.

Land owners in this area purchased their private properties for qualities that were specifically appealing to them. To put it simply, landscape permanently altered by wind turbines reduces property values and significantly compromises the ability of property owners to sell if so desired. From a purely economic standpoint, logic dictates that those assets which add value to private properties experience a corresponding loss when those assets are removed. The fact remains that there exist no accounting of any benefits that will flow back into the impacted communities or to those property owners who suffer decreased property values, borrowing power or potential loss of property sales. Loss in property values are not offset by the potential for local jobs or lease payments to property owners because to make this a financially viable arrangement, the turbines need to be consistently operating a full capacity, which often does not occur for a variety of reasons.

The best evidence of these concerns is to examine those communities that have been similarly impacted, specifically because turbines were placed too close to homes. At a recent community forum in East San Diego County, Carmen Krogh, a volunteer with the Society for Wind Vigilance, indicated that she has direct personal knowledge of many people who were forced to abandon their homes in Canada and elsewhere, due to adverse health effects from low-frequency noise, stray voltage and other impacts, coupled with an inability to sell after wind turbines were constructed near their property. At the same forum, appraisal consultant Mike

McCann of Chicago, who has an expertise in real estate zoning evaluations as well as property impact studies, testified that property values losses of 25 percent or more are becoming the norm within two miles of industrial wind farms, with some families choosing to abandon their homes and investments altogether. Unfortunately, efforts to retrofit homes to deal with problems such as noise and strobe light affects as a result of turbine shadows are either cost-prohibitive or ineffective.

Also documented are the well-known adverse health impacts that result from low-frequency noise and infrasound emissions that are generated by industrial scale wind turbines and related infrastructure. This evidence is sufficiently strong to warrant immediate concerns which should be incorporated into any agency decision on operational regulations and project designs. Experts have testified that the health effects of wind turbines cannot be mitigated and the only practical solution is to keep people and the wind turbines in separate environments.

In particular, in testimony before the New York State Legislature Energy Committee in 2006, Dr. Nina Pierpont, a physician-scientist who has studied Wind Turbine Syndrome, indicated that health conditions that have been demonstrated by those living nearby wind turbines include sleep deprivation, headaches, exhaustion, anxiety, depression, vertigo, tinnitus and several cognitive impairments. Aside from the United States, evidence of these problems have been found worldwide, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Japan and Canada. Another expert, Dr. Arline Bronzaft, testified at the International Symposium on Adverse Health Effects from Wind Turbines that she has conducted research indicating that children living in other areas with intrusive noises similar to wind turbines, such as passing traffic or overhead aircraft, have experienced problems with their cardiovascular systems, memory, language development and ability to learn. The potential severity of the situation is compounded when it understood that we are not taking about a few isolated turbines, but rather thousands throughout the valleys and mountains of San Diego County and into Imperial County and Northern Baja California as well.

Recent media reports suggest that business ventures into clean energy are facing an increasing lack of investment by the private sector. As a result, this industry is becoming more increasingly reliant upon government subsidies and utilization of government resources, such as public lands, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Section 1603 cash grants and loan guarantees by the U.S. Department of Energy to make their projects viable. These projects are being built as a result of taxpayer supported benefits, including renewable energy credits, and highly favorable permit conditions. Frankly, however, I cannot find the justification for U.S. agencies tasked with protecting American interests approving actions that will knowingly reduce property values for local residents and, at the same time, use their very own tax dollars to increase utility and fire insurance rates and support increased profits for energy companies, some of which are foreign-owned. If the American people are going to be expected to make an investment into energy production utilizing their own resources, should not they, at the same time, be respected enough to have their concerns addressed when presented? To my knowledge, Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar has yet to respond to the many concerns regarding these projects that have been raised by my constituents.

It is my understanding that the BLM and the CPUC have agreed to extend the public comment period for these projects beyond the original deadline to March 4, 2011. I would like to thank you for this action and for providing our community a greater opportunity to relay their concerns. That being said, I would also respectfully request that the BLM and CPUC conduct formal recorded public participation hearings in the impacted communities for both the draft and final DEIR/EIS instead of the planned "workshops." I firmly believe this action will result in more reliable data on which a decision can be made.

I also believe additional actions are warranted. Taking into consideration that these wind turbine projects are all reliant upon completion of the Sunrise Powerlink project, which has unresolved litigation in both state and federal courts, I believe all efforts to build these turbines within 2-3 miles of private residential properties, tribal homes and other sensitive resources be suspended until the appropriate court decisions are made and unbiased, peer-reviewed science-based studies have been completed and approved to determine what is a safe setback, if any, between industrial wind turbines from people, wildlife and livestock. To date, these science-based studies have not been conducted and evidence has been presented indicating that local residents are already suffering adverse health problems from the existing Kumeyaay Wind turbine project with only 25 turbines.

Additionally, project developers should be required to enter into legitimate and enforceable Property Value Protection Agreements to ensure against total property losses that can be expected as evidenced by other communities impacted by the proliferation of industrial wind turbines too close to homes, along with the entire related transmission infrastructure. Likewise, any fire mitigation should be required to be negotiated with full disclosure and legally noticed public review and comment prior to any approvals and a science-based noise monitoring and mitigation plan should be drafted and made available for public review and comment during the DEIR/EIS process, not after public comment has closed and project decisions have already been made

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide my concerns on this very important issue to our community and I sincerely hope these action items are taken into consideration. I recognize that these decisions are complicated by competing goals and investments, but I firmly believe when sufficient consideration is given to the consequences of placing agendas above people's needs and health, prudence will provide a clear path of action. I remain available to discuss any of these issues involving my district and my constituents in greater detail at your convenience.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Duncan Hunter  
Member of Congress