

Desert Trail

Editorial

Help fight DWP power line

By SUSAN LUCKIE REILLY / Twentynine Palms

Wednesday, December 5, 2007 4:01 PM PST

In 1980 the California Energy Commission decided that the huge electric transmission line being proposed by the Edison company to run the length of the Morongo Basin was instead to be routed around east and south of the Joshua Tree National Monument (now park) where there was already a power line.

This followed an 11-year battle by Morongo Basin citizens to keep the line out of here.

Then these same citizens requested the Bureau of Land Management to require such lines to follow existing routes, and not to spider-web all over the desert. In its area plan for the desert soon after that, the BLM designated specific transmission corridors to be followed for any new lines.

Since that time, changes have been made in the Desert Plan; and now, we in the Morongo Basin are faced with the possibility of a new transmission line cutting through the west end of the Basin to carry power for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, with no benefit to us, that could mean such impacts as falling property values, access roads to the towers that would open the way for illegal trespass and property abuse, impacts of heavy construction, noise pollution and possible health risks.

As the scenic gateway to the Joshua Tree National Park, the beauty and tourist attraction of the Morongo Basin would be downgraded by the presence of a huge transmission corridor.

What appears to be the route favored by DWP runs through Morongo Valley, the preserves of Big Morongo Canyon and Pipes Canyon, bisecting Pioneertown and entering Flamingo Heights, Landers, Yucca Mesa and Johnson Valley.

It is not fair that the impacts of bringing power to feed Los Angeles' endless urban sprawl should be pushed off onto the scenic gateway to the Joshua Tree National Park with its pleasant resort-style rural living, an escape from big city congestions and pollution.

For impacts of the power line, see the California Desert Coalition brochure.

There is a more direct route to take that power along the Interstate 10 corridor to Los Angeles.

The route through the west end of the Morongo Basin that the DWP is considering is like a detour around the more direct I-10 corridor.

Why? Would it cost less than the I-10 way because BLM charges so little for the use of its land, \$14.63 per mile per year?

Opening a new corridor for DWP through the Morongo Basin would be like letting the camel's nose under the tent; the rest of the camel might follow in the form of a proposal for a new corridor the length of the Basin.

A number of years back, DWP was looking as such a route as one possible alternative. Morongo Basin citizens persuaded them to stay out of the territory.

Numbers of voices heard and persistence are what's needed in this contest to keep the transmission lines away from here.

Things people can do:

- Get informed. Pick up the brochures of the California Desert Coalition at these and many other offices and businesses; Morongo Valley Community Services District, Yucca Valley Town Hall and Park and Recreation, Joshua Tree Park and Recreation, Twentynine Palms City Hall, restaurant at the 29 Palms Inn, Senior Center in Twentynine Palms, fire station, community hall and Palms Restaurant in Wonder Valley.

Take them to your club meetings and distribute them. Be sure to send the card that is included in the brochure to Gov. Schwarzenegger.

When maps become available, post them in your meeting places and distribute them.

- Follow the developments carefully through the news media, papers, radio and computer gadgets. Speak up on radio talk shows about it.
- Write letters to the editors of the area papers.
- Talk about this to friends and relatives in person, on the telephone and through e-mail.
- Attend meetings of organizations that are opposing the line coming through any part of the Morongo Basin and speak up about it.
- Bring it up at your organization meetings, discuss it and appoint a member to gather information for the group and spread it around.
- Advocate that the line be located in a transmission line corridor already designated in the Bureau of Land Management Desert Area Conservation Plan.

Write to the BLM about this Bureau of Land Management, Green Path North Project, 690 N. Garnet Ave., North Palm Springs, CA 92258.

- Attend local government meetings and speak up against huge transmission corridors in any part of the Morongo Basin.

Write or call to your governmental representatives all up and down the line, county, state and federal.

For addresses, see the editorial page of your local newspaper or call the local library. It has telephone books from all over the country and they are very nice about helping with this.

Susan Luckie Reilly has been a longtime advocate of environmental causes in the Morongo Basin.