

County opposes power-line plan

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The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday sent a message to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power: Don't build your power lines through environmentally sensitive areas of our desert.

In a resolution sponsored by Supervisor Dennis Hansberger, the board voted 4-0 to tell the L.A. DWP to choose a different route for its Green Path North project that seeks to build new high-tension power transmission lines to bring alternative energy to the Los Angeles region.

The L.A. DWP's project would access potential geothermal, solar and wind projects in the Imperial Valley.

The path opposed by the San Bernardino County board would pass along the western portion of the Morongo Basin, stretching through Morongo Valley, Pioneertown, Flamingo Heights, and Landers. Areas potentially impacted would be the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve, home to rare birds, reptiles, amphibians and mammals.

"We are not taking a position against the project," Hansberger said, explaining that he simply doesn't support the proposed paths for the project through the Morongo Basin because it could damage the pristine environment there and impair its scenic vistas.

County officials prefer the utility use the 10 Freeway corridor, which already has established transmission lines.

L.A. DWP officials have said they are in the early stages of planning and that the Morongo Basin route is only one of several to choose from.

They met recently with Hansberger, whose 3rd District includes much of the Morongo area, and Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, the High Desert representative. Officials urged the supervisors not to vote on the matter, telling them to take a wait-and-see approach, Hansberger and Mitzelfelt said. Utility officials also said the 10 Freeway corridor would force them to acquire as many as 2,500 homes, Hansberger said.

County officials were not deterred.

"That was great news," Jim Harvey, an activist from Johnson Valley near Yucca Valley, said after the vote. "I just have a feeling that LADWP isn't telling us everything, and I think the supervisors picked up on that. Good for them."

Supervisor Gary Ovitt was absent Tuesday. He was attending a Southern California Association of Governments meeting in Los Angeles.