

Power-path foes host hootenanny to line war chest

By Rebecca Unger
Hi-Desert Star

Published: Friday, June 19, 2009 11:56 PM CDT

PIONEERTOWN — The California Desert Coalition has been standing up to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's Green Path North energy project since March 2007.

The feisty group has garnered support from a wide variety of individuals, groups and municipalities, like 41st District Congressman Jerry Lewis, the counties of San Bernardino and Riverside, the cities of Twentynine Palms and Desert Hot Springs, Yucca Valley Town Council, Morongo Valley Community Services District, Joshua Tree Municipal Advisory Committee, Johnson Valley Improvement Association and the Coachella Valley Association of Governments.

Ruth Rieman, CDC Vice Chairperson, attributes part of the project's delay to the CDC's success in securing so much support in opposition to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power's proposed 85 miles of high-voltage transmission towers.

But the Los Angeles utility is moving forward on the project. On May 19, its board of commissioners, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S Forest Service approved a Memorandum of Understanding together for Green Path North.

This document sets the groundwork for issuing a Notice of Intent, which the CDC anticipates will be issued this summer. Once the Notice of Intent is issued, the project will get off to a serious start by beginning the process through the California Environmental Quality Act, the National Environmental Policy Act and an Environmental Impact Study.

The BLM, the Los Angeles utility and the Forest Service will contract with a professional consultant to conduct the environmental studies, Rieman said.

"The CDC is going to need a consultant to advise on the science issues and the legal issues," Rieman said. "We've exhausted the expertise within our group."

To build a war chest, the Desert Coalition held a fund-raising hootenanny at Pappy and Harriet's Pioneertown Palace June 13. Supporters sold 189 tickets, and with the proceeds from the large silent auction, Rieman puts the net profit around \$12,000.

Third District County Supervisor Neil Derry was at the fund-raiser and is supportive to the cause.



Who put the "hoot" in the hootenanny? Singer and guitar player Jackie Young, for one.



The fund-raiser assembled the Basin's powerful, like Assemblyman Paul Cook, with the playful, like this curious youngster, and filled them barbecue and strawberry shortcake.



April Sall, a founder and the spokeswoman for the California Desert Coalition, continues to lead the opposition against large-scale energy projects in Basin's ecosystem.

"We need to keep the pressure up and keep the visibility of the project out there and in the public eyes," Derry said. "We don't want to give LADWP the chance to sneak anything by us."

Wednesday, Desert Coalition members went to Sacramento to meet legislators at the Inland Empire Caucus. "We were able to make a presentation, but the state's budget was the main feature," said CDC director Claudia Sall. "Next month LADWP will make a presentation there."

The coalition's chairperson and spokeswoman, April Sall, is emphatic when she urges supporters to stay involved.

"The official process is about to begin," she warned, "and it will be important for the community to become engaged in making comments during the periods provided."



A fund-raising feature of the hootenanny was a silent auction. One of the event's sponsors, Patty Domay, couldn't resist bidding up to win "Queenie," a wall-spanning metal sculpture by Dennis Blevins.