



Green Path opposition made firm

POWER LINES: A Riverside County resolution urges an LA utility to find another route.

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Riverside County supervisors announced their opposition Tuesday to a Los Angeles utility's plan to build an extensive corridor of power lines across portions of the Coachella Valley and Morongo Basin, saying the construction could harm fragile habitats and endangered species there.

Supervisors passed a resolution urging the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power to pursue alternate routes for the Green Path North Project, a set of high-tension transmission lines that would carry renewable energy from the Salton Sea to consumers in Los Angeles.

"The trouble is they call it a green path," Supervisor Marion Ashley said. "It is just one heck of a green path, wiping out swaths of San Bernardino and Riverside counties' conservation habitats."

H. David Nahai, the utility's general manager, said the resolution comes just as the utility is beginning its planning and outreach to local governments and communities. The DWP will host its first community workshop Saturday at Yucca Valley High School from 10 a.m. to noon.

"What we are attempting to do here is in the interest of all of us, our children and our grandchildren," he said, adding: "We want to take a very comprehensive look at what local concerns are."

The utility wants to minimize impacts to the environment and private landowners, he said.

The utility has mapped six potential routes to choose from, and has stressed that all are preliminary and could change.

All possible paths traverse San Bernardino County and three of them would cut into Riverside County, scooping around Joshua Tree National Park. One route would then go up into the Morongo Basin, while the other two would follow north along Interstate 10 past Banning.

The latter options could also affect the county's plans to construct a new jail, possibly east of Banning, said Supervisor Roy Wilson, who proposed the resolution with Ashley.

The proposed routes through Riverside County could harm land and species protected by the Coachella Valley's multiple species habitat conservation plan, a plan carved out by desert governments to balance conservation with development, Ashley said.

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments, which approved the conservation plan, does not have a stance on possible transmission lines, said Katie Barrows, the association's director of environmental resources. The Los Angeles utility should consider the plan and its analysis of conservation needs and sensitive habitats, she said.

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