



The Desert Trail's view: David tops Goliath, stops Green Path

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The Desert Trail

Those of us who believe the little guy can beat the big guy from time to time got a shot in the arm last week with word that the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, one of the biggest guys there is, has decided not to go ahead with its Green Path North project, which would have dropped 200-foot transmission towers through some of the most pristine areas of the Morongo Basin, including the Big Morongo Canyon Preserve and the Pipes Canyon Preserve.

Morongo Basin opposition to the project, which would have brought geothermal, wind and solar energy through the desert from the Imperial Valley to Los Angeles, was led by a coalition of environmental groups, including the Wildlands Conservancy and the California Desert Coalition and joined by a wide variety of Morongo Basin residents, from Morongo Valley to Wonder Valley, who fought to keep critical habitat undisturbed by the proposed energy transmission line.

The end of that three-year battle was announced locally on Wednesday, March 10 when a spokesman for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power came to the Yucca Valley Community Center to announce the end of the Green Path North project with the Department of Water and Power submitting two letters, to the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, withdrawing their right of way applications.

This really was a David and Goliath battle in which a loose confederation of community activists, environmentalists and residents placed themselves in opposition to what is arguably one of the most powerful entities in the state of California. Common sense should have told these people they did not have a chance to dissuade the department and water and power from pursuing their goals. Fortunately, common sense was not heard from until the Department of Water and Power turned away from their plans.

We commend those who took up the fight from the very beginning, when Green Path North was only an addendum on the Department of Water and Power's Web site, and those who joined the struggle, giving it greater and greater strength and momentum, over the years. We commend department officials for having the good sense to know when they have been beaten.

More to the point, we urge other outside forces who think the California desert is a place where they can get away with anything because there's nothing and no one out there to oppose them to think again. If nothing else, this battle has proven, once and for all, that the people of the Morongo Basin care deeply for their desert paradise and will do whatever it takes to protect it.