



San Bernardino Valley
Audubon Society



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SW Riverside County

Friends of the Forest
and the Santa Rosa
Plateau

*Elsinore-Murrieta-
Anza*
Resource Conservation
District

FRONTLINE

April 8, 2011

Fallbrook Land Conservancy
1815 South Stage Coach Lane
Fallbrook, CA 92028

Dear Executive Director Peters, Chairman Tucker, and Members of the Board,

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding the proposal by The Nevada Hydro Company to place a substation, powerlines, or transmission towers associated with the Talega-Escondido/Valley-Serrano 500 kV Interconnect and associated Lake Elsinore Advanced Pumped Storage (“LEAPS-TE/Vs”) project on land owned by the Fallbrook Land Conservancy. The two ill-conceived and destructive projects are inherently linked because, as recognized by the California Public Utilities Commission, “the proposed TE/Vs Project would facilitate the development of the LEAPS Project.” Together LEAPS-TE/Vs represents permanent and irrevocable impacts to the ecology of the Santa Ana Mountains, Cleveland National Forest, San Mateo Canyon Wilderness, Margarita Peak Preserve, and the communities that surround them. At a cost of over 1 billion dollars this is a project we cannot afford.

The LEAPS-TE/Vs project will have unacceptably severe environmental impacts on the region which cannot be mitigated. The hydroelectric dam, and associated facilities and transmission lines, will result in the loss of habitat for federally listed Quino checkerspot butterflies, coastal California gnatcatchers, Munz’s onions, slender-horned spineflowers, and Stephens’ kangaroo rats and will permanently eliminate more than 50 acres of sensitive plant communities, including coast live oak riparian forest, sycamore-alder riparian forest, southern willow scrub, and coastal sage scrub. The project also will destroy hundreds of acres of other habitats such as chaparral and grasslands and harm many more at risk plant and wildlife species.

Furthermore, edge effects such as spread of invasive species and visual impacts on adjacent wilderness areas will reach far beyond the areas of direct disturbance.

The LEAPS-TE/VS project would have negative impacts on water and air quality in Riverside, Orange, and San Diego counties. The construction and filling of the upper LEAPS reservoir would transport polluted water from Lake Elsinore into a pristine watershed, threatening the water quality of biologically rich San Juan Creek. It would also repeatedly churn sediment in the shallow Lake Elsinore which is already suffering from turbidity problems. Heavy construction would result in increased fugitive dust, diesel exhaust, and greenhouse gas pollution in an area that is already failing to meet federal air quality standards.

The LEAPS-TE/VS project would irrevocably change the character of the community by placing a dangerous industrial power project in an area cherished for its rural lifestyle. LEAPS-TE/VS would create a permanent scar on the landscape and generate large areas of Electro-Magnetic Fields below high-tension powerlines. It would turn peaceful recreational areas into areas dominated by overhead powerlines and new dams.

Finally, LEAPS-TE/VS significantly increases the threat of wildfire in rural areas and remote wildlands. Transmission lines and substations are known to increase the risk of fire ignition and—because they hamper fire fighting efforts—increase extensive fire damage. LEAPS-TE/VS would pose a significant wildfire threat to the community and to the Margarita Peak Reserve.

In short, the proposed LEAPS-TE/VS project is one of the worst environmental threats to the region. It would compromise the basic premise for the Margarita Peak Preserve and the overall guiding principles of the Fallbrook Land Conservancy. No final approval has been given and we urge you to reject any proposal from The Nevada Hydro Company that would facilitate this destructive project.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Evans
Center for Biological Diversity

Gene Frick
Sierra Club, San Geronio Chapter, Santa
Ana Mountains Task Force

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