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ITEM # 17 9/25/2018 Agenda -- Wildfire Safety Work in Pollock Pines

4 messages

Stacy <ycats1216@aol.com>

Mon, Sep 24, 2018 at 10:22 AM

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ITEM #17 -- 9/25/2018 BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA

Dear Members of the Board,

As you may or may not know PG & E is currently undertaking their Wildfire Safety work in the Pollock Pines area. Per their flyer: "This wildfire safety work involves creating clearances of 12-foot between power lines and trees, including any overhanging branches and limbs." And although their own standards recommend a 4' clearance from their lines, they are requesting this 12-15 foot clearance from their lines for this project. The result – hundreds, if not thousands of healthy trees are tagged to be removed in the name of fire prevention within the next few weeks.

No one disagrees that dead, diseased, or leaning trees need to be removed near the power lines or otherwise. Where the disagreement lies is removing healthy green trees. When those healthy trees are removed what will be in their place? Ideally PG&E would like clean, bare dirt but that isn't necessarily feasible or realistic. Where bare dirt can exist, there will always be weeds, pine needles and leaves ("vegetation") that will accumulate. Given that vegetation is 1,000 times more likely to ignite than a green healthy tree, ask yourself what has been gained by removing these healthy trees?

Of more concern is the potential devastation and financial impact to this area. Many of us live in a canyon which means you either live uphill or downhill from those lines. Good healthy trees have a root system that stabilize a hillside. Killing or removing those trees could destabilize dirt and cause slides like we have seen on hwy 50. This could potentially mean damage to individual homes, county roads and other land. For those of us on slopes we will have no choice but to re-plant with vegetation (far more flammable than the trees they are replacing) or come up with another solution to both fund and execute at our own expense in order to protect our property from further damage from removal of these trees.

Further, most of these power lines parallel a county road. Who will be responsible for repair of damage to those roads when the trees that previously stabilized those roads are removed? The taxpayers of El Dorado County?

As far I can tell there is nothing built into this plan to stabilize the soil when these trees are removed. It appears no environmental impact report has been done or other study. And although the damage may not be immediately apparent, just what plans are in place to mitigate present or future damage to property?

Based on all of this, I firmly believe that the Board of Supervisors should direct County Counsel to intercede on behalf of the residents of this County. As a condition of this project PG & E should be forced to:

(1) Work with homeowners to immediately repair the land where these trees previously existed so as to stabilize these hillsides from future slides. This would include PG & E funding retaining walls and other acceptable methods to stabilize hillsides where trees have been or are to be removed; and

(2) A fund should be set aside for any future damage as a result of massive removal of these trees. The process should be simplified to make a claim on these funds and the financial burden for these repairs should not fall on the homeowners or the taxpayers of El Dorado County.

This project is moving quickly —good or bad. Clearly there will be an impact to this area both environmentally and financially. It has already pitted one neighbor against the other. And the list of potential consequences continues to grow. The residents of Pollock Pines need your help to save our community. No one is disputing the need for fire prevention, but it needs to be done in a responsible way.

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Mon, Sep 24, 2018 at 10:48 AM

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