

The Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy (AREP) delivered this speech to the Sierra Club's California and Nevada Desert Group on Saturday May 10, 2008. AREP felt the speech was necessary because Sierra Club staff has become an active participant in a very questionable alliance with energy and utility companies and government agencies. As such, the historic checks and balances that used to regulate energy and utilities companies to protect citizens and our environment have become seriously eroded. Sierra Club staff, over and above the objections of many of its members, is now actively working to site power plants and transmission lines.

The speech addresses why the Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy was formed and identifies key legislation that has generated energy policy that is bad for our country. We expose the fact that current policies intentionally ignore locally generated energy potential, such as PV rooftop, that could meet renewable goals. We also identify how the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies' (CEERT) Big Solar project and the California Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) have eroded protective checks and balances. Additionally, we address how precaution is disregarded and cumulative assessment of environmental impact avoided. The speech closes with the policy changes that are necessary and the role that environmental organizations should be carrying to become allied in the development of responsible energy policy. Please read the entire speech to learn more about the issues and the Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy's positions.



Towards Responsible Energy Policy

Presented to the Desert Committee of the Sierra Club 5-10-08

The Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy (AREP) was founded as a result of the 2005 Energy Policy Act and its repercussions. This federal law along with similar State legislation, such as California's Senate Bill 1059, is misguided and has disastrous implications for our State and our Nation. The policies that emanate from these legislative acts perpetuate and expand a century long history of energy dependence and the financial burden it imposes upon our citizenry. These policies target public lands for remote utility-scale projects and transmission lines. They promote permanent destruction of hundreds of thousands of acres of pristine public lands designated for multi-purpose use that belong to the people and they compromise our National security. Additionally, these policies boost eminent domain powers which threaten private property rights and trump local government participation in determining land use rights. LADWP's Green Path North, SDG&E's Sunrise Powerlink and Bright Source's Ivanpah are just a few examples of the 100+ proposed projects that will devastate our local desert areas. The Alliance supports the long overdue use of renewable energy technologies however we can not condone wilderness killing, unacceptable groundwater depletion and the erosion of hard fought protections of public lands and private rights.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 sets the stage for misguided policy at state level. A California example is Senate Bill 1059. California's Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) states 20,000MW of renewable energy are necessary by 2020 to meet AB32's goals. RETI assumes that only 3,000MW of this goal can be achieved by locally generated photovoltaic (PV) systems. California's GDP is the world's 6th largest economy. Spain's GDP is the world's 13th largest economy and Germany's GDP ranks 5th in the world. Spain and Germany are currently installing 2,000MW of locally generated PV system per year. Germany's latitude incidentally is 51 degrees north the same as Calgary and Alberta Canada. Surely California's PV solar potential far outweighs Germany's. Let us consider examples of our Nation's will to achieve extraordinary goals that required solar technologies. NASA did not rely upon 19th century transmission technology. Mars Observer, Viking Orbiters, Mariners, Pathfinder, Surveyor and the international space station use NASA's primary space power: End-point of use solar. AREP believes if we had the will to develop responsible policies we could meet and surpass renewable energy goals entirely through the development of local distributed energy generated at point of use.

So why aren't we moving in that direction? What are the economic and political forces that seek to sacrifice wilderness protections, destroy habitat, compromise National security, endanger the safety and health of all living things and obliterate our rights in the name of reducing transmission congestion and green house gases? Joan Taylor's "Big Solar" article in the Sierra Club's March Desert Report raises a critical question that this Alliance also asks: "SOLUTION OR THREAT?" In her subheading entitled who Joan calls our attention to the "BIG SOLAR Renaissance" video which can be viewed on our website protectourlands.com (and I quote) ***"It features, among others, Sierra Club staff suggesting that by developing Big Solar, California may even export renewable energy power!"*** In her Our Job subheading Joan address additional serious concerns shared by this Alliance:

***“The Sierra Club has a hard-earned reputation as the toughest defender of public lands, and a green light from us is a gold mine for the solar industry.”
(That’s a dangerous truth!)***

(And)

“...but let’s not imagine that industry will put Club priorities ahead of profits and preserving their status quo of concentrated power generation delivered to market on their transmission lines.” (A necessary caution perhaps overlooked by some.)

AREP is concerned that the current misguided California energy policy has seriously diluted the efficacy of the checks and balances that used to protect our lands, safety, rights and our pursuit of happiness. Publically Owned Utilities (POUs) like LADWP have enjoyed ubiquitous unregulated powers for nearly a century. We are all well aware of the devastation LADWP has perpetrated upon the Owens Valley, and is currently proposed for the Mojave Desert. Investor Owned Utilities (IOU’s) [an ironic acronym] propose projects that are subject to permit by the California Energy Commission (CEC) and purportedly regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and the Independent Systems Operator (ISO). Environmental Organizations such as the Sierra Club have historically kept a watchful eye, using the power of its membership, lobbying skills, media resources and when necessary civil litigation to ensure that protection of our lands remains the highest priority. AREP’s examination of RETI’s structure and process causes this Alliance to encourage the CLUB and other environmental organizations to recognize the intrinsic danger from joining a coalition of energy producers, utility companies, and government regulators. Indeed, the tasks of identifying California Renewable Energy Zones (CREZ) to build utility-scale projects in remote areas then site transmission lines to carry that energy to end-users in urban regions, is counter to the mission of environmental organizations that should be protecting our lands. Furthermore, it is important to note that RETI’s Stakeholders Steering Committee (SSC) is coordinated by the Center for Energy efficiency and Renewable Technologies. CEERT is an organization whose board is made up of mostly energy generators that also includes Sierra Club and NRDC staffers. Club staff asks us to believe: ***“We need it all”*** and ***“RETI is better than the Feds because Big Solar will displace coal fired plants”*** and ***“New transmission lines are necessary to ease grid congestion.”*** This Alliance asks where is the research that supports the truth of these assertions.

April Sall’s “Desert Report” article [A Feeding Frenzy in the Desert: The New California Gold Rush](#) addresses another important concern shared by this Alliance: ***“... desert residents, recreation users, city and county governments, and conservationists are alarmed at the scale of development and impact of these proposed projects within previously open space and undisturbed lands. Furthermore, there is no cumulative assessment to ascertain the impacts on the Mojave Desert... (And) ...there is no assurance that cumulative impacts will be adequately addressed.”*** Among his many other expert contributions Bill Powers informs us that: 1) ***“utilities profit from ownership”*** 2) ***“no brown-outs or black-outs are occurring due to a lack of transmission”*** and 3) ***“transmission loss ranges from 7% up to 14% during peak demand periods.”***

As AREP’s remarks transition from the problems to the solutions, we look at California’s current renewable energy recipe. It calls for hundreds of thousands of acres of 1970’s big solar technology and 1980’s wind farm technology that are remotely generated, and a sprinkling of yet proven or built generation technologies, all brought to you by 19th century transmission. While this recipe simmers in the RETI/CEERT pots, locally generated renewable energy systems, the proven better way, are largely ignored. Local generation reduces congestion, protects public lands and private

rights, preserves habitats, reduces fossil fuel dependence, and moves us away from increasing centralized power grids that compromise National security.

Let us turn our attention for the moment to caution. When we consider the potential risks associated with current Federal and State Energy policy shouldn't we as a citizenry and especially as environmentalists look before we leap? Shouldn't the Hypocratic notion "**First do no harm**" not only come to mind but also guide our process? When we assess environmental risk in the ordinary way via "**Ordinary Risk Analysis**" we assume that something must be done, in this case utility-scale remote generation and long-distance transmission, then we ask the question: **How much environment damage will we allow?** However, if we apply the logic of precaution "**The Precautionary Principle**" as our European Union neighbors have since 1991 and the City of San Francisco has since 2003 we operate from a different standard "**How little damage is possible**" and begin from there to establish what we need to do. Bill Powers encourages that we need to: "**... minimize transmission infrastructure**" "**... avoid the land stampedes**" "**... maximize local power generation to free transmission**" (and) "**...generate large amounts of photovoltaic energy locally.**"

Joan Taylor echoes the issues that are at the heart of this Alliance in her subsection entitled Easy Solutions "**...clearly something needs to tip the balance in favor of the better alternative: locally generated renewable power generation.**" and "**...government will not do this (policy incentives) without public pressure, and the Sierra Club has a role to play.**" The simple and only solution is to change National and State energy policy to tip that balance. Public policy changes in only two ways; by legislation or litigation. The fix, if you will, involves the repeal of laws like Energy Policy Act of 2005 especially sections 368 and 1221 and California Senate Bill 1059 and the plethora of similar laws around our Nation that promote the misguided policies articulated in this address, the comments quoted here and many others of other experts and activists. Termination of the RETI process and the repeal of the West-wide Energy Corridors and the National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors (NIETC) are essential. These misguided initiatives need to be replaced by mandatory utility-buy-backs of all available locally generated renewable energy. Governments at all levels should provide adequate tax credits and low or no interest loans to purchase and retrofit locally generated technologies. Building codes need to be upgraded to require net-zero energy and carbon footprints. Government grants should be generously provided to universities and companies to improve the efficiency of locally generated energy products and to develop new technologies such as thin film solar, household wind turbines and energy conserving appliances and other products.

The Sierra Club has 1.3 million members, the NRDC has 1.2 million, the Nature Conservancy has 1 million, the Defenders of Wild Life has 500,000, the Wilderness Society has 200,000 members, and the Center for Biological Diversity has 40,000 members in the United States. In California alone there are 166 environmental groups. Each of these organizations has power that emanates from its: Membership; Financial resources; Ability to utilize media; Lobbying capabilities; and its Research, scientific and legal staff. Imagine what could happen if all that human energy is directed towards responsible energy policy. Imagine how quickly and thoroughly energy policy could become responsible if we joined together in an Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy! Thank you for this opportunity to share AREP's views and please visit our website at protectourlands.com. We also want to express a special thank you for the legacy of protecting our lands created and shared by Sierra Club members and activists.

Respectfully submitted,

The Alliance for Responsible Energy Policy