



June 18, 2024

TO: California Public Utilities Commission  
Cc: California State Senator District 32 Kelly Seyarto  
Cc: California District 75 Assembly Representative Marie Waldron  
Cc: San Diego County District 5 Supervisor Jim Desmond  
Cc: Senate Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Communications  
Cc: Horizon West Transmission / NextEra Energy  
Cc: CAISO  
Cc: Save Palomar Mountain Task Force  
by Certified Mail

Public Advisor's Office,

I am writing as Chair of the **Save Palomar Mountain Task Force** to express our strongest objection to any route for the Imperial Valley-North of SONGS Project crossing Palomar Mountain, California. Our reasons are fourfold:

1. **Unparalleled Public Value:** Palomar Mountain offers unique experiences to a vast and diverse audience. Tens of thousands of children and families visit our rustic camps each year. Vacation rentals host guests from across the United States and over twenty countries.

The mountain boasts a rich astronomical heritage. For 45 years, Palomar Observatory held the title of the world's largest telescope. Today, six active telescopes remain, attracting astronomers and visitors from around the globe. Significant events like the Tour de California Amgen Bicycle Race further cement Palomar's international appeal.

The pristine old-growth mixed conifer forest and extraordinary ocean views, unmatched in the southwest, are significant draws for many. We invite you to explore the ever-growing list of testimonials on our website from not only Southern California but also around the world, highlighting the mountain's profound impact on the public: <https://savepalomarmountain.org/>.

2. **Extreme Wildfire Risk:** Your organization has designated Palomar Mountain a Tier 3 High Fire Threat Area. This classification signifies an extreme risk for utility-caused wildfires on the CPUC Fire-Threat Map. With winds known to reach 100 mph, downed power lines pose a severe wildfire threat. Notably, safer alternative routes exist. Furthermore, limited evacuation routes (only two) on the mountain further complicate fire danger.

The 2007 Witch Fire in San Diego County started from a downed power line and burned 197,990 acres, caused at least \$1.142 billion in damages, killed two people, injured 40 firefighters, destroyed 1,125 homes, and led to the evacuation of 1,000,000 people, the largest in Californian history.

3. **Ecological Significance and Endangered Species:** Palomar Mountain provides critical habitat for the endangered Laguna Mountain Skipper Butterfly, once exclusive to the mountain and recently reintroduced to Laguna Mountain. Other crucial species include the California Golden Eagle, mountain lions, and wild turkeys.
4. **Historical and Cultural Significance:** Palomar holds deep significance for Native American communities. Hundreds of grinding holes, pottery shards, and arrowheads point to numerous historical sites. Additionally, the mountain harbors plant species vital for traditional basket weaving by local tribes.

We urge you to reconsider any route that would traverse Palomar Mountain. The potential damage to its public value, ecological health, and cultural heritage is simply too great.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jim Hamerly  
Chair,  
Save Palomar Mountain Task Force