Key Decision Brings Region One Step Closer to Its Clean Energy Future

The Associated Press

San Diego Gas & Electric (http://sdge.com/index/) (SDG&E) has received approval to move forward with construction of the approximately $1.9 billion, 120-mile Sunrise Powerlink (http://www.sdge.com/sunrisepowerlink/) transmission line from the Department of Agriculture's United States Forest Service (http://www.fs.fed.us/) (USFS). The new power line will increase the reliability of the power grid and transport renewable energy, such as solar, wind and geothermal power, from remote areas in southern California's Imperial Valley to residences and businesses in the San Diego region.

"This key decision (http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland/projects/sunrise-powerlink/index. shtml) accelerates the momentum for the Sunrise Powerlink, a project that will create much needed jobs, lower greenhouse gas emissions and bolster reliability for the region's power grid," said Jessie J. Knight, Jr., chief executive officer of SDG&E. "This project will access vast, untapped sources of renewable power for the people of San Diego County and help create a cleaner, more environmentally-responsible future for the region."

After a rigorous environmental review, the USFS issued a Record of Decision approving the construction, operation and maintenance of a 19-mile segment of the transmission line through the Cleveland National Forest (CNF).

The milestone decision joins key prior project approvals from the California Public Utilities Commission (http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/puc/) (CPUC) in late 2008 and the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en.html) in early 2009, and signals the imminent start of the project's construction. The permitting process and environmental reviews for the Sunrise Powerlink represent the most comprehensive completed for a power line in California history.

"California has two dozen renewable energy projects looking to break ground this year alone that will create thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment in our state. But, many of these projects will be built in remote locations in the desert, and we need more transmission lines, like the Sunrise Powerlink, to transport this renewable energy to population centers," said Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (http://gov.ca.gov/) . "I applaud the U.S. Forest Service for approving this important project that will play a critical role in bringing clean, renewable electricity to the cities where people live and work and improving our power grid's reliability. These are exactly the types of projects California needs to transition to a brighter clean-energy future."

"The Sunrise Powerlink is a vital connection to sustainable economic development in Imperial County," said Gary Wyatt, member of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors (http://www.co.imperial.ca.us/Supervisors/BoS.htm) . "This project will tap into the vast sources of locally-generated renewable energy and facilitate the creation of green jobs. These advances will make a tangible difference for residents and help benefit our region for generations to come."

When completed in 2012, the 500-kilovolt Sunrise Powerlink electric "superhighway" will have the capacity to carry at least 1,000 megawatts of clean power, or enough energy for 650,000 homes. The project will create 400 to 500 direct construction jobs and provide more than $100 million in annual energy savings.

"This is a great day for clean air and clean power in California," said Michael R. Peevey, president of the CPUC. "As the CPUC's original decision outlined, the Sunrise Powerlink is vital to making California's electric grid renewable-energy ready. We are pleased that the Forest Service concurred with our decision and has given this project a green light."

The environmental review process, a collaborative effort between SDG&E, USFS and other federal, state and local agencies, has led to several modifications that will substantially reduce the environmental impacts of the project, including preserving sensitive resources within CNF. Even with these modifications, SDG&E recognizes there is opposition to the project and pending legal challenges, and is committed to working with the communities impacted by project construction.

"The Sunrise Powerlink will help shape California's clean energy future," said Dian M. Grueneich, commissioner at the CPUC. "It will bolster renewable energy development in the Imperial Valley, bringing clean energy jobs to that region, and help us to reach our state's clean energy goals."

"This project includes the upgrade of existing equipment and the addition of new infrastructure that will substantially enhance the reliability of our network," said Michael R. Niggli, president and chief operating officer of SDG&E. "We will start work and look forward to completing this important project by the summer of 2012, thereby taking a major step toward a smarter, greener grid."

SDG&E is currently working with the CPUC to finalize Notices to Proceed on non-transmission related construction activities taking place on private lands, including system upgrades, construction yards and field offices. These non-transmission construction activities are expected to begin later this summer, while construction of the transmission line is expected to start this fall.

More information about the power line is available here: http://www.sdge.com/sunrisepowerlink/ (http://www.sdge.com/sunrisepowerlink/) .

SDG&E (http://sdge.com/aboutus/) is a regulated public utility that provides safe and reliable energy service to 3.4 million consumers through 1.4 million electric

meters and more than 840,000 natural gas meters in San Diego and southern Orange counties. The utility's area spans 4,100 square miles. SDG&E is committed to creating ways to help our customers save energy and money every day. SDG&E is a subsidiary of Sempra Energy (http://sempra.com/) (NYSE: SRE), a Fortune 500 energy services holding company based in San Diego.

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