

Comments by Kara Woodruff  
Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Engagement Panel Meeting  
August 24, 2022

Greetings and thank you to everyone participating in person and virtually tonight. This is what the Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Engagement Panel is all about and we're sincerely grateful for your engagement.

A lot has been said in the news about the potential, continued operation of Diablo Canyon Power Plant beyond its scheduled full closure in three years. This is a great and profound debate and what happens here, in our backyard, of course has considerable impact on the future of energy delivery across the state.

But I'd like to stress that the question before us today about Diablo's future is not pro-nuclear vs. anti-nuclear, it's a debate about specifically Diablo Canyon and – given its particular circumstances and particular location -- whether it should carry on beyond its current license term.

For those who don't know it, I'll provide a brief history leading up to the momentous decision that now stands before this community and the State of California:

- The two-unit Diablo Canyon Power Plant began its nuclear operations in the mid 1980's, under a 40-year license issued by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). Today it operates as the only remaining nuclear plant in the state; Unit 1 is scheduled to close in 2024 and Unit 2 is scheduled to close in 2025.
- In 2009, PG&E filed an application with the NRC to renew its license for an additional 20 years – sixteen years before the scheduled closure. In 2016, everything changed. PG&E entered into a Settlement Agreement with environmental and labor groups to end Diablo Canyon's operation upon the termination of the existing licenses, and the closure was approved by the State of California.
- As of March of this year – a mere five months ago – the Governor and PG&E assured the public that the plans to close and decommission Diablo Canyon were on track. However, in mid-April, the Biden Administration announced its intention to "save nuclear plants" with a \$6 billion federal cash infusion. Shortly thereafter, the Governor and PG&E reversed their stance and PG&E announced its intention to probably apply for those funds and consider the continued operation of the plant beyond 2025.
- Less than two weeks ago, the Governor released draft legislation to continue Diablo's operation, and also hosted a virtual workshop on the topic, with co-sponsors the California Energy Commission and the California Independent System Operator, aka CAISO (incidentally, CAISO manages the flow of electricity across the high voltage, long distance power lines that make up 80% of California's power grid.) Almost 700 people participated in the workshop, and public

comment went two and a half hours beyond the scheduled time, with an emotional and formidable split between those in favor of Diablo's extension, and those opposed to it.

- During the workshop, the Governor's team made the case for Diablo's extension of operations. In a nutshell, they argued that Diablo's nuclear energy was needed as a stop-gap measure for 5 to 10 years beyond 2025, to ensure the reliability of the state's energy grid, because of unexpected extreme heat, drought, and wildfire events stemming from climate change, supply chain disruptions due to COVID and otherwise, the impact of tariff disputes, and inflation.
- In an opening statement by Senator Laird (who represents this district) at the workshop, he called out a dozen issues of concern that would have to be addressed before a decision were to be made on Diablo Canyon's future, including the future of spent nuclear fuel generated at Diablo, safety and deferred maintenance, seismic issues, once-through-cooling technology employed at Diablo Canyon, and the Diablo Canyon Lands. My fellow Panel Member Bruce Severance will be covering these concerns in detail during his presentation later tonight, and when it comes to the future for spent nuclear fuel storage, we hope to address this in a future Panel meeting; surely future generations burdened with this radioactive waste need us to make the right decisions today.
- Under the Governor's legislative language, the state would loan PG&E up to \$1.4 billion to keep Diablo Canyon open. Also included in the language was a plan to bypass much of the regulatory framework that would normally be involved in relicensing, including the California Coastal Act.
- In response to the Governor's legislative proposal, just five days ago the California State Assembly issued its "Clean, Diverse, Safe, and Reliable Energy Proposal." It promoted a different vision for California's short to mid-term energy challenges, providing \$1.4 billion (the same amount that the Governor was proposing for PG&E) in monetary incentives to get zero-carbon generation online faster, to accelerate electric transmission projects, and to reduce permit delays for new clean energy generation. This proposal was offered in lieu of extending Diablo Canyon's operation.
- In the last few days, members of the public including from academia have offered their own views of the Governor's proposal to extend Diablo's operation. I think we've seen a lot of thoughtful consideration of the Diablo question, and I encourage you to visit the Panel website to read these analyses.
- And just yesterday, mayors of nine Central Coast cities chimed in on the Diablo Canyon extension proposal. In their letter, they urge (among other things) that any legislation concerning the future of the plant also include assurances of plant safety, that any extension should be of limited term and tied to when the state has sufficient renewable energy online, that the Governor should partner with this region and invest now in renewable energy sources

and create what Senator Laird referred to as a “Marshall Plan for Renewables,” that community mitigation monies first awarded after the plant closure decision was made in 2016 not be returned, and that the 12,000 acres that surround the plant known as the “Diablo Canyon Lands” be conserved in perpetuity.

If you’d like to see the materials prepared for the Governor’s workshop on August 12, 2022, the legislative language proposed by the Governor and its response by the State Assembly, the Central Coast mayors’ letter to the Governor, Senator Laird’s comments at the workshop, or other related materials and comments, please visit the Engagement Panel website at [www.diablocanyonpanel.org](http://www.diablocanyonpanel.org). These materials are located under the “Get Involved” tab, with the label “View Public Comments.” You can also leave your own comment by clicking the blue “Submit Comment” button on every page of the website.

So where do we go from here? This whole debate about the future of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant began with the Biden Administration’s launching a \$6 billion initiative to “save nuclear plants.” The deadline for PG&E to apply for that money is early September, and the utility can’t do so unless they get the legislative authority to move forward. The legislative session ends a week from today on August 31<sup>st</sup>. And tomorrow after session, the Senate Committee on Energy, Utilities, and Communications will be holding an oversight, non-voting meeting about the “Proposal to Extend Operations of the Diablo Canyon Power Plant.” This could be the only legislative hearing on Diablo’s future before new legislative language is introduced, most likely the day after tomorrow, for a vote next week. This is a very, very large decision to be made in a very, very short time.

