

MATTHEW HOY

JULY 9, 2016 9:29 PM

Closing Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant is a mistake for SLO County

HIGHLIGHTS

Nuclear power plants emit no carbon dioxide

Closure will put the equivalent carbon dioxide of 2 million cars on the road annually

Local governments will lose tens of millions of dollars in tax revenues



People attend a State Lands Commission hearing delivered via satellite from Sacramento to Morro Bay in June 2016. The hearing included lease renewal discussion regarding Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. **David Middlecamp** - dmiddlecamp@thetribunenews.com



BY MATTHEW HOY

Late last month, PG&E looked at the math and decided it [wasn't worth the cost to seek to renew](#) Diablo Canyon's operating licenses in the face of vocal opposition and state mandates that require the use of more expensive, less dependable "renewable" energy sources.

Local governments, businesses and our community will suffer because of this decision.

According to a [2013 Cal Poly study](#), the plant's closure means more than 3,000 fewer jobs, tens of millions of dollars in reduced property tax revenue for local governments and more than \$10 million in lost sales tax revenue.

We've come a long way from the 1960s and early '70s when the Sierra Club supported the construction of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant over hydroelectric projects. Its slogan at the time was "Atoms not Dams."

As carbon dioxide emissions have become a major worry of the environmentalist left, you would think renewing the permits for an already-built plant that generates electricity with zero carbon dioxide emissions would be a no-brainer.

Instead, most greens praise huge solar farms that require far more acreage to produce less power than a standard nuclear plant at a higher cost. Unlike nuclear plants, solar plants produce no energy after sundown.

If the [closure of the San Onofre nuclear power plant](#) is any guide, that lost power isn't going to be replaced by wind and solar, but by natural gas.

A few environmentalists dissent from the anti-nuclear orthodoxy and have likened closing Diablo Canyon to an "environmental disaster." A recent report in [Mother Jones magazine](#) — not exactly a right-wing outlet — noted that Diablo Canyon produces "twice as much power as all the state's solar panels" combined.

Shutting the plant would necessitate the construction of new natural gas plants and the expansion of existing ones. Environmentalist Michael Shellenberger told Mother Jones that the closure would cut 20 percent from the state's "zero-carbon energy" portfolio and increase overall CO2 emissions by the equivalent of 2 million cars on the road each year.

You can count me as an anthropogenic global warming skeptic. But if environmentalists really want to convince me that carbon dioxide is a bad thing and we need to stop producing so much of it, then they can start by acting like it's a problem.

Likewise, the green movement has come out strong against plans to deliver oil by rail to Phillips 66's Nipomo Mesa refinery putting good-paying jobs there at risk. At two days of hearings in February, hundreds arrived from across the state to protest the plan.

Protesters arrived in the area via cars, trains, buses and all manner of vehicles powered by unicorn farts and gasoline, but mainly gasoline. Opponents' main concern was the potential environmental damage should a train derail.

Similar concerns are muted when the subject is wind power, like that proposed off the Morro Bay coastline. After all, while an oil spill is just a possibility that can be mitigated or remedied, with wind turbines, lots of dead birds are a sure thing.

Environmentalists imagine a world where all of our energy comes from so-called "green" sources — wind and solar. They need not try too hard.

We once lived in a world where all our energy came from windmills and the sun. It was called the the Dark Ages and average life expectancy was into about the mid-30s.

Our energy portfolio needs to contain more than just wind and solar. There's a place for nuclear, natural gas, oil and even coal. We need the high-paying jobs that expertise in these industries requires.

If San Luis Obispo County is to lose the dubious distinction of being the [sixth most unaffordable](#) place to live in the United States, then we need leaders who put jobs first and affordable housing a close second.

The closure of Diablo Canyon isn't something to be praised. Those highly skilled workers with their high-paying jobs won't be replaced by jobs installing solar panels, or a raft of wind turbines 30-plus miles offshore.

Instead, those jobs will go to Pennsylvania, Florida, Virginia, New Jersey or South Carolina — all places where new nuclear plants are being built.

Conservative columnist Matthew Hoy is a former reporter, editor and page designer. His column appears in The Tribune every other Sunday, in rotation with liberal columnist Tom Fulks. Read Hoy's blog at Hoystory.com. Follow him on Twitter @Hoystory.

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David Ciaffardini

Employees at Diablo continue to downplay the risks posed by computer hackers. This is worrisome as it suggests there may be reluctance to do what is necessary to lessen the threat.

Diablo employees need to get real and educate themselves to the facts of the modern world. They can start here: <http://phys.org/news/2015-10-nuclear-power-cyber.html>

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Christian Friedrich · Zhenjiang

"If the closure of the San Onofre nuclear power plant is any guide, that lost power isn't going to be replaced by wind and solar, but by natural gas."

That is not true. In 2015 California generated around 17,000Gwhs only from solar, this capacity was installed in about four years.

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Greg Alvarez · Washington, District of Columbia

Wind turbines are only responsible for a small portion of overall bird mortality. Exponentially larger sources include cars, buildings, cats, and pesticide poisonings.

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David Ciaffardini

Matthew Hoy's article is as outmoded and inadequately thought-out as the power plant he writes about.

The Diablo Canyon Power Plant is old-fashioned, inadequately designed for its precarious location, and badly in need of upgrades considered so costly as to not be worthwhile.

There is nothing "magic" about a nuclear power plant. Just like a refrigerator, nuclear power plants wear out or are so antiquated as to be considered dangerous. Even PG&E acknowledges this. Hoy seems to think he knows better or is willing to put the Central Coast at risk against the advice of nuclear power experts.... [See More](#)

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AJ Starling · Procedure Writer, Operations and Engineering at Pacific Gas and Electric Company

"The Diablo Canyon Power Plant is old-fashioned, inadequately designed..." These statements are simply not true. Diablo Canyon systems are routinely updated, and the design has huge amounts of conservatism - layers of conservatism - built in.

"...badly in need of upgrades considered so costly as to not be worthwhile." Also a false statement, or do you have some source to back it up?

"Just like a refrigerator, nuclear power plants wear out or are so antiquated as to be considered dangerous. Even PG&E acknowledges this." More false statements (two of them in this quote alone). Unlike a re... [See More](#)

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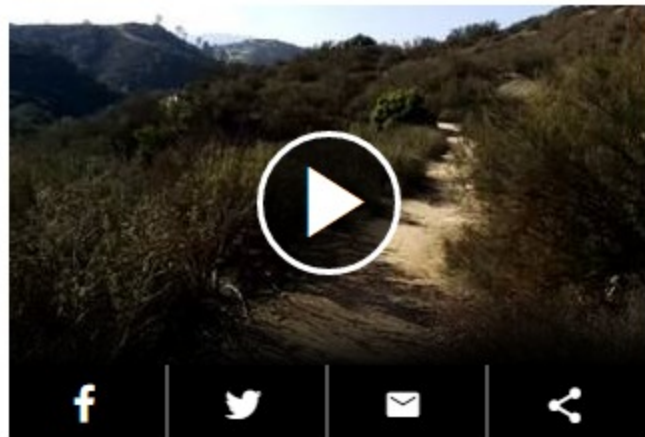
David Ciaffardini

AJ Starling Sorry, your arguments don't hold up. Because if they did, PG&E would not be so eager to decommission the plant. This is PG&E's plan. If you don't like it, argue with your superiors at the company. Good luck on that! And I GUARANTEE you that SLO County real estate prices will rise after Diablo is decommissioned. I'll bet on it, in fact. Will you bet against it? You do seem to be a gambling type of person, willing to bet the lives of everyone on the Central Coast that we will never experience an earthquake stronger than 6.5. And then you make the outrageous claim that Diablo is impervious to computer hacking. Care to explain THAT? I think you need to educate yourself because right now you sound dangerous. Start here: <http://phys.org/news/2015-10-nuclear-power-cyber.html>

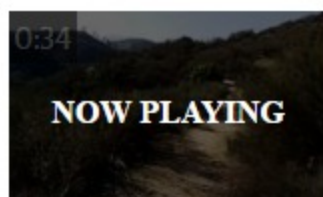
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ABOUT MATTHEW HOY



Matthew Hoy, a conservative, is a San Diego-area native and 1994 graduate of Cal Poly's journalism program. He spent 15 years at various newspapers along the West Coast, including Theompoc Record, The Daily World in Aberdeen, Wash., The North County Times in Escondido and The San Diego Union-Tribune. For 15 years, Hoy has written a blog on politics and the media, Hoystory.com. Hoy's column will be published in The Tribune every other week, in rotation with liberal columnist Tom Fulks.

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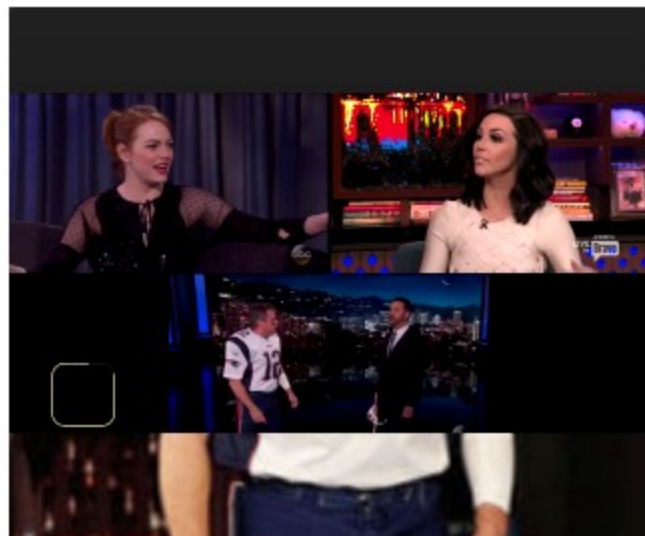
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