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Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 4:06 PM
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Subject: Comments on WMP Draft Guidance Resolution - PG&E WMP Assessment

Dear Director Thomas Jacobs,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Wildfire Safety Division's WMP Draft Guidance Resolution and the PG&E's WMP Assessment. *It is a unique and welcome situation that a member of the public is counted as a Stakeholder and has been assured that its analyses and comments on such a vital topic to our community will be considered during the process of approval-with-conditions of PG&E's cumbersome, inadequate and spendthrift WMP.*

You note in the introduction to the Wildfire Safety Division (WSD) draft action statement on the PG&E Wildfire Mitigation Plan (WMP) that the WSD was given responsibility for evaluation and approval of the WMP process via AB 1054 and AB 111. You further note that in July of 2021, the WSD becomes an independent office within the California Natural Resources Agency. This is an important point. As a current Division of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), WSD is structurally part of CPUC. CPUC is required to ensure that public utilities operate fairly to the benefit of ratepayers under their license as a regulated public monopoly. While CPUC can take action to revoke a utility's license, it is not within their scope of responsibility to determine whether a structure other than a regulated public monopoly best serves the needs of California.

WSD becomes the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety in 2021. In your own words "In this role, the WSD must ensure utility wildfire mitigation efforts sufficiently address increasing utility wildfire risk". Unlike the CPUC, your office is not bound to a particular utility structure. Indeed, WSD brings its own unique expertise to bear on the issues pertaining to wildfire safety, as does your own Wildfire Safety Advisory Board (WSAB). WSAB explicitly notes that "WSAB (Board) members bring individual expertise in reviewing these plans, independent of current CPUC actions". Three of the four main areas of recommendation within their April 15, 2020 "RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE 2020 UTILITY WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLANS" emphasize the development of a common state-wide response structure that transcends the boundaries of the traditional 'stand-alone' utility. These are:

- Grid design and system hardening,
- Resource allocation methodology including "Risk Spend Efficiency," and
- Communication with the community, planning, preparedness and recovery after Public Safety Power Shut Off (PSPS) events.

WSD has mirrored these observations in its own reviews. We applaud your acceptance of the WSAB recommendations because we believe their views coincide with the urgency of creating a different type of structure. Rather than treating the traditional utilities as independent entities, each providing a diverse set of vertically integrated services, they should be viewed as professional service providers providing a common set of services to the state through the use of best possible practices. These practices, in turn can only be defined through professional oversight and analysis. WSAB has defined three high level methods which facilitate this oversight and analysis. We summarize them as follows:

- Create defined performance metrics that provide a framework for the utilities to deliver meaningful results and useful information.
- Create a state-managed central data repository, shareable by a broad community network of researchers and fire scientists coupled with a task force or open forum to have deeper discussions and evaluations of emerging technology and scientific discovery (“best practices”). This would be potentially housed within the University of California.
- Require that WMPs be developed based upon lessons learned as an organizing principle. Integrating best practices from lessons learned into the WMP narrative allows the utilities to demonstrate the effectiveness of their ongoing efforts.

Finally, the WSAB identifies the critical nature of close cooperation with local municipal governments. The concept of best practices should include whether the utilities demonstrate that they are forming closer partnerships with local city and county governments. This should include protocols for informing city and county planning departments, emergency response personnel and fire departments, and assuring that the local governments and counties have the ability to have on-going representation whenever a utility assembles an Incident Management Team at an Emergency Operations Center.

The utilities have an uneven historic relationship with communities based on delivery of electricity and gas service. Under the wildfire threat, utilities are acquiring increased infrastructure and situational awareness that must be shared with local city and county government agencies at all levels, especially in real-time at Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). Impacted county or local government liaisons should be made knowledgeable regarding local wildfire activities and fully integrated into the EOC to actively participate in information sharing. The liaison will then be able to inform local decision makers, activate resources and identify local at-risk populations requiring enhanced services.

City and county governments are responsible for meeting a wide range of local needs including assessing the impact of local infrastructure changes and rapidly identifying and responding to the needs of at-risk populations. The wildfire crisis and global COVID-19 pandemic makes forming deeper partnerships with local city and county governments, including protocols for informing city and county agencies and first responders, critical. The development of successful community partnerships should be the key performance metric for evaluating utility performance. With shared infrastructure and weather mapping information, local city and county governments can make appropriate decisions regarding energy planning and help situate accessible Community Resource Centers, where first responder resources can be deployed. Local governmental agencies can then better plan how and where to deploy resources.

Clearly, achieving the results described above is a complex process. Nevertheless, the imperative is obvious. Based upon WSD’s own review and evaluation, only one of the three major IOU’s in California comes close to successfully meeting the challenge of wildfire mitigation. This is largely due to the way CPUC views its traditional charter, especially in the development of common best practices for the IOU’s. As noted, WSD in its emerging role as the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety need not be constrained in this fashion. One technique which could yield immediate benefits would be to restructure PG&E, the worst of the three state IOU’s, into a more competent and compliant Public Benefit Corporation.

Fortunately Appendix A of the Proposed Decision in the CPUC Bankruptcy Proceeding coupled with emerging legislation (SB 350 - Hill - “The Golden State Energy Act”) provides a foundation for such a restructuring. Under Appendix A, CPUC retains the right to progressively increase its oversight into PG&E’s operations. Step 5 in this process includes the right to appoint a Receiver to restructure the company. In our view, there is a strong argument to be made that WSD’s evaluation of PG&E’s performance on the WMP satisfies the requirement of immediately placing them in Step 5. Placing PG&E in Receivership is one thing, but taking them over and making them a public utility is another. That is why SB 350 is important. Unlike Senator Scott Wiener’s public takeover bill (SB 917), SB 350 has been specifically crafted so that it will not adversely impact the state from a financial or legal perspective. The existence of Appendix A to the CPUC Bankruptcy

Proceeding coupled with SB 350 creates a powerful “one-of-a-kind” opportunity for the WSD to successfully impact it’s own future. I strongly urge you to take advantage of it.

Chuck Rosselle

California Alliance for Community Energy (CACE)
Indivisible California “Green Team”