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For Immediate Release

C.O.A.S.T ALLIANCE FORMED TO FIGHT PG&E CENTRAL COAST SEISMIC TEST

MORRO BAY, Calif. -- Backed by broad local and regional support, the C.O.A.S.T Alliance has formed in Morro Bay, California, in opposition to Pacific Gas & Electric's Central Coast Seismic Imaging Project to survey the fault lines around and under the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant in Avila Beach, set to start November 1.

According to the group's mission statement, "The C.O.A.S.T (Citizens Opposing Acoustic Seismic Testing) Alliance, a diverse coalition of individuals, associations and government and non-government organizations is unified in the goal of ending any efforts to permit and undergo high-intensity acoustic seismic testing by PG&E in the regions surrounding the Diablo Canyon Power Plant on the central coast of California."

The C.O.A.S.T position statement explains: "In recognition of the significant biological impacts and the resulting negative impacts to our coastal economy, C.O.A.S.T seeks a cessation to all preparations for offshore acoustic testing now in progress and an end to all plans to engage in high-intensity acoustic testing as means for seismic mapping. The Alliance further recognizes that testing new faults is not mandated in AB 1632 and that the only legal mandate is to review and assess existing studies and thereby makes the proposed testing superfluous and not a legal requisite to adhere to the legislation.

"We insist that the permitting process cease in accordance with the fact that an issuance of the permit would not comply with the Coastal Act, Chapter 3, and would be in violation of the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the California MLPA (Marine Life Protection Act), and the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act, as well as several established international marine conservation laws.

"Further, we insist that the permitting agencies follow the precautionary principle as it relates to biological communities and recognize their responsibility to the human communities involved and to the devastation that the acoustic seismic testing would wreak on the economy of the Central Coast. We understand and agree that mitigation of said impacts by PG&E is an unacceptable option and cannot be construed as a responsible solution to the impacts of high-intensity acoustic seismic testing both now and in the future."

“The unprecedented formation of a unified coalition – the C.O.A.S.T Alliance – to fight the proposed acoustic seismic testing that PG&E is attempting to permit is a statement in and of itself,” said Mandy Davis, a respected area naturalist and co-spokesperson for C.O.A.S.T. “The fact that such a diverse group of people, with differing backgrounds and positions on past issues can band together to end the potentially horrendous biological impacts of such testing is a testament to the irrefutability of the facts involved and the significance of the resulting negative ramifications for our coastal communities’ economies.”

Said Mark Tognazzini, a commercial fisherman for 44 years – born and raised in Morro Bay, a member of the Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen’s Organization and co-spokesperson for C.O.A.S.T: “This coalition will help everyone, including fishermen, any kind of user group whether you are a consumptive user or just a sightseer of birdwatcher. It’s going to help every user group that’s going to be impacted by this test, and that’s anybody who enjoys the oceans. So, anybody, whether you like looking at the ocean or you like catching something out of it, is going to be impacted.”

Added Mr. Tognazzini: “The public might not have a concept of what 250 decibels, times 18, every 15 seconds is going to do to the oceans. Just the larvae killed, the zoe plankton killed in the upper reaches of the ocean, the displacement of fish, the displacement of mammals. The mammals are going to get pushed into smaller areas where they might be more impacted by fishermen because we’re all going to be in a smaller area trying to make a living, the mammals as well as us.”

“The project EIR clearly states that the biological impacts would be ‘significant’ with hearing loss and mortality an assurance from the smallest of larval forms to the largest of all marine mammals, the Blue Whale,” Ms. Davis states. “Yet within that same EIR the staff states that the impacts are ‘unavoidable.’ The impacts to our community, both biological and economic ARE avoidable.”

Concludes Ms. Davis: “It’s really quite simple. The Department of Fish & Game should not set a very destructive precedent by issuing a permit for ‘take’ within an established MPA. The Coastal Commission should adhere to the Coastal Act and the biological precautionary principle. NOAA should recognize their mandate to uphold and enforce the Endangered Species Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act. All agencies involved should refrain from buying into the fear-based hogwash that this test is going to assure the citizens of a safer power plant and help folks sleep better at night. Last but not least, PG&E, in accordance with AB 1632, should withdraw their permit request for high-intensity acoustic seismic testing, assess and review the current studies already on the table, and act responsibly with the public interest and the viability of the oceans as their priorities.”

Mr. Tognazzini believes it’s important for the average citizen to know what’s going on off the Central Coast. “It’s far-reaching. We’re a community. It’s not just the fishermen that are being impacted.

“The coalition is a great concept,” he said. “We have across the board such diverse backgrounds. That’s the beauty of it. We often actually sit at different sides of the table, on the different sides of the issues, but here’s an issue where you’ve got consumptive users as well as preservationists all coming together saying, really, this test is not going to be good for anyone.”

C.O.A.S.T representatives will be attending the California Fish & Game Commission hearing in Sacramento on Monday, October 3 and 4, and the California Coastal Commission hearing in Oceanside on October 10-12.

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