Coalition of Cities FAQ Sheet

What is happening with Diablo Canyon? This summer, PG&E announced that it wishes to close the nuclear power plant, which first began operating in Avila Beach in 1985. But its plans to close the facility must first be approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), which meets to consider the request Oct. 20th.

What was the response to the closure decision? While some groups were pleased to hear that the nuclear plant was shutting down, the communities surrounding Diablo were surprised by the news. Since the closure has many important ramifications impacting our county’s future, several cities – San Luis Obispo, Atascadero, Arroyo Grande, Morro Bay, Paso Robles and Pismo Beach – formed an unprecedented Coalition of Cities to ensure that the closure does not devastate the local economies.

How would the closure impact the local economy? According to a 2013 report prepared in coordination with the Nuclear Energy Institute, Cal Poly’s Orfalea College of Business and Productive Impact, Diablo’s impact on the county is nearly $1 billion annually, encompassing jobs, schools, infrastructure and other businesses. If Diablo were to shutter, according to the study, the county would lose over 3,200 jobs in virtually every sector and the San Luis Coastal School District would lose 11.6 percent of its annual budget.

Hasn’t Diablo been a good neighbor? The county has benefitted greatly from its presence. But PG&E has equally benefitted from its host, earning huge profits ($1.4 billion in 2014) thanks to a dedicated SLO County workforce. (Diablo provides at least 22 percent of PG&E’s power to California, according to the Cal Poly study.)

The plant had to shut down some day. Why is the coalition protesting PG&E’s request to close Diablo now? Unfortunately, PG&E’s request to close Diablo did not consider the impact on individual communities and offered no plans to assist local communities in transitioning to a post-Diablo economy given the outgoing long term impacts to the region. Given that the county has worked cooperatively since the plant began construction and operation for Diablo’s success for three decades, we think PG&E should work with the communities to ensure a smooth transition.

Nationwide, other small communities with nuclear plants suffered greatly when the facilities closed. We do not want to share their experience. Our residents – including over 1,200 Diablo employees – don’t deserve that.

What does the coalition want from the public? PG&E has requested the CPUC hear its request for closure on Oct. 20. CPUC meetings will be held at hearings on October 20, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. at San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden in El Chorro Regional Park. We hope SLO County residents and officials will inform the CPUC that it must require PG&E be more involved in the transition before it will approve Diablo’s shutdown request. The public should request that the CPUC make decisions that ensure that public safety remains a priority, that recovery funds are allocated in help with the economic transition from losing the region’s largest employer, and require PG&E to keep desalination as an option for the region.

How can PG&E be more involved? We would like PG&E make sure that the continued safe operation of the plant is a priority until closure; help analyze the impact of a closure on individual communities; foster creative solutions to lessen the financial impact; investigate job creation and economic diversification and explore options for future use and protection of the land around Diablo and keep desalination on the table as potential water source for the region.

Why should PG&E have to pay anything – isn’t it a private company? PG&E is a publicly regulated utility. When PG&E decided to build Diablo Nuclear Power Plant, the communities around it assumed a significant risk of having a nuclear power plant built on a seismic fault line. And when Diablo closes, PG&E will leave behind hazardous nuclear waste onsite. Given that Diablo accounts for
eight percent of the county’s economy, simply cutting ties would also leave the community to deal with financial instability while PG&E continues to prosper from its Diablo earnings. Therefore, we ask that PG&E provide resources to ensure the communities don’t suffer economic fallout once Diablo shuts and the region has to transition to a new economy without Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant.