



Dr. Richard McCann Joins Aspen

Aspen is extremely pleased to announce that Dr. Richard McCann, formerly a partner at M.Cubed, has joined our Sacramento office Integrated Energy Analysis and Planning Division as a Senior Associate. Dr. McCann's expertise in energy and natural resource economics and policy is widely recognized. He has testified before numerous regulatory agencies, including FERC, CPUC, CEC, CARB, SWRCB and regional water boards. High-profile issues he has addressed include: sales of utilities' power plants under restructuring; testifying on behalf of California subsequent to the recent energy crisis; the costs for new alternative generating technologies; the economic costs and benefits from acquiring new water resources, including desalination; closure of the Rancho Seco Nuclear plant; and the potential consequences of decommissioning dams on Klamath River.



Dr. McCann received PhD and MS degrees in Resource Economics from the University of California, Berkeley, and an MS degree in Public Policy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He will substantially strengthen Aspen's core business by conducting economic and policy analysis, and developing models and forecasts using economic analytical tools, particularly related to energy and water utilities. He will also add important capabilities to Aspen's growing climate change and air quality analysis. You can reach Dr. McCann at 916-379-0350 or RMcCann@aspeneg.com.

Final EIR/EIS Released on SDG&E Sunrise Powerlink Project

Under contract to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC; CEQA Lead Agency) and under the direction of the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM; NEPA Lead Agency), Aspen recently published the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the highly controversial San Diego Gas & Electric Company's (SDG&E) Sunrise Powerlink Project (Sunrise).

EIR/EIS Preparation. Working with Project Managers Billie Blanchard (CPUC) and Lynda Kastoll (BLM) for the past 2.5 years, Aspen has been managing a team of nearly 20 subcontractors, and using technical experts from all four Aspen offices. SDG&E has stated that the Sunrise Project is needed by 2010 to ensure reliable electricity and to transport energy from renewable energy projects planned in Imperial County.

The proposed transmission line would span 150 miles, starting near El Centro and ending in San Diego near the Pacific Coast. It would include 91 miles of new 500 kilovolt (kV) transmission line (with 22 miles in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park) and 59 miles of new 230 kV line, with both overhead and underground segments.

The scope of Aspen's work went far beyond that of any previous project-level EIR directed by the CPUC. In addition to the full analysis of 27 alternatives, the analysis included large solar and wind projects that would likely be developed if Sunrise is approved, as well as future transmission system upgrades.

A six-volume Draft EIR/EIS was published in January 2008, followed by a Re-circulated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS (RDEIR/SDEIS) in July 2008. The RDEIR/SDEIS was required because of new information that became available after publication of the Draft EIR/EIS. It included analysis of a 1,250 MW wind project proposed by Sempra Generation in northern Mexico as well as 13 transmission line reroutes.

The scope of the Sempra project expanded from a proposal for 250 MW of wind generation (analyzed in the Draft EIR/EIS) to a project that included wind generation, new 500 kV and 69 kV transmission lines, and a new major substation to be located near the town of Jacumba, California.

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Aspen Wins Three More Years with Army Corps

Aspen was recently awarded its fourth Miscellaneous Environmental Services contract with the Los Angeles District (LA District) of the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). With this new contract, Aspen will continue its thirteen-year record of service to the LA District for up to another three years.

Aspen is proud of its long association with the LA District and grateful for the opportunities that the Corps has provided to work on challenging assignments across the southwestern US. These assignments have included task orders for major water resources, flood control, navigation, and environmental restoration projects in California, Arizona, and Nevada. Through our contracts with the Corps, Aspen has also provided services to numerous other federal agencies, including the Border Patrol, US Air Force, Food and Drug Administration, Army National Guard, Marine Corps, Immigration and Naturalization Service, International Boundary and Water Commission, and US Army Forces Command.

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Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Aspen has been a consultant to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) for several projects. We provided NEPA compliance review for two significant restoration projects undertaken by the Conservancy on behalf of the National Park Service. These were for the restoration and rehabilitation of a portion of the Lands End district of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) near the Cliff House and Sutro Baths in San Francisco, and the Coast Trail Corridor Enhancement and Restoration Project in the Marin Headlands.

For Lands End, Aspen researched and documented the rationale for why a new NEPA assessment was not required. The old, but still valid, NEPA analysis was demonstrated to be sufficient for NEPA compliance. The Aspen recommendation was adopted, resulting in project construction beginning a year ahead of schedule.



Lands End Trail Restoration Project



Photo Credit: Charlotte Fiorito

For the Coast Trail Corridor, Aspen documented that 70 individual restoration and vegetation-removal projects within the trails program should be considered elements of the annual vegetation and asset management program conducted by GGNRA. This annual program had an existing NEPA exemption. As a result, the GGNPC was able to save the time and cost of an EA or EIS preparation.

Subsequently, the California Coastal Conservancy (CCC) wanted to contribute funds to the second phase of Lands End restoration. Even though the project had been reviewed under NEPA, CCC believed that an EIR was needed under CEQA as well. Aspen developed a strategy that allowed the State funds to be used on a specific, CEQA-exempt element of the project.

Army Corps Cont. from p.1

Many of the more than one hundred task orders Aspen has completed for the Corps have been associated with some of the most significant projects undertaken by the LA District in the last thirteen years. In fact, Aspen has worked on almost every major project initiated by the LA District since 1995, as well as numerous smaller projects. The work has been varied and interesting, including projects in coastal, desert, mountain, and urban environments. Aspen's role has been to provide various types of environmental support services for these projects, including completion of environmental impact statements, biological surveys, water and soil analyses, air quality analyses, biological technical reports, restoration and revegetation plans, as well as a wide variety of technical studies and reports.

Over the years, Aspen's assignments on Corps projects have been broad in scope and have included work on many significant Corps projects, including:

- Santa Ana River Mainstem Project
- Los Angeles River Improvement Project
- Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project
- Port of Los Angeles Channel Deepening Project
- Whitewater River Flood Control Project
- Murrieta Creek Flood Control, Environmental Restoration, and Recreation Project
- Rio Salado Environmental Restoration Project
- Lower Colorado River Boundary and Capacity Preservation Project
- Imperial Beach Shoreline Protection Project
- San Luis Rey River Flood Control Project

In total, Aspen has worked on nearly 60 different projects for the LA District, including preparation of more than 40 NEPA documents. We look forward to working with the Corps for another three years.

Recent Aspen Wins Include:

- Technical Support/Training for Electricity Supply Analysis, California Energy Commission
- Long-Term Procurement Resource Planning Framework Technical Support Services, California Public Utilities Commission
- Lompoc Wind Energy Project EIR, Santa Barbara County Energy Division
- Santa Maria River Levee Repair Project, US Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District
- Biological and Cultural Resources Surveys for the Trinity GIS O&M Project, US DOE (Western Area Power Administration)
- Loop 303 Sossaman Channel Repair and Improvement Solutions, Flood Control District of Maricopa County
- Western Electricity Dialogue, Park City Center for Public Policy
- CORE/Western Grid Group



Sunrise Powerlink “We commend the team that worked on the Draft EIR/EIS for recognizing impacts to ABDSP and other open spaces and recommending environmentally superior alternatives.” – Diana Lindsay, VP-Environmental Affairs, Anza-Borrego Foundation

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In the Final EIR/EIS (published on October 13, 2008), Aspen responded to more than 3,000 pages of comments on the Draft EIR/EIS and nearly 900 pages of comments on the RDEIR/SDEIS on a tight schedule. Following a complex comparison of alternatives that considered route segments, full projects, and generation alternatives, both the Draft and Final EIR/EIS concluded that two non-wires alternatives (an all-renewable generation alternative and a conventional-plus-renewable generation alternative) would be environmentally superior to the 150-mile proposed Sunrise Project.

Sunrise and Greenhouse Gas Analysis. With Aspen’s experience in air resources management, power plant permitting, and transmission planning, we were able to develop a methodology to evaluate the direct and indirect effects of Sunrise on climate change. Aspen’s Greenhouse Gas Analysis in the EIR/EIS used data provided by the CAISO to evaluate emissions reductions from existing generation throughout the western grid that would occur as a result of Sunrise being operational. Sunrise was the first major environmental project at the CPUC to address climate change, so we closely followed the actions of the California Attorney General and lead agencies around the state to be sure that our analysis would be adequate. The EIR/EIS found that greenhouse gas emissions caused by construction alone would be significant, and not offset by reduced generation emissions until 12 years of operation have passed. The EIR/EIS conclusions will inform the decision-makers who must balance the State’s renewable power and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Agency Decisions. On October 31, 2008, the CPUC’s Administrative Law Judge issued her “Proposed Decision,” recommending that the project not be approved. At the same time, the CPUC’s Assigned Commissioner, Dian Grueneich, issued an “Alternate Decision” recommending that the Environmentally Superior Southern Route (a route that avoids Anza-Borrego Desert State park) be approved. The CPUC is expected to make a decision on the project in December 2008, and BLM is expected to issue its Record of Decision in January 2009.

Aspen Volunteer Aids Endangered Turtle Species in Costa Rica

Environmental scientist Emi Kiyan recently volunteered with the Asociacion Salvemos las Tortugas de Parismina (ASTOP), a community-based project to protect sea turtles on Costa Rica’s Caribbean Coast. Parismina’s desolate beaches are prime nesting grounds for endangered leatherback, green, and hawksbill turtles. Along with local residents, she patrolled the beaches nightly to effectively deter poachers, who covet the turtles and eggs for both food and for their local market value. She observed several massive green turtles laying hundreds of eggs under the cover of intense darkness, which made it challenging for the human participants in this preservation effort.



Aspen Providing Extensive and Comprehensive GIS Database to California Energy Commission

Aspen is assisting the Energy Commission in developing a high-resolution/high-accuracy transmission line GIS database for the entire state of California. The Energy Commission’s original database is based on 20-year-old hard copy map data which was digitized and updated sporadically throughout the last decade.

Aspen is using a combination of high-resolution aerial imagery from the latest flights over California, current Energy Commission GIS data, ancillary imagery data, and external documentation, such as plan and profile drawings, to identify large transmission line corridors and tower structures.

Each structure is digitized in a GIS as a vertex within a line arc and each line arc is identified with key information such as ownership, name of line, kilovoltage (kV) and length of arc. A geoprocessing tool converts line arc vertexes into points representing tower locations with all of the attached information copied to each individual tower. Aspen is also tracking those areas where tower digitization is difficult to identify with aerial imagery. For these areas, Aspen is mobilizing with GPS, laser rangefinders, laptops with GIS, and hardcopy maps to identify and collect tower locations in the field.

This information is then merged with the master transmission line GIS project database. To date Aspen has assisted the Energy Commission in capturing over 8,500 miles of transmission lines and 47,000 individual tower structures in the Southern California and Central Valley regions of the state. This high accuracy GIS data is already being used by the Energy Commission for the Renewable Energy Transmission Initiative (RETI) and Competitive Renewable Energy Zone (CREZ) transmission siting studies. Aspen is continuing work on this important project, presently focusing on additional areas in the Central Valley and Northern California.

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Fixing Mercury Mine Waste Damage in Santa Clara Valley

Mercury ore processing debris fills the Jacques Gulch creek bed and floodplain in Santa Clara County's historic Almaden Mining District. Mercury mining and processing were active here from the Gold Rush era through the late 20th century. In the 1970s, a massive storm-soaked ore waste pile on Mine Hill failed and flowed down into the valley, clogging parts of Jacques Gulch and destroying its natural habitat. Aspen and its team were selected by the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) to develop preliminary engineering and vegetation restoration designs and prepare a CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration for restoring the area. The work included culvert design under a road leading to Almaden Reservoir. Aspen prepared permit applications on behalf of the District as well.

The ore processing waste (calcine) remains after roasting cinnabar ore to release elemental mercury vapor, which is then condensed into its familiar shiny liquid form. Over the years, calcine waste was discarded over the edge of hillside. The debris resting in the valley has formed a dense pavement-like material covering the original creek and its floodplain. Although the creek has cut down through the calcine to near its original elevation, the floodplains remain filled. The restoration work planned for 2009-10 calls for excavating and hauling the calcine to an approved disposal area. Based on Aspen's plans and the SCVWD's final engineering, natural habitat will be established by re-contouring the land surface and revegetating the watershed in native species. The project also will reduce the amount of mercury entering Almaden Reservoir and, further downstream, San Francisco Bay.

New Leaves On The Aspen Tree

Aspen Environmental Group has added more expertise throughout the company.

In the Agoura Hills office, **Cindy Hitchcock** has joined Aspen's Biology department. She is highly experienced, specializing in amphibian biology and amphibian declines. **Akbar Noorzay** has joined our growing GIS Services department. **Insun Hwang** has joined our Air Quality specialists, supporting their work on a number of ongoing projects. **Dalene Schneider** is assisting with document production and marketing.

In the Sacramento office, in addition to Dr. Richard McCann, **Daniel Whitehorn** has joined GIS Services with a specialty in GIS and GPS, **Brian Fedrow** brings expertise in technical editing and document production, and **Richard Walsborn** has joined as an Administrative and Research Assistant supporting the entire office.

Working throughout the State of California, **Arturo Ruelas** has joined Aspen's Mitigation Monitoring team. He is a cultural resource management expert, with more than 25 years of experience.

