

Update on Hatchet Ridge Wind and TANC from the Wintu Conservation Chair

As site work on the Hatchet Ridge Wind project is set to begin, a charter for the operation of the Technical Advisory Committee, (TAC), was circulated among the potential members. Wintu provided input on the document, which will govern the operation of the TAC. The TAC is part of the required mitigation for the project, it's role being to assess the impacts of the project to birds and bats during construction and operation, and to provide adaptive management practices that will respond to these impacts.

It is expected that Wintu Audubon will be invited to sit on the TAC as a voting member, which will set a precedent as the first time an environmental group has been asked to participate in this process for wind facility in California.

Your Conservation Chair, Claudia Lyons Yerion and Secretary Rosemary Powder, will serve as principle and alternate TAC members for Wintu. Thanks to Rose for stepping up to the challenge!

The TAC will be comprised of a representative from Shasta County Planning, California Dept. of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wintu Audubon and the project owner, Pattern Energy.

The planning and permitting process for the TANC powerline project was halted after several of the participating power companies withdrew as partners in the project and WAPA removed the project from the Federal Register.

This as a result of massive public outcry from landowners and environmental groups.

The project, whose stated purpose was to improve power reliability and to connect to alternative power sources in northern California, was to be massive in scope and area, covering much of the north state from the S.F. Bay Area all the way to the northeast portion of the state. There were also fears that this project would connect to coal-fired power plants being constructed in neighboring states, supplying California consumers with 'dirty power'.

Audubon California Policy Director Dan Taylor was heavily involved in lobbying the power companies of TANC to construct the project in a way that would minimize impacts to birds and the environment; advocating for use of existing powerline corridors and towers. The project proposed all-new powerline corridors, with two corridors proposed for the northeastern portion of the state, which would pose electrocution dangers to birds such as the Sandhill Crane and large raptors, as well as fragmenting habitat and loss of carbon-sequestering forest area.

Wintu Audubon was able to assist Dan Taylor by providing our analysis of the impacts to our region which he incorporated into his written responses to the notice of preparation and his discussions with the power companies.

Wintu also submitted our own comprehensive 20-page written response to the Notice of Preparation for the project. (This document should be available soon for viewing on the Wintu website.)

- Claudia Lyons Yerion,
Wintu Conservation Chair