

Column: Urgent Appeal for Electrical Power Redundancy in Del Norte and Curry Counties

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Dear Community Constituents,

In the wake of recent catastrophic events, we find ourselves urgently seeking your assistance in rectifying a preventable and distressing situation that affects both Curry and Del Norte counties- the lack of electrical power redundancy. A solution to this problem is not only conceivable but, given the proximity of the power infrastructures in both counties, eminently achievable.

Del Norte County has faced an onslaught from the relentless Smith River Complex Fire, which has decimated vast tracts of land, amounting to over 85,000 acres thus far. The fire's rampage led to an extensive power outage that lasted over a week, casting a pall of darkness and uncertainty across the region.

Addressing this crisis necessitated an unprecedented response: the deployment of 81 commercial-grade generators to temporarily restore power to Del Norte County until the restoration of the primary transmission lines. This emergency measure, although successful, came at a monumental cost. A staggering amount of fuel, approximately one million gallons over a three-week period, was consumed to maintain this makeshift power grid, illustrating the sheer scale and financial burden of this operation.

This predicament is not isolated to Del Norte County. In recent years, Curry County has faced similar threats, with significant fires causing damage and raising the specter of extended blackouts. It is deeply concerning that the electrical lines in both counties, though located mere feet apart, lack an interconnection to provide power redundancy in times of crisis. The gravity of this issue cannot be overstated; it poses a substantial risk to the well-being of our communities, particularly given the financial vulnerabilities in our economically distressed regions.

To mitigate future disasters, it is essential to address the following points with the power utility providers:

- 1) Gain consensus on the necessity for redundant lines.
- 2) Navigate the regulatory hurdles existing between the two states.
- 3) Initiate necessary planning and design work.
- 4) Rectify the voltage incompatibility across the state line.
- 5) Secure financial support to establish a new transmission line.

The intended course of action is for the electric utilities servicing both counties to prepare detailed studies. This will pave the way for an agreement on the specific steps necessary to achieve this goal. Presumably, the construction of a new transmission line, approximately 55 miles long, will be pivotal, connecting the Rogue substation near Gold Beach, Oregon to a substation close to Fort Dick, California.

Despite our persistent communications and efforts to expedite this crucial interconnection, we are concerned that the involved parties, namely Pacific Power, Bonneville Power Administration, and Coos Curry Electric Cooperative, may not prioritize these studies. It is imperative to apply political pressure to ensure that the necessary improvements, permitting, and other requisite tasks are accomplished by next summer.

Time is of the essence, as both counties are at a critical juncture where another catastrophe could bring insurmountable consequences. Historically, one of the most effective political tools has been a coordinated letter writing campaign. For your convenience, we have attached templates which can be easily personalized to suit your individual perspectives and preferences. We ardently request your support and intervention in this matter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wes White is President of the Tri-Agency Economic Development Authority. He may be reached at wes.white@charter.net.

