

# Group sues to shut down power corridor

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Lawsuit could affect SDG&E's Sunrise Powerlink proposal | Thursday, January 10, 2008 9:38 PM PST [8](#)

An environmental group sued Thursday to overturn the federal government's designation of Southern California and Arizona as an electricity corridor of "national interest," something with big implications for a power line proposed for San Diego County.

In October, the Department of Energy put seven Southern California counties ---- including San Diego, Riverside and Imperial ---- in the corridor, which spans nearly 70,000 square miles. The agency also designated a national corridor along the heavily populated East Coast.

Under energy legislation passed in 2005, proponents of power-line projects in national corridors have the option of asking the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to overrule state denials. And officials with San Diego Gas & Electric Co., which wants to string a 150-mile, high-voltage line between El Centro and Carmel Valley, have said they would consider invoking that option.

For now, utility officials are working with the California Public Utilities Commission, a regulatory body that is reviewing its \$1.3 billion proposal and is expected to deliver a decision by August.

But the Arizona-based Center for Biological Diversity, which filed the lawsuit in Los Angeles federal court Thursday, asked that the Department of Energy be ordered to withdraw the California-Arizona corridor and prepare an environmental study before trying again.

Amy Atwood, a staff attorney for the group in Portland, Ore., said the National Environmental Policy Act requires agencies to study environmental impacts before making such sweeping decisions.

"That's the law that forces all federal agencies to look before they leap," Atwood said.

The Department of Energy contends such a study is not required for the corridor overall, but for individual projects proposed inside it.

In a statement, department spokeswoman Julie Ruggiero said: "Designation of corridors, as directed by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, in and of itself has no environmental impact, but instead identifies a problem and shines a spotlight on areas of the country that are experiencing or could experience interruptions in power supply."

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