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**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking to Modernize
the Electric Grid for a High Distributed
Energy Resources Future.

Rulemaking 21-06-017
(Filed June 24, 2021)

**WILD TREE FOUNDATION
COMMENTS ON ORDER INSTITUTION RULEMAKING**

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Dated: August 16, 2021

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Pursuant to the Order Instituting Rulemaking To Modernize The Electric Grid For A High Distributed Energy Resources Future (“OIR”) issued in this proceeding July 2, 2021, Wild Tree Foundation (“Wild Tree”) submits the following comments on the preliminary scoping memo and other proposals in the OIR.

Wild Tree Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to protection of our environment, climate, and wildlife. Wild Tree advocates that our future is dependent upon a transition away from fossil fueled and utility-scale electricity generation reliant upon lengthy transmission from for-profit, investor owned utilities to a system based upon local, distributed, publicly and cooperatively owned renewable resources. Wild Tree intervenes in Commission proceedings to further the interests of our environment, climate, wildlife, and ratepayers that are concerned about their protection. In furtherance of these interests, Wild Tree advocates for transparency, public participation, and compliance with the Rule of Law in government decision-making and against corruption by government agencies and officials and regulated entities.

COMMENTS

Wild Tree provides the following comments as answers to questions posed in the OIR. Overall, Wild Tree fully supports the stated goal in the OIR of “preparing the grid to accommodate what is expected to be a high DER future and capture as much value as possible from DERs as well as mitigate any unintended negative impacts.” The proposed scoping questions cover much ground and seek to answer many important questions but the proposed schedule would not lay the proper foundation for this proceeding and would not allow for sufficient stakeholder involvement. At this time, Wild Tree does not challenge the categorization as quasi-legislative or determination that hearings are not necessary but, as discussed below, parties should have the opportunity to provide factual evidence as well as legal argument on all proposed issues.

1. How should the proceeding schedule and tracks be managed? Should the tracks be reorganized, and if so, how? Comments may include whether to amend the issues presented in the OIR and how to prioritize the issues to be resolved; how to procedurally address these issues; and a proposed schedule for resolving the issues that may extend beyond 36 months. Please also address to what extent the tracks should be run in parallel or sequentially, taking into consideration stakeholder capacity to participate in multiple tracks at once.

The first step in this proceeding should be completion of analytics that describe the baseline of DER deployment and established of the role DER plays and can play in achievement of state GHG emission reduction goals and other value in value elements of DER such as reliability and energy security. The OIR explains that “The work contemplated in this OIR aligns with analytics activities underway at the CEC to increase understanding about plausible levels of DER deployment and their grid implications, the value and scope of services DER can provide to address reliability and Senate Bill 100 goals, and anticipated levels of transportation

electrification and its grid implications.” (OIR at p. 25.) The OIR further states that “Collaboration with the CEC throughout the course of the proceeding is anticipated to support decision making in each track as appropriate based on the contents of CEC independent research and development efforts.” (OIR at p. 25.) While collaboration with the CEC is appropriate, there should not be decisions made in this proceeding prior to completion of work establishing where we are and what are the technically feasible possibilities for where we can go in so far as “captur[ing] as much value as possible from DERs.” This work should be conducted at the outset of this proceeding with stakeholder participation so as to inform decisions regarding the issues proposed in the OIR.

Furthermore, the schedule suggested in the OIR seems to be somewhat inverted with a decision on the role of DSO coming prior to answering questions about Distribution Planning, Data Portals, Community Engagement, and DER Integration, Smart Inverter Operationalization, and Grid Modernization. These issues in this proceeding that involve questions of technical capabilities, data and metrics, and frameworks should be addressed prior to issues of policy and planning including the DSO issues.

2. Should the Commission address Track 1 (DSO) issues with a consultant-led process that includes a white paper followed by workshops and culminates in a third-party consultant report of recommendations? If not, how should Track 1 issues be addressed?

This suggested process does not leave enough room for stakeholder participation. Wild Tree expects that this topic will be controversial as the IOUs will have desires regarding their role in distribution system operation that conflict with interest of many stakeholders including Wild Tree that seek to see our grid run by accountable, public entities instead of for-profit, private corporations. While Wild Tree does not necessarily believe, at this point, that evidentiary

hearings are necessarily, there should be opportunity for stakeholders to provide factual evidence as well as legal argument on DSO issues.

3. Should the Commission address Track 2 (DPP) issues through a series of consultant technical reports supplemented by workshops and followed by staff proposals? If not, how should Track 2 issues be addressed?

It does not make sense to attempt to address issues of community involvement through a process that sidelines community involvement. Technical reports prepared by consultants and workshops will sideline the necessary community voices on these issues. While Wild Tree does not necessarily believe, at this point, that evidentiary hearings are necessarily, there should be opportunity for stakeholders to provide factual evidence as well as legal argument on DPP issues.

4. Should the Commission address Track 3 (smart inverter operationalization, grid modernization, and GRC alignment) issues in two separate work streams: 1) a smart inverter working group and working group report followed by a staff proposal and workshop, and 2) a staff-led proposal and workshop on grid modernization and GRC alignment? If not, how should Track 3 issues be addressed?

Yes, these issues should be addressed in separate work streams.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ April Maurath Sommer

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