



October 26, 2018

California Public Utilities Commission  
Consumer Affairs Branch (CAB)  
505 Van Ness Ave.  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear CAB:

Save East Bay Hills is an organization of Oakland hills residents founded to protect the natural beauty and iconic character of our neighborhoods and regional parks. Our primary focus is protecting the historic mix of trees growing throughout the hills upon which local character, natural beauty, and property values depend.

This Autumn, many homeowners and residents throughout the San Francisco East Bay awoke to find multitudes of healthy, beloved, and in many cases, more than century old and historic trees growing on private and public property in their neighborhoods suddenly marked with a spray painted X or dot, tagging them for imminent destruction or radical trimming by PG&E. In awakening to this anxiety-inducing threat, East Bay residents join other Californians living along the 100,000 miles of PG&E transmission lines whose neighborhoods are currently or will soon undergo an environmentally and aesthetically devastating transformation.

6114 La Salle Ave. 836 | Oakland, CA 94611 | [saveeastbayhills.org](http://saveeastbayhills.org)

In the Oakland hills, for instance, there are some streets where the tallest trees on virtually every lot will be destroyed or radically cut back, devastation that will render such neighborhoods unrecognizable after PG&E crews sweep through with chainsaws to destroy the very thing that makes such neighborhoods so desirable: their natural beauty.

In the place of soaring trees, large canopies, shade, and habitat for local wildlife, PG&E will leave tree stumps and empty sky, with many remaining trees being profoundly hacked without regard for beauty or symmetry. Not only will this loss take an emotionally devastating toll on many local residents, but by degrading landscaping and destroying property value-enhancing trees, it will also negatively impact what is for many residents their single greatest asset: their homes.

Yet despite this radical agenda which effects primarily private but also public lands as well, PG&E has failed to adequately educate citizens and homeowners about their rights. In fact, homeowners in other parts of California where PG&E's tree killing has already begun, such as in the Santa Cruz mountains, report that PG&E has not only been inconsistent and contradictory in the information it provides to citizens regarding their right to object, it has both failed to honor agreements with homeowners not to kill trees and it is forcing them to agree to the killing of trees they don't want destroyed under duress by fear mongering about liability.

This negligent conduct, which impacts Californians throughout PG&E's 70,000 square mile service area, has proceeded without any opportunity for public input, without an environmental impact review by PG&E, without adequate oversight by the California Public Utilities Commission, without regard for less destructive alternatives, and without analysis of actual effectiveness at achieving the stated aim of fire prevention. PG&E is recklessly, and potentially illegally, proceeding without mitigation plans, information about the impact on biological assets, or consideration of what habitats, species, or nests may be in danger.

Compacting the haste, shambolic, and undemocratic way in which this process has unfolded is the larger issue of its ineffectiveness at achieving its stated aim. In fact, cutting down healthy, moisture-rich, shade-giving, wind-breaking and fire resistant trees will not reduce the risk of fire, it will thereby exacerbate it. At the same time, it leaves the actual cause of fires associated with the electrical equipment itself unaddressed and, therefore, an ongoing threat.

Instead of allowing PG&E to kill trees, destroy local beauty, harm the environment, and devastate property values, the California Public Utilities Commission must force PG&E to eliminate the danger of fire resulting from downed lines through the following methods:

- Installing, as San Diego Gas & Electric has done, High Impedance Arc Fault Circuit Interruption Gear — lightning fast circuit breaker technology that can cut the power to a broken electric line before it hits the ground, eliminating any danger associated with a downed line, such as fire or electrocution;
- Replacing small gage and/or uninsulated distribution and power pole wire with strong insulated wire;

- Replacing wooden power poles with metal power poles that are capable of supporting stronger, heavier wire and the additional communication equipment that would also eliminate arcing of downed wires;
- Improve falling object and wildlife contact protection of transformers and the tangle of conductors that bridge between the distribution wiring and homes or service locations; and where necessary,
- Putting wires underground.

PG&E is sitting on over \$1 billion in credit reserves to make these necessary upgrades. Instead of doing so, as other public utility agencies in California such as San Diego Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison have already done, PG&E is determined to force local homeowners to bear the burdens associated with their attempt to limit liability from their own faulty and inadequate equipment instead.

On behalf of the millions of Californians served by PG&E, we demand that the California Public Utility Commission immediately suspend the planned destruction of healthy trees growing on our properties and on our collectively owned public lands and demand that PG&E — an agency that provides a public utility but in 2016 paid its CEO over \$10 million, its Vice President \$3.5 million, and each of its Board of Directors \$1 million — use its considerable financial resources to protect both the environment *and* public safety by upgrading their antiquated infrastructure instead.

Very truly yours,

SAVE THE EAST BAY HILLS