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Sierra Club still loves the ocean

By Andrew Christie

Former County Agriculture Commissioner Bob Lilley is dead wrong about the Sierra Club's position on the Diablo Canyon seismic surveys. ("Seismic test not worth damage to ocean," Aug. 23).

We have worked to force PG&E to change how it will pursue seismic testing. In conjunction with the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, the Sierra Club tried to persuade the State Lands Commission to move its recent hearing from Sacramento to SLO County. That effort resulted in the creation of a remote meeting site in Morro Bay, allowing local citizens to voice their concerns. In the weeks leading up to that meeting, we alerted our members to the need to attend and ask for alternatives environmentally preferable to PG&E's proposal. They did.

My testimony at that meeting sharply questioned the claim that the proposed testing's impacts on fish would be minimal. Our written comments to the State Lands Commission and National Science Foundation urge a review of the necessity of the offshore portion of the surveys and redesign of the project.

We have pointed to the Public Utilities Commission testimony of former PG&E geologist Dr. Douglas Hamilton noting that PG&E could get the data required with much less focus on offshore faults and much more focus on less-studied onshore faults. We want testing, but not in a way that decimates the environment and the fishery.

The California Coastal Commission is likely to hear PG&E's application for a permit for this project at its October meeting in Oceanside. It has the authority to require that the utility significantly reconfigure the testing to assure maximum protection for the marine wildlife of the Central Coast. We urge all concerned residents to attend that meeting and ask the Commission to do so.

Andrew Christie is the director of the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club.