

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

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COUNTY

County Works to Close Digital Divide in Unincorporated Area

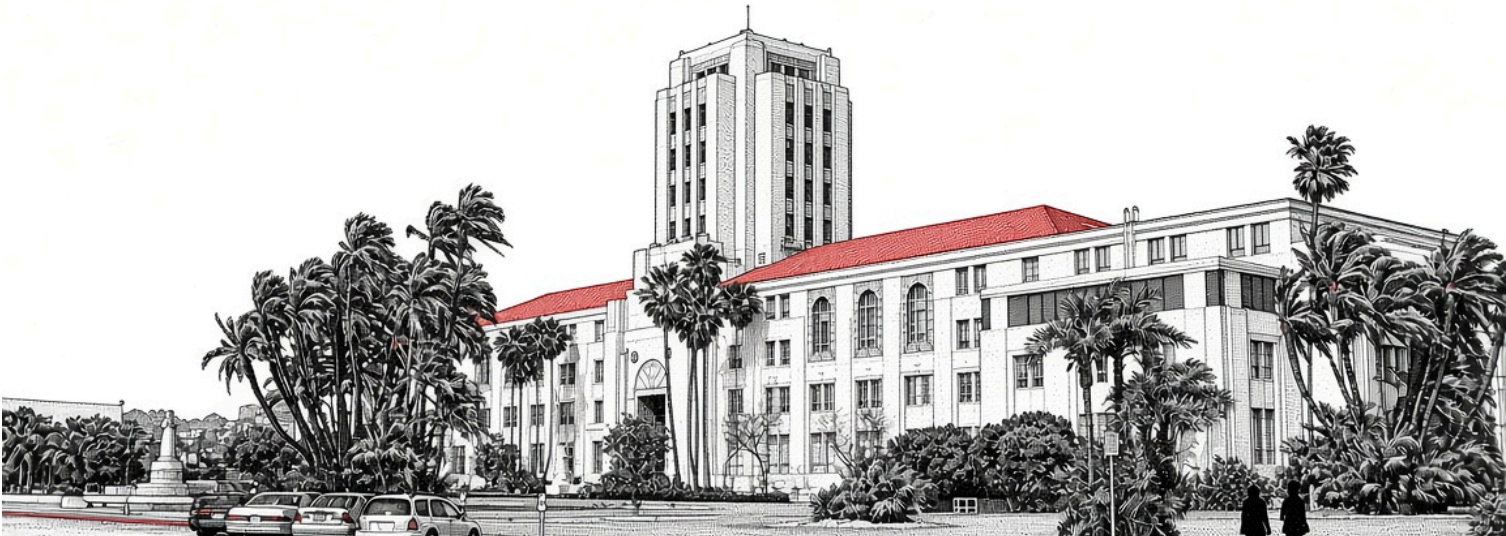


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In San Diego County's unincorporated areas, there are pockets where high-speed internet is unavailable, unreliable or unaffordable. The County is working to reduce the digital gap and has made available \$9 million in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act for broadband infrastructure.

Through an appointed Broadband Committee, the County has selected projects submitted by Internet Service Providers to provide affordable broadband service to over 1,000 residents in three unincorporated areas:

\$4.7M awarded to Onward to deliver high-speed internet service to 281 households in Warner Springs.

\$2.7M awarded to AT&T to deliver high-speed internet service to 101 households in San Dieguito.

\$1.5M awarded to AT&T to deliver high-speed internet service to 53 households in Ramona.

Each chosen project provides affordable internet service at or below \$30 per month to low-income households.

In July 2024, the Notice of Funding Availability was shared with all known Internet Service Providers in the county.

The County requested grant proposals through public outreach and engagement based on findings from the Comprehensive Broadband Plan.

The Plan supports the County's efforts in attempting to close the digital divide in the

unincorporated area by identifying problem areas and the partnerships, infrastructure and education needed to change that.

"These projects will provide affordable internet plans for low-income households, and high-speed internet access, strengthening residents' connection to telehealth, education and economic opportunities. This is one of several positive outcomes for the community advanced by our Comprehensive Broadband Plan," said Dahvia Lynch, general manager of the County's Land Use & Environment Group leading broadband efforts for the County.

Construction of the internet and full operable service into the homes will be completed by December 31, 2026.

County of San Diego news release · Dec 18, 2024

COUNTY

'Tis the Season for Scams

The holiday season is prime time for scammers, with thousands of older adults scammed each year in San Diego County.

San Diegans over the age of 60 often become victims of scams, on average losing over \$30,000, according to the FBI's 2023 Elder Fraud Report . Older adults are often retired with no way to recover their life savings, whereas younger adults have more time to remedy their financial situation.

For years, local law enforcement lacked the tools and resources to investigate these cases and there was less connection between the FBI and the County's Adult Protective Services (APS), which was receiving thousands of suspicious reports a year. In 2021 the law changed, allowing the agencies to

share that vital information.

That same year, County Aging & Independence Services (AIS) , the District Attorney's Office and law enforcement representing jurisdictions throughout the region teamed up with the FBI to create the Elder Justice Task Force to investigate older adult scam cases and bring criminals to justice. To date, the task force has helped recover \$3.3 million and both the District Attorney and U.S. Attorney's office have successfully prosecuted the criminals involved.

Experts say scammers use layered schemes and fool people in different ways. Phone calls, texts, email and pop ups that appear to be legitimate communications from a bank, family member or government agency are ultimately tricks to steal money. They also note that no government agency will urge anyone to pay something immediately, especially with a wire transfer, gold, bitcoin or gift cards.

If you feel like you're falling for a scam, follow these guidelines:

Look up the business online and call that number

If it's a friend or family member, call them directly using a number you have used before.

"No one should be embarrassed if they fall victim to a scam, it can happen to anyone," said Jessica Salazar, supervisor for the financial abuse unit at the County's Adult Protective Services. "It's important as soon as you realize something is wrong to call your financial institution and let them know in detail what happened. That is the best way to try and get your money back."

Salazar is part of a team focused on investigating older adult scam cases. Her team is busy with a steady flow of cases and collaborates with other teams in APS to manage the heavy caseload.

The County provided 33 Don't Get

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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‘Tis the Season for Scams

Hooked trainings for more than 700 San Diegans across the region between July 2023 and June 2024. Older adults, caregivers, family and friends of those most at risk learned about common scams, protection strategies, what to do if scammed, and signs to watch for to determine if a loved one is being scammed.

“Every day in San Diego more than a dozen seniors are likely walking into their banks after being traumatized by scammers and are trying to withdraw their life savings, convinced that their financial accounts have been compromised,” said Scott Pirrello, deputy district attorney.

If you or a loved one has been scammed, report your case to local law enforcement and file a report with the FBI at www.IC3.gov . To report any type of suspected financial elder abuse, please contact the APS Hotline at 800-339-4661.

County of San Diego news release · Dec 17, 2024

COUNTY
Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Recycling Time is Here

Gifts, boxes, wrapping paper, cards—even trees! Yes, the holidays, and one of the biggest recycling opportunities of the year, are upon us.

The holiday season always means there’s a lot of stuff to recycle—to “re-gift” to our earth and its future—rather than tossing it into the trash and landfills.

With that holiday spirit of giving back in mind, the County Department of Public Works would like to give you some tips on what to recycle and how to do it right!

We all love our beautiful Christmas trees. But if you’re using a real tree, there eventually comes a time to say goodbye. The County is here to let you know how to recycle it the right way.

Properly recycled trees and wreaths can be turned into mulch that will improve soil health and help soil retain moisture at our parks, farms, home gardens and landscapes. Recycling them

also keeps them from going into the trash where they can unnecessarily fill up landfills and generate unwanted climate-changing greenhouse gases as they decompose.

So, check with your waste hauler to find out if they offer curbside pickup. Many of them do. Or go to the County’s recycling and hazardous waste database, WastefreeSD.org , to find Christmas tree drop-off sites near you. It’s easy.

Type “Christmas tree” in the “find an item” box, add your ZIP code, community and how you heard about the site, and you’ll see all the drop-off locations near you.

Finally, remember, never leave your old dry tree or wreaths lying in the backyard where they can become dangerous fire hazards.

Know What Packaging Can—and Can NOT—be Recycled

Online shopping and gift-giving typically means lots of packaging, and a lot of stuff to recycle. But not all packaging can be recycled. For example, cardboard boxes and kraft paper can be recycled (just break them down and put them in your blue recycling bin). But other items can’t — manila envelopes, padded plastic mailers, bubble-wrap and traditional gift-wrapping materials including metallic wrapping paper, wrapping paper with glitter, ribbons, bows, twine, tissue paper and cellophane. So please DO NOT put them in your blue recycling bins; consider re-using them instead. Here’s a link to learn more about how to Recycle Right , during the holidays and every day.

Like packaging materials, not all holiday cards should be added to your recycling. Simple paper cards and envelopes can be added to your blue bins. But cards that have glitter, foil, metallic inks (inks made with tiny metal flakes) or other adornments can’t. If there’s a glitzy front and plain paper backing, tear the cards in two. Recycle the backs and put the glitzy fronts into the trash.

Please — don’t put old holiday lights in your recycling bins. They can tangle up recycling equipment and they also pose a danger to workers in those

recycling centers. For recycling options, please visit WasteFreeSD.org , or contact a scrap metal or e-waste recycler.

So, there you have it. Remember, if you have other questions about what can and can’t be recycled, go to DPW Recycling’s webpage or to DPW Recycling’s Facebook page .

County of San Diego news release · Dec 16, 2024

COUNTY
Probation Supervisor Receives Employee of the Year Statewide Award

A San Diego County Probation Youth Development and Community Support Services special projects supervisor has received the California Probation Employee of the Year.

The Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), an association of all 58 counties, awarded Yvonne Salgado at its annual awards ceremony earlier this month. Salgado first received the Southern Region Employee of the Year award along with four other Region Employees of the Year. Then she was selected among the five region award recipients.

“A true leader, Yvonne encourages excellence from her staff, fosters a culture of learning, and is dedicated to advancing the core values of our Probation Department,” said Chief Probation Officer for San Diego County Tamika Nelson. “Her positivity, genuine enjoyment of her work, and willingness to support her colleagues make her a beacon of inspiration in the field of probation work and enhance the health and safety for everyone in our community.”

Nelson said Salgado’s exceptional leadership, dedication and innovative approach to community collaboration and youth development has had a transformative impact on County Probation and the broader California Probation profession. She had made significant contributions on numerous critical projects and initiatives.

Recognizing a need to note in the Probation case

management system if the child was affected by the Child Welfare Act (ICWA), she led an effort to develop a ICWA Node in the Probation system. She did this by implementing ICWA policy and procedures in collaboration with Tribal Star for planning and working with County staff to assist with the technological set up.

She worked with community partners to create the Community Resource Directory, a comprehensive system facilitating referrals to community programs. Then, Salgado spearheaded a virtual resource fair where community partners showcased their unique programs and answered participant questions. Now, she has expanded the directory to include ICWA partners.

“Officer Salgado exemplifies what it means to be a dedicated and forward-thinking leader,” said Tulare County Probation Chief Kelly Vernon, president of the CPOC. “Her tireless efforts and collaborative approach continue to uplift not only San Diego County but also serve as a model for probation across California.”

County of San Diego news release · Dec 13, 2024

COUNTY
Protect Yourself, Family and Friends from the Flu this Holiday Season

As flu cases continue to increase, County public health doctors are reminding San Diegans to take care of themselves and loved ones this holiday season.

This week the County reported 761 new flu cases, up from 468 cases the week before. This week-to-week increase is the biggest so far this flu season, which happens during fall and winter

To date, seven people have died from the flu this season. Most were people aged 65 years and older.

Older adults and young children are at greatest risk of getting seriously sick from the flu or dying. During last flu season, 60 people died including two infants.

“We are seeing flu cases go

up each week as we approach the holidays,” said Dr. Ankita Kadakia, County interim public health officer. “This is concerning because historically we see spikes directly following big holiday gatherings. That is why it is important that everyone takes some extra precautions to reduce the spread of the flu virus.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 6 months and older get a flu shot yearly. The CDC also indicates you can get a flu and COVID-19 vaccination at the same time, including a booster dose. The COVID-19 vaccine does not work against the flu or vice versa.

The flu vaccine can help keep those most at risk of getting really sick from the flu from ending up in the hospital.

Those who should make vaccination a priority include:

People with chronic medical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and lung disease, even if symptoms are under control

People who live with or care for others who are at higher risk

The influenza vaccine is available at doctors’ offices and retail pharmacies and is covered by medical insurance. People with no health care coverage can get vaccinated at one of the County’s six public health centers or a local community clinic. To find the nearest location, visit the County’s Flu Vaccine Locations page or call 2-1-1 San Diego.

In addition to getting vaccinated, people should also do the following to avoid getting sick:

Use hand sanitizers, if unable to wash hands

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth

If you are sick, stay home and avoid contact with others

County Health and Human Services Agency publishes the Respiratory Viruses Surveillance report, which tracks key flu, COVID-19, and RSV indicators and summarizes respiratory virus surveillance in the region.

County of San Diego news release · Dec 13, 2024

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BUSINESS
Chamber Participates in Statewide Prop 36 Roundtable

Chamber Executive Director of Public Affairs Justine Murray joined elected officials, public safety leaders, and law enforcement officers from across the state on December 12 th in Los Angeles for a discussion regarding the implementation of Proposition 36. Chamber representation was critical to ensure that the San Diego business community’s voice is at the table while decisions are made on the implementation of this important ballot measure.

Prop 36 was one of the most

significant criminal justice victories in California history, winning majorities in every county and more than 68% of the vote statewide. Prop 36 must be implemented in a fair and effective way, protecting law and order while also connecting our most vulnerable with the resources they need to overcome addiction and mental health issues. Public and private sector collaboration is needed across the state for the successful implementation of this measure.

The roundtable featured panels focused on the perspectives of retailers, law enforcement officials, policy makers, treatment and addiction experts, just system and treatment professionals, and more. Attendees discussed how the development of best practices that any county or city can adopt to enforce tougher laws against retail theft, fentanyl trafficking, and to move those suffering from addiction into treatment through the newly

authorized treatment-mandated-felony provision. The Chamber will continue to work with leaders across the state to implement Proposition 36, as the safety of employees, residents, and tourists alike remains a top priority for San Diego’s business community.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Dec 16, 2024

BUSINESS
Chamber meets with Gov. Newsom

Earlier this month, Governor Gavin Newsom visited our border region and Chamber’s COO and Executive Vice President, Jessica Anderson, joined the Governor on a business roundtable and press conference on border efficiency and the impact of tariffs on cross-border economic prosperity and global competitiveness.

Governor Newsom announced the completion of the Otay Mesa East Land Port of entry by December of 2027 and efforts to finalize a design contract by the end of this

year. Increased resources to protect public safety and hinder drug trafficking across port of entry, including the deployment of additional CalGuard’s Counterdrug Task Forces, were also announced. CalGuard will additionally target the contraband of firearms and money from the U.S. into Mexico and work closely with the U.S. Department of State to facilitate military partnership with Mexico under the Federal State Partnership Program.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Dec 16, 2024

BUSINESS
Chamber COO Wins 2024 Nonprofit Business Woman of the Year

The Chamber was proud to attend the San Diego Business Journal’s annual Business Women of the Year Awards Luncheon which celebrates the accomplishments of remarkable female business leaders in San Diego. Through the Chamber and LEAD San

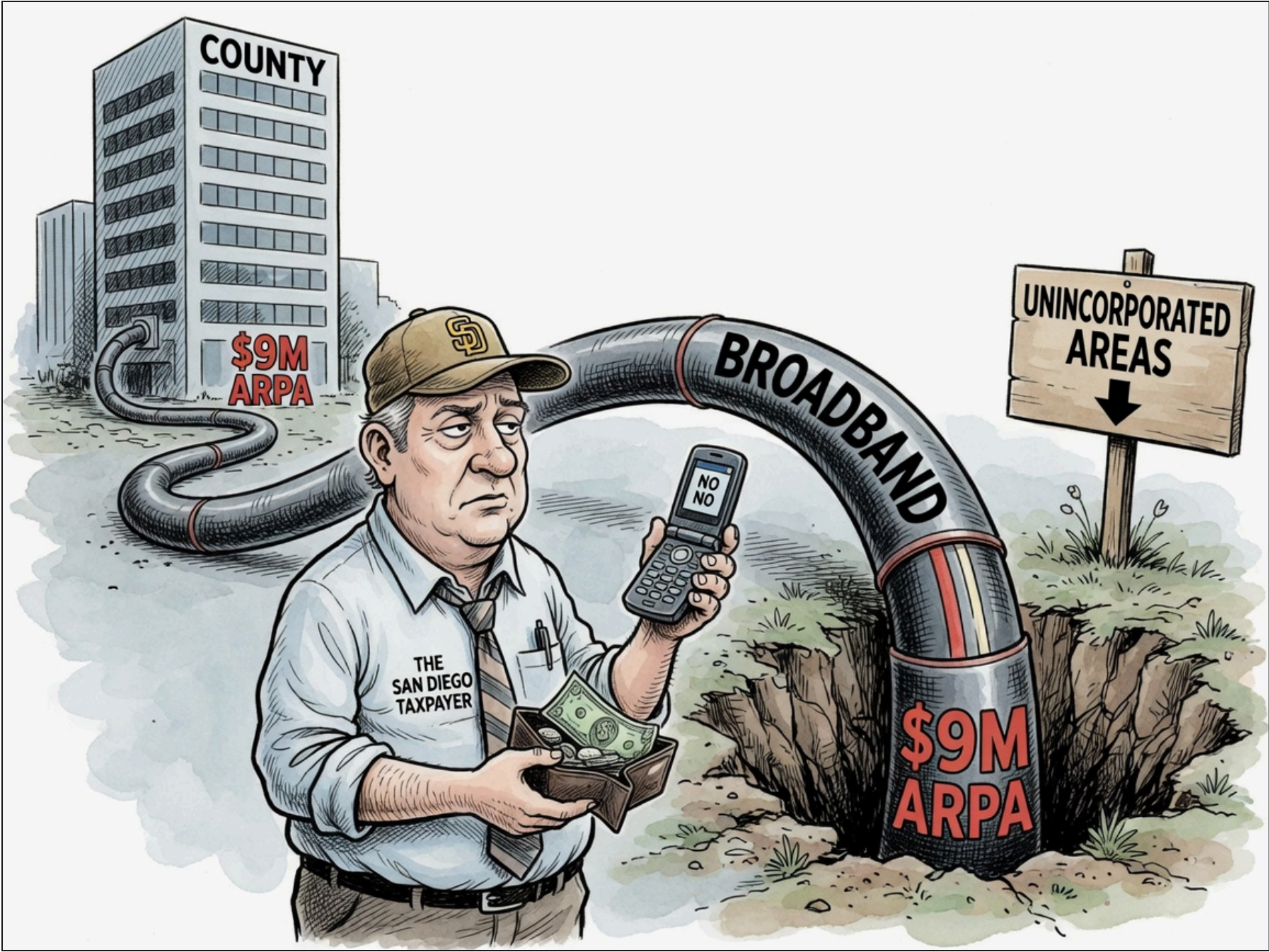
Diego, we strive to support and uplift women in leadership positions throughout our region.

Chamber’s own COO and Executive Vice President, Jessica Anderson, was selected as the 2024 Nonprofit Business Woman of the Year. This is a much-deserved recognition of Jessica’s accomplishments and her outstanding leadership at the Chamber, who is also stepping up as Interim President and CEO starting January 3 rd .

We extend our congratulations to all the winners, including LEAD San Diego Board Chair Nancy Rohland-Heinrich, and the many Chamber members and regional partners who were named among the finalists. All of whom join an impressive list of previous Chamber community members who have received this award.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Dec 16, 2024

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON



Closing the digital divide, one federal dollar at a time

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COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

COMMENTARY

Is Utility-Scale Solar Truly Competitive in California?

Edward Ring of the California Policy Center questions the economic viability and hidden costs of converting vast farmland into the world's largest solar array.

Plans by the Westlands Water District to transform roughly 200 square miles of Central Valley farmland into a massive solar facility have drawn attention, as noted in a recent Politico report. The idea of shifting from growing crops to generating electricity makes sense on the surface amid challenges with water availability, according to Edward Ring, director of water and energy policy at the California Policy Center.

Ring argues that several key assumptions behind this push deserve closer scrutiny. He suggests that addressing unreliable water sources should involve expanding infrastructure and improving management of the delta rather than abandoning agriculture. Proponents, he writes, must also assess the potential heat island effects from covering such a large

area with dark solar panels.

A central concern Ring highlights is the significant seasonal variation in solar output, even when paired with battery storage. He points out that in 2023, California's utility-scale photovoltaic systems produced 4,456 gigawatt-hours in June but only 1,832 gigawatt-hours in December. Scaling up further could create surpluses in summer months that prove difficult to sell.

Setting aside those issues, Ring examines the project's potential economic returns. He estimates that panels across 200 square miles would generate about 200,000 gigawatt-hours annually. This calculation assumes 15.5 watts per square foot in full sun, 6.5 full-sun-equivalent hours daily and an overall yield of 27 percent. For comparison, the California Energy Commission reported an average 23 percent yield for the state's existing utility-scale solar in 2023.

Excluding land costs that current owners might absorb and assuming no disruption in panel supplies, Ring uses a conservative installed system cost of \$1 per watt. That leads

to a total upfront investment of \$84 billion for the solar array. At today's wholesale electricity price of \$0.05 per kilowatt-hour, the project would bring in roughly \$10 billion in yearly revenue.

Such figures might appear promising under the right financing conditions, Ring notes, but he adds that heavy government support plays a major role in making these projects attractive. Investors can receive at least a 30 percent tax credit along with accelerated depreciation, and operators may earn Renewable Energy Credits based on output.

Any large solar development would also require substantial storage capacity. Ring calculates that storing half the daily generation for later use at peak times would demand battery systems costing another \$41 billion, at \$150,000 per megawatt-hour. The combined total reaches \$125 billion.

Financing that amount over 25 years at 5 percent interest would mean annual loan payments of \$8.9 billion, according to Ring. While batteries could allow the facility to supply steady

baseload power and command higher wholesale rates, he emphasizes the wide gap between California's average retail electricity price of \$0.32 per kilowatt-hour and the wholesale average near \$0.05. Much of that difference stems from transmission, distribution and grid integration expenses.

Ring observes that federal subsidies seem likely to continue, as lawmakers from states benefiting most from current infrastructure programs may resist cuts. Yet developers still confront numerous obstacles. Statewide electricity use stood at 281,000 gigawatt-hours in 2023, while the California Air Resources Board aims for 500,000 gigawatt-hours by 2045.

Uncertainties include whether electric vehicle adoption and all-electric building conversions will absorb extra supply quickly enough. Ring asks how the planned retirement of 94,000 gigawatt-hours of annual natural gas generation will be replaced, particularly in winter when solar output drops by half. Additional renewable projects across

California or imports from other states could flood the market and depress prices.

He also raises long-term questions about decommissioning aging panels and the possibility that improved technology could encourage widespread private rooftop solar paired with electric vehicle batteries, undermining the case for utility-scale installations.

Ring offers a simple benchmark: each square mile of solar panels would yield about 1,000 gigawatt-hours per year, but output remains seasonal and market prices vary. "Solar farmers should plant accordingly," he concludes.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Dec 12, 2024

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first — City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals and our standards at sandiegonewsline.com.

LEGAL NOTICES

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