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Edison pulls unused line from park

By Marianne Napoles

California State Parks is calling it a triumph.

Southern California Edison is uprooting towers and power lines in Chino Hills State Park 28 years after it was ordered to do so by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

Helicopters have been over the park since Oct. 1, where 40 towers and seven miles of line are being removed.

The towers are being transported to the equestrian staging area, where they are dismantled and trucked out via the main entrance road. The \$2 million project will be finished this month.

"It is so emotional to watch," said Claire Schlotterbeck, executive director of Hills for Everyone, the group that founded the State Park. "It is bittersweet."

In the early 1980s, Hills for Everyone protested a proposal by Edison to erect 250- to 300-foot towers through what was to become Chino Hills State Park, Ms. Schlotterbeck said.

Hills for Everyone opposed the action and CPUC ordered a mandatory settlement conference. As a result, a settlement agreement was reached that included shorter, wider towers, resulting in a savings of \$441,000, that was to



Photo by California State Parks

A helicopter removes Southern California Edison towers from Chino Hills State Park.

be spent on the removal of deactivated lines, Ms. Schlotterbeck said.

Edison complied with a portion of the agreement by acquiring additional right-of-way for towers and by burying some utility lines, but never complied with the heart of the agreement, which was to remove the seven miles of lines and 40 towers, Ms. Schlotterbeck said.

"Edison was bordering between being insensitive and outright bullies throughout the process," she said.

Two of the towers are in the City of Chino Hills, where the lines cross Soquel Canyon Parkway to the Albertsons/

McDonalds shopping center area on Butterfield Ranch Road.

During the Tehachapi hearings last year, when Chino Hills was battling Edison over power lines through residential neighborhoods, an attorney for California State Parks reminded the CPUC about Edison's unfulfilled obligation.

"Nobody could find the actual settlement agreement so I began searching my files at home, and there it was, in a file folder marked Edison," Ms. Schlotterbeck said.

See PARK, Page A2

Park

Continued from Page A1

Michael Peevey, the CPUC president who was president of Edison International and Southern California Edison Co. from 1984 to 1995, ex-

pressed concern during the December 2009 hearing that the agreement was not fulfilled under his watch at Edison.

Ron Krueper, Inland Empire district superintendent, said Edison was close to fulfilling the project in 1988 and again in 2002 when deregulation for utility companies hit and Edi-

son postponed the removal.

"With the Tehachapi and CPUC decision, that helped guide the final conclusion of this long drawn-out process," Mr. Krueper said.

He said the visual impact is tremendous, especially looking down Lower Aliso Canyon from the overlook.

"What a triumph for the future of the Chino Hills State Park and the visitor experience," Mr. Krueper said.

Neither Edison nor CPUC returned phone calls. "Yep," quipped Ms. Schlotterbeck about the non-response. "Now you know what we went through."