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San Diego News

South Bay Power Plant Spared From Early Closure

POSTED: 7:21 pm PDT May 12, 2010
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SAN DIEGO -- The San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Wednesday spared the South Bay Power Plant from being shut down early.

The board gave the plant the OK to continue producing energy despite having a harmful effect on the San Diego Bay.

The South Bay Power Plant has been producing energy since 1963 and has four generators. However, this year, only two of them are being used.

"Those units are on stand-by to come online to make sure the region has the power it needs," said David Byford of Dynegy, the company that operates the plant.

The plant has been turned on for only eight days in the past four months.

development on the bayfront.

Chula Vista City Councilman Steve Castaneda said, "This power plant needs to go. It's old, it's dirty, it's costly and it doesn't benefit the rate payers or businesses of San Diego County."

The Independent System Operator, who is responsible for distributing the state's energy, won't allow the plant to shut down as of now. The ISO said the county still needs the plant's power until other power sources come online.

Ultimately, the board denied the petition. It feared Dynegy could have appealed and kept the plant running for months.

David King of the Regional Water Quality Control Board said, "What we don't want to see is this thing rolling forward indefinitely and Dynegy using this to continue discharging indefinitely."

The South Bay Power Plant's permit expires on December 31, and fixing the plant to fit new state standards could cost millions. Getting a permit without the upgrade may be impossible, and if and when the plant officially shuts down, it could take up to two years to tear the plant down.

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"Basically, they just use it under certain, very narrow conditions," said Laura Hunter of the Environmental Health Coalition.

On Wednesday, environmentalists and local leaders petitioned the Regional Water Quality Control Board to terminate the plant's water discharge permit on June 1 -- seven months early. The plant uses water to cool its generators, and then dumps the water back into the bay. Opponents argued the method is dangerous for sea life and humans.

The property is also valuable for future

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Dynergy said it has no intention of fixing the plant to meet the new standards and the ISO can't force them to either.

It appears likely the South Bay Power Plant's last date of operation will be New Year's Eve this year.

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San Diego County Resident

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