

Bickering ties up renewable energy projects in California

By Julie Cart, Los Angeles Times

Millions of dollars in renewable energy projects intended to provide power to facilities in California's national parks and forests are sitting idle because of a years-long squabble with Southern California Edison.

A new \$800,000 solar project at Death Valley National Park, photovoltaic panels at the state-of-the art visitors center at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and a solar power system at the U.S. Forest Service's new facility at Mono Lake are among dozens of taxpayer-funded projects in Southern California on hold as the federal agencies try to hash out an agreement with SCE to tie the projects to the state's electrical grid.

The apparent stumbling block involves contract restrictions imposed by federal law, but utilities elsewhere in California have signed similar agreements with the agencies with few problems or delays.

"There's 24-plus systems in the Southern California Edison area that have been installed in the last three years that we have not been able to negotiate an interconnection agreement on," said Jack Williams, who retired this month as the National Park Service's Oakland-based regional facilities manager. "We think we are close at times, but then nothing. We were successful with PG&E, but with Southern California Edison.... They have been a bit more difficult. We've raised the flag many times. It's an issue for all federal agencies."

An Edison spokesman declined to discuss the projects, citing ongoing negotiations.

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