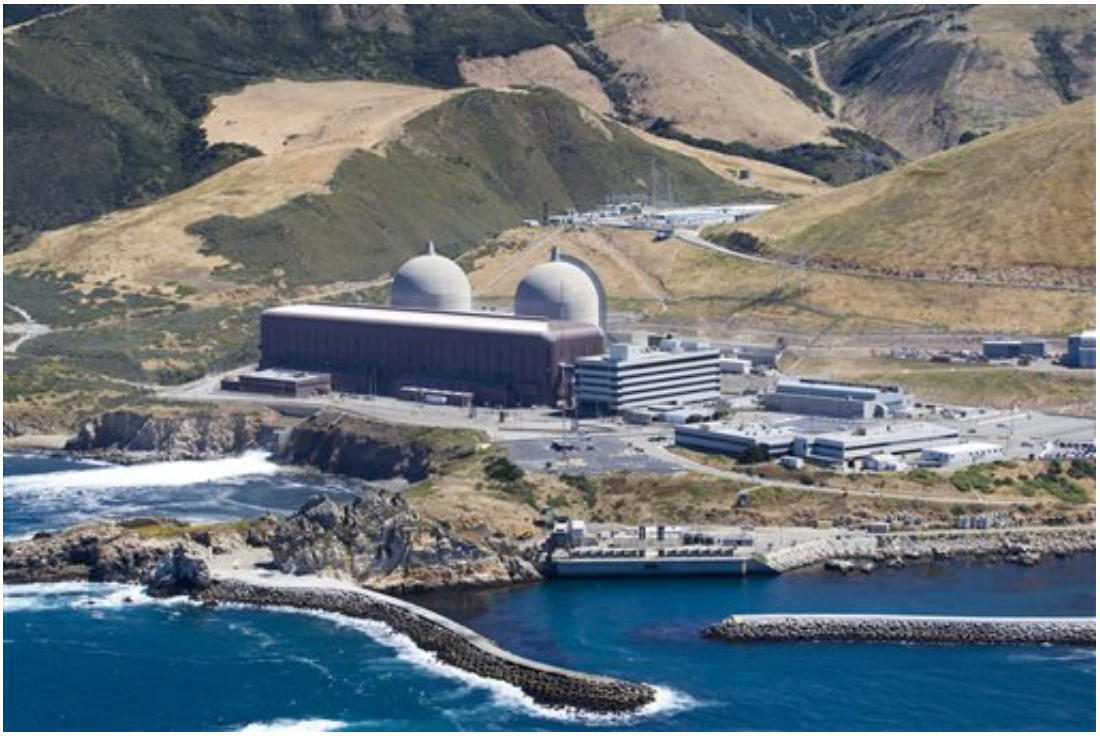
California land regulators to weigh end of nuclear power

June 28 2016, by Alison Noon



This aerial file photo taken, June 20, 2010, shows the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, in Avila Beach, Calif. California regulators are expected to decide Tuesday, June 28, 2016, whether to drop their longstanding environmental objections to the state's last nuclear power plant in return for its promised early closing. (Joe Johnston/The Tribune (of San Luis Obispo) via AP, File)

California regulators are expected to decide Tuesday whether to drop their longstanding environmental objections to the state's last nuclear

power plant in return for its promised early closing.

The State Lands Commission will consider foregoing an environmental review before renewing a contract with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. after its agreement with environmental groups to close the Diablo Canyon twin-reactor facility by 2025, nine years earlier than previously planned.

The commission's vote is the first of multiple regulatory hurdles facing the agreement to shut down the 31-year-old plant nearly 20 years ahead of PG&E's previously planned termination.

Diablo Canyon's twin reactors hug a Pacific Ocean bluff midway on the coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco, in San Luis Obispo County.

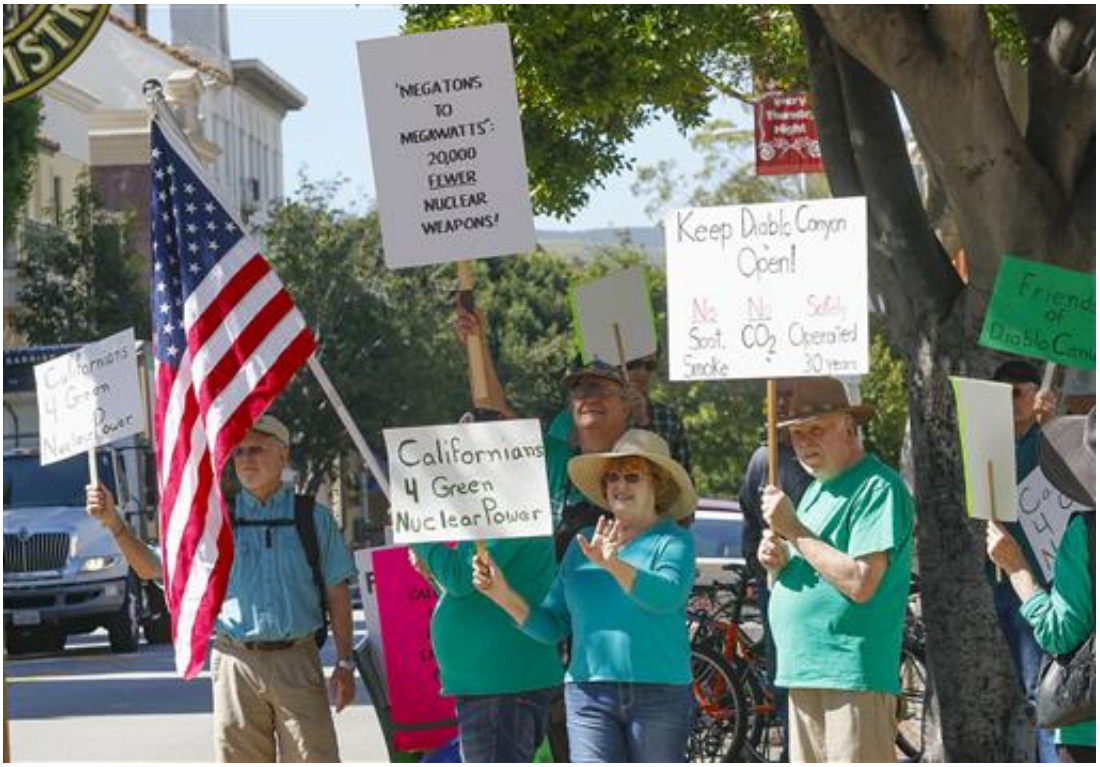
Fears about the seismic faults running through the area have dogged the project since its conception in the 1960s, and fostered opposition nationally to nuclear power within the country's then-fledgling environmental movement.

PG&E maintains the plant could withstand the strongest likely earthquakes, but growing scientific knowledge about the seismology has heightened worries.

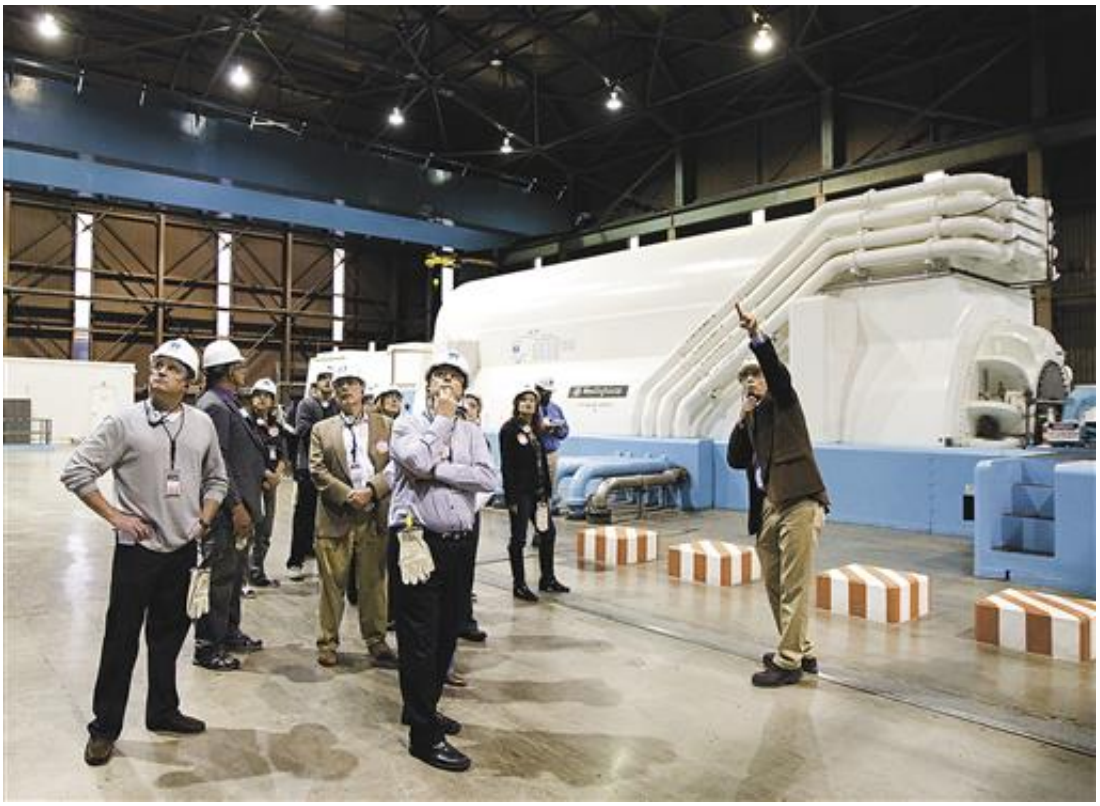
The state's largest utility and environmental groups agree that California no longer needs the electricity from Diablo Canyon, given increased energy efficiency in the state and the growing availability and affordability of solar and wind power and other renewable energy.

Nationally, the nuclear-power industry is caught in a debate between those who call nuclear power an essential alternative to climate changing fossil fuels, and those who question the growing costs of maintaining the

country's decades-old nuclear plants.



In this file photo taken, March 17, 2016, people rally in front of the San Luis Obispo County government building in support of Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in San Luis Obispo, Calif. California regulators are expected to decide Tuesday, June 28, 2016, whether to drop their longstanding environmental objections to the state's last nuclear power plant in return for its promised early closing. (David Middlecamp/The Tribune (of San Luis Obispo) via AP, File)



In this Jan. 9, 2013 file photo, station director Jim Welch, right, gives members of the California Coastal Commission and others a tour of the generator turbine deck of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in San Luis Obispo, Calif. California regulators are expected to decide Tuesday, June 28, 2016, whether to drop their longstanding environmental objections to the state's last nuclear power plant in return for its promised early closing. (Joe Johnston/The Tribune (of San Luis Obispo) via AP, File)

This Nov. 3, 2008, file photo, shows one of Pacific Gas and Electric's Diablo Canyon Power Plant's nuclear reactors in Avila Beach, Calif. California regulators are expected to decide Tuesday, June 28, 2016, whether to drop their longstanding environmental objections to the state's last nuclear power plant in return for its promised early closing. (AP Photo/Michael A. Mariant, File)