

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
PALM SPRINGS-SOUTH COAST FIELD OFFICE

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW AND DECISION RECORD

CX Number: CA-660-05-25

Name of Proposed Action: San Diego Gas & Electric Company: Reconductor Project for the Superior Renewable Energy Project.

Case File: CACA-46885

Legal Description: T.17S., R. 6E., Section 18 NW¼NE¼ SBM
(See attached maps)

Land Use Plan conformance: In compliance with 43CFR1610.5-3 and BLM MS1617.3, the proposed action is in conformance with the *South Coast Resource Management Plan (1994)*

Description of Proposed Action: This 69kV electrical line was originally built in the late 1950's by the Mountain Empire Cooperative, Inc. and was subsequently purchased by San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E). However, no right-of-way grant or other authorization was ever issued to the owners of this facility for placement of this 69kV electrical line on BLM administered public lands.

SDG&E has submitted an application:

- for a 30 foot wide right-of-way grant to authorize this existing facility, involving one wood pole and 458.30 feet of 69kV electrical conductor, located on public lands within T.17S., R. 6E., Section 18 NW¼NE¼ SBM (see attached map), and
- to re-conductor the electrical line to allow for increased transmission capability, from 269 to 418 Amps.

The need to re-conductor the line is a result of development of a new wind energy project being located on Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) managed Kumeyaay tribal lands. Construction of the wind energy project is expected to begin this summer and be completed by the end of the year. This power line, approximately 7 miles in length, extends from the Crestwood substation to the Boulevard Tap facility.

The new conductor would be non-reflective to minimize the visual impacts of the line. The one wood pole located on public lands would not be replaced; however the ceramic insulators would be replaced with rubber post insulators which would improve power transmission, reduce maintenance and result in lower noise levels during line operation.

No new disturbance, including pulling sites and staging areas, or increased activity would occur on or across BLM managed lands as a result of this project. The project would involve 1 to 2 construction line crews (4 people per crew), using construction trucks. These trucks would access the area on existing roads and would travel over-land along the power line during re-conductor activities. Minor crushing of vegetation and compaction of soils would occur. No surface grading or clearing is proposed. Re-conductor activities would occur intermittently for up to 2-3 weeks.

SDG&E has a formal raptor protection program based on the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and Edison Electric Institute (EEI) Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines (1996). Potential avian impacts would be mitigated by using 12' crossarms on the reconductor with the middle phase placed on a ridge pin on the pole. This configuration would achieve the minimum spacing required to conform with the SDG&E raptor protection program and the "Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines". In addition, the approved SDG&E cover-ups would be used on the 12kV line to complete the raptor protection of the line. All poles for the project would be including in the protection element of the project.

On January 4, 2005, Essex Environmental submitted a biological report on this project concluding that temporary impacts to northern mixed chaparral, chamise chaparral, big sagebrush scrub and nonnative grasslands would occur and that no wetlands or habitat of listed species is affected. The Jacumba Critical Habitat Unit for the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly is not within the area of affect.

In January, 2005, Engineering-Environmental Management, Inc. submitted the *Cultural Resources Impact Study, San Diego Gas and Electric Campo Reconductor Project (TL629E), San Diego California*. This survey involved a 100 foot corridor for the 7 miles of the overall project alignment. This report concluded that no potential Project impacts or adverse effects to cultural resources were identified within the area of potential effects (APE). Two previously unrecorded prehistoric resources and the remains of a historic foundation were identified in the vicinity of the APE. The two prehistoric sites contain bedrock milling features with associated surface artifacts and the historic foundation has no associated artifacts or subsurface features. Archaeological monitoring and fluffing in the vicinity of the two milling sites is recommended in order to insure that activities do not stray outside of the project area and potentially impact these resources. These sites are not associated with BLM lands.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs issued a final Environmental Assessment(EA)/FONSI, dated January 18, 2005, entitled *Proposed Kumeyaay Wind Energy Facility Lease, Campo Indian Reservation, San Diego County, California*. This EA/FONSI fulfilled NEPA, National Historic Preservation Act, and Endangered Species Act requirements for the windfarm portion of this project involving tribal lands.

Categorical Exclusion Reference: 516 DM 6, Appendix 5.4 (E)13

Amendments to existing rights-of-way such as the upgrading of existing facilities which entail no additional disturbances outside the right-of-way boundary

Screening for Exceptions: The following exceptions apply to individual actions within categorical exclusions (516 DM, Appendix 2). The preparer and/or indicated specialist must verify that the Proposed Action does not:

2.1	Have significant adverse effects of public health or safety?	none
2.2	Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farm lands, wet lands, flood plains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of National Landmarks?	none
2.3	Have highly controversial environmental effects?	none
2.4	Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?	none
2.5	Establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?	none
2.6	Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?	none
2.7	Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?	none
2.8	Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species or have adverse effects on designated critical habitat for these species?	none
2.9	Require compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?	none
2.10	Threaten to violate a Federal, State, or local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?	none

Prepared by: Claude Kirby

Reviewed by: _____
 Environmental Coordinator

DECISION: It is my decision to approve the proposed action as described in Categorical Exclusion (CX) number CA-660-25-05. I find this action conforms to 516 Departmental Manual DM 6 (E) 13 with no exceptions. I further find this action in conformance with applicable land use plans and that it would not cause unnecessary or undue degradation. Conditions of approval, if attached, are incorporated by reference as the decision of the Bureau of Land Management regarding this action. A copy of this Decision Record and attendant conditions of approval shall be in the possession of the on-site operator during all undertakings approved herein.

APPEALS:

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations at Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 4, and the information provided in Form 1842-1 (enclosed). If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed in the Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior, 690 West Garnet Avenue, P.O. Box 581260, North Palm Springs, California 92258, within 30 days from receipt of this decision. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision appealed from is in error.

If you wish to file a petition for a stay of the effectiveness of this decision during the time that your appeal is being reviewed by the Board, pursuant to Title 43 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 4, Subpart E, the petition for a stay must accompany your notice of appeal. A petition for a stay is required to show sufficient justification based on the standards listed below. Copies of the notice of appeal and petition for a stay must also be submitted to each party named in this decision and to the Interior Board of Land Appeals and to the appropriate Office of the Solicitor (see 43 CFR 4.413) at the same time the original documents are filed with this office.

If you request a stay, you have the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

Standards for Obtaining a Stay

Except as otherwise provided by law or other pertinent regulations, a petition for a stay of a decision pending appeal shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted, and
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

APPROVED BY:

Field Manager
Palm Springs-South Coast Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
690 W. Garnet Avenue; P.O. Box 581260
North Palm Springs, CA 92258-1260

Date