

Imperial Irrigation District  
Bureau of Land Management, El Centro Field Office  
230 kV Transmission Imperial Valley to Dixieland "ID" Line  
and Expansion of Substations Project

DRAFT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION/  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
IMPERIAL COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



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Bureau of Land Management  
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El Centro, California 92243



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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**for the**  
**230 kV Transmission Imperial Valley to Dixieland “ID” Line and  
Expansion of Substations Project**  
**(SCH# 2010121019; EA # 2009-082; Case File # CACA-50661)**

***Prepared for:***

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September 2011

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## ACRONYM LIST

AB	Assembly Bill
ACEC	Area of Critical Environmental Concern
APCD	Air Pollution Control District
APE	Area of Potential Effects
AQAP	Air Quality Attainment Plan
AQMD	Air Quality Management District
AQMP	Air Quality Management Plan
Basin Plan	Colorado River Basin Water Quality Control Plan
BACM	Best Available Control Measure
BCMP	Best Construction Management Practice
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BMP	best management practice
B.P.	before present
BRSA	Biological Resources Survey Area
BUOW	burrowing owl
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAAQS	California Ambient Air Quality Standards
Cal-IPC	California Invasive Plant Council
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CBC	California Building Code
CBOC	California Burrowing Owl Consortium
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CCS	cryptocrystalline silicate
CDCA	California Desert Conservation Area Plan
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEC	California Energy Commission Guidelines
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CERCLA	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CERCLIS	Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Information System
CFC	chlorofluorocarbon
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations

## Acronym List

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CH <sub>4</sub>	methane
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CO	carbon monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide
CO <sub>2</sub> E	CO <sub>2</sub> equivalents
CRHR	California Register of Historical Resources
CWA	Clean Water Act
dB	decibels
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
EA	Environmental Assessment
EO	Executive Order
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FGC	Fish and Game Code
FLPMA	Federal Land Policy Management Act
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FTHL	Flat-tailed Horned Lizard
FTHLICC	Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Interagency Coordinating Committee
FTHLRMS	Flat-tailed Horned Lizard Rangewide Management Strategy
GCR	General Conformity Rule
GHG	greenhouse gas
H <sub>2</sub> S	hydrogen sulfide
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
HFC	hydrofluorocarbon
HWCL	Hazardous Waste Control Law
I	Interstate
ICAPCD	Imperial County Air Pollution Control District
IID	Imperial Irrigation District
IV	Imperial Valley
IVNCCP	Imperial Valley Natural Community Conservation Plan
kV	kilovolt
L <sub>eq</sub>	noise equivalent level
LORS	laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards
LUST	Leaking Underground Storage Tank

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MA	Management Area
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MMRP	Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
MMTCO <sub>2</sub> E	million metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> E
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MWA	Major Work Authorizations
N <sub>2</sub> O	nitrous oxide
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NAF	Naval Air Facility
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NCCP	Natural Community Conservation Plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFRAP	no further remedial action planned
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NO <sub>2</sub>	nitrogen dioxide
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPS	National Park Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
O <sub>3</sub>	ozone
OPGW	optical ground wire
PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon
Pb	lead
PERP	Portable Equipment Registration Program
PFC	perfluorocarbon
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	fine particulate matter
PM <sub>10</sub>	respirable particulate matter
POD	plan of development
ppv	peak particle velocity
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
RSA	resource study area
ROG	reactive organic gases
ROI	Region of Influence
ROW	right-of-way
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SARA	Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act
SCAB	South Coast Air Basin

SCIC	South Coast Information Centre
SDG&E	San Diego Gas & Electric
SF <sub>6</sub>	sulfur hexafluoride
SHMA	Seismic Hazards Mapping Act
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SO <sub>2</sub>	sulfur dioxide
SR	State Route
SSAB	Salton Sea Air Basin
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAC	Toxic Air Contaminant
UBC	Uniform Building Code
µm	micrometers
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UST	Underground Storage Tank
VCUP	Voluntary Clean-Up Program
VdB	velocity expressed as decibels
VOC	volatile organic compound
WEEP	worker environmental education program

## **CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM), El Centro Field Office, prepared this Mitigated Negative Declaration/Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (MND/EA) to analyze the potential environmental impacts associated with constructing a 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line (referred to as the ID Line) between the Imperial Valley (IV) and Dixieland Substations, including associated poles and maintenance roads, substation improvements to the existing Dixieland Substation, and construction of the proposed Leibert Substation. This proposed transmission line would be located within a portion of the Utility Corridor “N” of BLM’s California Desert Conservation Area in unincorporated Imperial County, southwest of El Centro, California (Figures 1.1-1 and 1.1-2). The transmission line would be located within a new 140-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) through both Federal and non-Federal lands.

Three alignments are under evaluation, including the Preferred Alignment and two alternative alignments (Alternatives 1 and 2). The transmission line will consist of single-monopole structures. Depending on the final route chosen, span lengths will generally be 650 feet or 800 to 900 feet. In addition to a new transmission line, IID would construct a new 230-kV substation approximately 400 feet north of the IV Substation (proposed Liebert Substation) and expand the existing Dixieland Substation.

The Proposed Action is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.). The lead agency for CEQA compliance is IID (SCH#2010121019). The lead agency for NEPA compliance is BLM, El Centro Field Office (EA # CA-670-2009-082; Case File # CACA-50661). A new 140-foot ROW across BLM land in accordance with typical requirements for constructing transmission lines is needed. This MND/EA will be used by BLM, El Centro Field Office, to support its review and decision whether to approve the ROW on Federal lands managed by BLM to comply with NEPA. The NEPA term “Proposed Action” is used throughout this document and should be considered synonymous with “proposed project,” which is more typically associated with CEQA. As part of this MND/EA, a CEQA checklist has been prepared as supporting documentation and is included as Appendix A.



Source: Imperial Irrigation District 2009; ESRI 2009

**Figure 1.1-1**



**Regional Map**

ID 230-kV Transmission Line and Substation Expansion—Imperial Valley to Dixieland Substations MND/EA

Path: P:\2009\09080060 IID 230kV\6.0 GIS\6.3 Layout\REPORT\_Maps\_ALL\MND\_EA\Fig1.1-1\_MND\_EA\_Regional.mxd, 11/10/09, shahs2

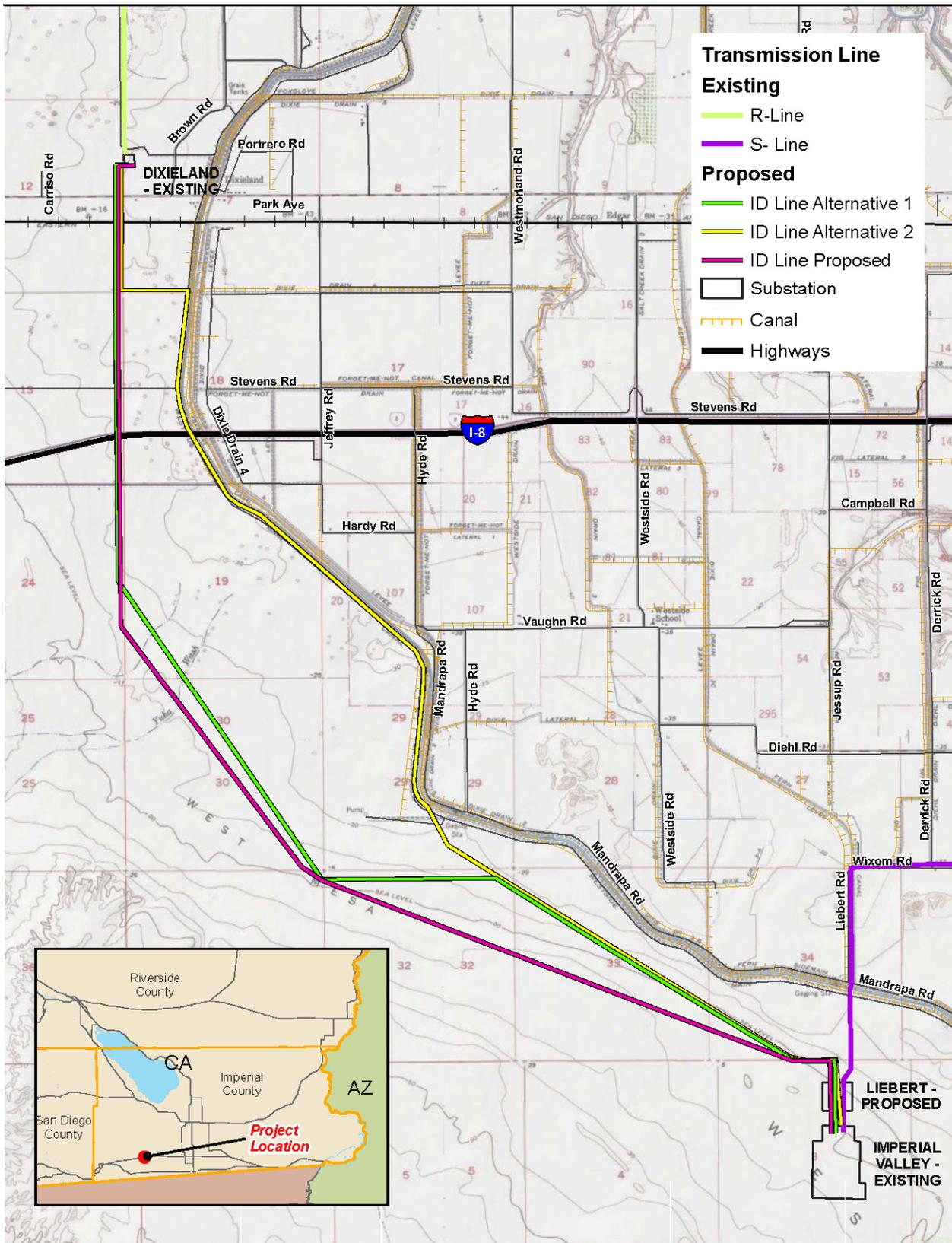
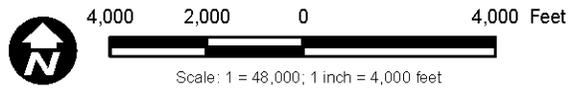


Figure 1.1-2



**Vicinity Map**

ID 230-kV Transmission Line and Substation Expansion—Imperial Valley to Dixieland Substations MND/EA

Path: P:\2009\09080060 IID 230kV\6.0 GIS\6.3 Layout\REPORT\_Maps\_ALI\MND\_BA\Fig1.1-2\_MND\_BA\_Vicinity\_Topo.mxd, 12/21/09, Shahs2

A public review period for MND/EA pursuant to CEQA commenced on December 8, 2010, and ended January 7, 2011. Since that time, IID and BLM have coordinated revisions to the document ahead of posting the MND/EA for public review by the BLM as part of their role as NEPA lead agency. As a consequence of some of the changes and in the interests of maximizing public disclosure and participation, the document in its entirety is being re-circulated for public review by the IID pursuant to CEQA at the same time as it is available for review through the BLMs NEPA process.

### **1.1.1 Project Location**

The ID Line project is located in Imperial County, California, southwest of El Centro. The alignments under consideration extend from the north end of the IV Substation northward through the proposed Liebert Substation. From that point, all three alignments follow different tracks to the north and west, crossing Interstate 8 (I-8), and eventually reaching the Dixieland Substation north of I-8. The alignments cross Federal lands managed by BLM, IID lands or rights-of-way, and private property.

### **1.1.2 Environmental Setting**

The proposed ID Line would be constructed in an area that skirts the western edges of a large area of irrigated agricultural cropland that extends farther to the east of the transmission line corridor. The edges of the cultivated lands generally comprise the eastern boundary of the Yuha Basin, which consists primarily of Federal desert lands managed by BLM. The cultivated lands are irrigated via a system of irrigation canals and laterals maintained by IID to convey water to agricultural users in the Imperial Valley.

The Yuha Basin is a BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) that is managed by BLM to protect sensitive cultural and wildlife resources and for certain compatible public uses such as camping in designated areas. The Yuha Basin area consists primarily of undeveloped open space. The Yuha Basin ACEC includes the Yuha Desert Management Area, which is specifically designated by BLM for the flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*; FTHL), as outlined in the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Rangewide Management Strategy (Strategy) (FTHL Interagency Coordinating Committee [ICC] 2003).

## **1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED**

### **1.2.1 IID Purpose and Need**

Currently, IID maintains a single interconnection between the electrical transmission systems maintained by IID and San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). This interconnection occurs via IID's "S" Line, which is a 230-kV transmission line extending between SDG&E's IV Substation and IID's El Centro Switching Station. The El Centro Switching Station is located within the city limits of the City of El Centro approximately 12 miles northeast of the project. This is the only transmission line that connects IID's power generation resources with SDG&E's transmission system. The proposed double circuit 230-kV transmission line between the IV and Dixieland substations will provide a second interconnection between IID and SDG&E, which will improve reliability through redundancy. For this reason, IID identified a need for additional transmission reliability and interconnection in Imperial Valley. While not driving the need for the Proposed Action, a growing number of renewable energy, or "green" energy, projects are being independently developed in Imperial Valley, increasing the available power generated for transmission to SDG&E. The Proposed Action may result in indirect benefits for green energy, because the improved reliability would improve IID's import/export energy transmission ability to the IV Substation's 230-kV bus. Power Transformers located in the substation would be protected with Surge Arrest in event of lightning and high speed circuit breaker. All power transformers are located within the fence of the substation away from any trees. Also the proposed transmission line would be constructed with much greater safety factor than that recommended by GO95 or NESC.

### **1.2.2 BLM Purpose and Need**

In accordance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Section 103[c]), public lands are to be managed for multiple uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and non-renewable resources. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to grant ROWs on public lands for systems of generation, transmission, and distribution of electric energy (Section 501[a][4]). Taking into account the BLM's multiple-use mandate, the purpose and need for the Proposed Action is to respond to a FLPMA ROW application submitted by IID to construct, operate, maintain, and decommission a 230-kV transmission line, new substation, improvements to an existing substation, access roads, and associated facilities on public lands administered by BLM in compliance with FLPMA, BLM ROW regulations, and other applicable Federal laws and policies.

In conjunction with FLPMA, BLM's applicable authorities are the following:

- Executive Order 13212, dated May 18, 2001, which mandates that agencies act expediently and in a manner consistent with applicable laws to increase the production and transmission of energy in a safe and environmentally sound manner.
- Section 211 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAAct 05 or EPAAct), which established a goal for DOI (BLM's parent agency) to approve at least 10,000 megawatts of non-hydropower renewable energy power on public lands by 2015.
- Secretarial Order 3285A1, Renewable Energy Development by DOI, dated February 22, 2010. This Secretarial Order establishes the development of renewable energy as a priority for DOI and creates a Departmental Task Force on Energy and Climate Change. It also announced a policy goal of identifying and prioritizing specific locations (study areas) best suited for large-scale production of solar energy.

### **1.3 DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS AND REGULATORY PERMITS**

Several discretionary actions and regulatory permits may be required to implement the Proposed Action. The environmental documentation for the project may be used to facilitate compliance with Federal and State laws and the granting of permits by various State and local agencies having jurisdiction over one or more aspects of the projects. These approvals and permits could include the following:

#### **1.3.1 Bureau of Land Management**

This MND/EA will be used by BLM, El Centro Field Office, to support its review and potential approval of a ROW on Federal lands managed by BLM to comply with NEPA. This project would require the approval of BLM for right-of-way on BLM land, including the proposed Liebert Substation and the portions of the selected transmission line route that are located on BLM lands. As the Federal lead agency, BLM will also conduct consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and, if required, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

#### **State of California, Department of Fish and Game**

- Consultations, actions, and permits pursuant to the Fish and Game Code relative to impacts to waters of the State, protection of rare, threatened, and endangered species or other sensitive species protected by law.

### **State of California, Department of Transportation**

- A portion of the transmission line would cross State ROW for I-8, which is maintained by the State. IID may be required to obtain an encroachment permit to cross the ROW. IID will comply with the requirements contained in the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Encroachment Permits Manual for the portions of the proposed transmission line that extends across the I-8 freeway and for those supporting poles that are in close proximity to the I-8 freeway ROW.
- An air space lease may be required to operate and maintain the transmission lines over I-8.

### **California Regional Water Quality Control Board – Colorado Region**

- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Construction Storm Water: Applicant is required to submit a Notice of Intent to the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), Colorado River Basin Region, for coverage under the General Construction Permit.
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP): The SWPPP is a standard requirement for development under the General Construction Permit. The SWPPP would be developed and implemented throughout the entire project. The SWPPP would contain the elements required by the General Construction Permit and illustrate the protective measures that would be taken during construction to control storm water runoff and erosion and siltation on-site.

### **County of Imperial**

All local permitting will be coordinated by IID with the County of Imperial, including the following:

- Grading Permits
- Haul Route Permits
- Road Encroachment Permits
- Conditional Use Permit may be required to locate the project on some properties depending on the zoning and final locations of the project features.

### **1.3.2 National Environmental Policy Act Requirements**

This EA has been prepared pursuant to regulations implementing NEPA (42 USC 4321 et seq.), which require Federal agencies to assess the impacts that their actions may have on the environment. BLM's discretion to issue the permits necessary for project construction and implementation requires that BLM assess the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and describe them in an environmental document.

### **1.3.3 California Environmental Quality Act Requirements**

CEQA applies to proposed projects initiated by, funded by, or requiring discretionary approvals from State or local government agencies. The Proposed Action constitutes a project as defined by CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.). IID is the lead agency for this project under CEQA and will fund, implement, and operate the Proposed Action. Preparation of the Initial Study and MND has been performed by IID to comply with CEQA. The Initial Study Checklist for this project is provided as Appendix A of this MND/EA.

### **1.3.4 Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program**

CEQA Section 210816(a) requires lead agencies to adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The specific "reporting or monitoring" program required by CEQA is not required to be included in this MND/EA; however, it will be presented to the IID Board of Directors for adoption. Any mitigation measures adopted by the Board as conditions for approval of the project will be included in the MMRP to verify compliance.