



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Mother Lode Field Office
5152 Hillside Circle
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762
www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode

PG&E installation of an overhead transmission line (CA-180-11-42) Finding of No Significant Impact

It is my determination that this decision will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Anticipated impacts are within the range of impacts addressed by the Sierra Resource Management Plan (RMP). Thus, the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of CEQ's following criteria for significance (40 CFR §1508.27), regarding the context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA and based on my understanding of the project:

- 1) *Impacts can be both beneficial and adverse and a significant effect may exist regardless of the perceived balance of effects.* Potential impacts include negligible soil disturbance along an existing road and temporary negligible noise and dust. Three to four gray pines would be removed and interior live oak would be trimmed.
- 2) *The degree of the impact on public health or safety.* No aspects of the proposed action have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety.
- 3) *Unique characteristics of the geographic area.* The project area does not contain any unique characteristics.
- 4) *The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial effects.* No anticipated effects have been identified that are scientifically controversial. As a factor for determining within the meaning of 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27(b)(4) whether or not to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, "controversy" is not equated with "the existence of opposition to a use." *Northwest Environmental Defense Center v. Bonneville Power Administration*, 117 F.3d 1520, 1536 (9th Cir. 1997). "The term 'highly controversial' refers to instances in which 'a substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature, or effect of the major federal action rather than the mere existence of opposition to a use.'" *Hells Canyon Preservation Council v. Jacoby*, 9 F.Supp.2d 1216, 1242 (D. Or. 1998).
- 5) *The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are likely to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.* The analysis does not show that the proposed action would involve any unique or unknown risks.
- 6) *The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.* The proposed action is not precedent setting.
- 7) *Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.* No significant site specific or cumulative impacts have been identified. The

proposed action is consistent with the Sierra RMP which requires that the Mother Lode Field Office respond to demands in land use authorizations.

8) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect National Historic Register listed or eligible to be listed sites or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.* The proposed action would not adversely affect cultural properties listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

9) *The degree to which the action may adversely affect ESA listed species or critical habitat.* No ESA listed species (or their habitat) are known to occur in the area potentially affected by the proposed action.

10) *Whether the action threatens a violation of environmental protection law or requirements.* There is no indication that the proposed action will result in actions that will threaten such a violation.

William S. Haigh
Field Manager, Mother Lode Field Office

Date



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5152 Hillsdale Circle

El Dorado Hills, CA 95762-5713

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EA Number: CA-180-11-42

Proposed Action: PG&E installation of an overhead transmission line

Location: T. 15N., R. 8E., Section 6, Lot 26, MDM, Nevada County, California
Refer to the attached project area maps

1.0 Purpose and Need for Action

PG&E has applied to build an overhead transmission line on BLM-administered land near the intersection of Rex Reservoir Road and Dead Man's Flat Road, southwest of Grass Valley. The power line would provide power to at least one customer on Rex Reservoir Road.

1.2 Conformance with Applicable Land Use Plans

The proposed action is consistent with the Sierra Resource Management Plan Record of Decision (ROD), approved in February 2008. The plan has been reviewed to determine that the proposed action conforms to the land use plan terms and conditions as required by 43 CFR 1610.5.

2.0 Proposed Action

The proposed action is to grant PG&E a right of way (R/W) to install overhead power lines on BLM-administered land, including three poles and 30" R/W, 15" on either side of the line (see project area maps attached). Three to four gray pines would be removed as part of the project.

2.1 No Action

The no action alternative would be to not issue a R/W or allow the poles to be installed. In this case, the applicant would not have access and would not be able to provide electoral service.

3.0 Affected Environment

The proposed R/W is in the west central Sierra foothills, southwest of Grass Valley. There are no water resources present in the area affected by the proposed R/W. The plant community is shrub land, mixed woodland with thick ground cover of shrubs and grasses. Plant species include Blue Oak, Interior Live Oak, Gray Pine, White-leaf Manzanita, Buckbrush, Coffeeberry, Poison Oak, Yerba Santa, Redbud, Coyote brush and other shrubby and herbaceous species. The project area was surveyed for special status species by a BLM botanist but none were observed in the area potentially affected by the R/W. There are no

rangeland or forestry resources in the project area and no recreational values. A survey for cultural resources was conducted by a BLM archaeologist but no cultural sites were found. The BLM manages this area under the Class III visual resource management standard. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

4.0 Environmental Effects

The following critical elements have been considered for this environmental assessment, and unless specifically mentioned later in the EA, have been determined to be unaffected by the proposal: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, prime/unique farmlands, floodplains, water quality, hazardous waste, wetlands and riparian zones, wild and scenic rivers wilderness, and environmental justice.

4.1 Impacts from the Proposed Action

The proposed action is for the installation of overhead electric line, including three poles and 30" wide R/W, 15" on either side of the line (see project area maps attached). Potential impacts include negligible soil disturbance along an existing road and temporary negligible noise and dust. The project area is dominated by chaparral and mixed woodland with a thick ground cover of shrubs and grasses. Three to four grey pines would be removed for pole installation and several live oaks that would be trimmed within the project area, all along an existing road. No special status species were identified within the area of potential effects, or would be affected by the proposed action generally. The removal of the trees and tree trimming would not impact special status species, significant cultural resources, or other environmental resources worth preserving. There is an abundance of Scotch broom and annual grasses that would be disturbed. The BLM will request that PG&E follow best management practices during construction to minimize the spreading of invasive weeds. Approval of the R/W would be consistent with the Class III VRM standard.

4.2 Impacts from the No Action Alternative

Impacts to resources described above would not be expected from the no action alternative.

4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Erosion, rare plants, and wildlife in general would not be impacted at the site specific scale. Therefore, cumulative impacts at a larger scale are not expected. The project is not expected to cumulatively contribute to dust and noise because these road construction-related impacts would be very short term and there are no other known similar activities expected to occur at the same time in the nearby vicinity that could conceivably combine to constitute a considerable cumulative impact.

5.0 Agencies and Persons Consulted

PG&E were consulted regarding the development plans

5.1 BLM Interdisciplinary Team

/s/ Jodi Lawson

Lands and realty specialist/EA preparer

/s/ James Barnes

NEPA coordinator/archaeologist

/s/ Jeff Horn

Outdoor recreation planner

/s/ Beth S. Brenneman

Botanist

/s/ Peggy Cranston

Wildlife biologist

5.2 Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

This EA, posted on Mother Lode Field Office's website (www.blm.gov/ca/motherlode) under Information, NEPA (or available upon request), will be available for a 15-day public review period. Comments should be sent to the Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillside Circle, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762 or emailed to us at jjbarnes@blm.gov or insert your email address.