

Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Department of Public Works



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Department of Public Works
Environmental & Construction • Flood Control
Operations • Solid Waste Management
Surveyor • Transportation

Gerry Newcombe
Director

September 16, 2015

File: 10(ENV)-4.01

Billie Blanchard (CPUC Project Manager)
California Public Utilities Commission & Bureau of Land Management
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA. 94104-3002
westofdevers@aspeneq.com

RE: CEQA/NEPA – NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE WEST OF DEVERS UPGRADE PROJECT FOR THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Dear Mr. Blanchard:

Thank you for giving San Bernardino County Department of Public Works the opportunity to comment on the above-referenced project. **We received this request on August 11, 2015** and pursuant to our review, the following comments are provided:

A1-1

Environmental Management Division (Marc Rodabaugh, Stormwater Program Manager, 909-387-8112):

1. While SCE is explicit in its intention to implement a SWPPP to address potential water quality impacts *during* construction, they neglect to address the Construction General Permit's requirements for permanent post-construction BMPs. This needs to be addressed. In addition, SCE must evaluate NPDES MS4 Phase I and II requirements for post-construction BMPs. In San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, it may be necessary to prepare Water Quality Management Plans for those portions of the project (facilities, paved areas and/or roadways) where new impervious areas are created, or existing impervious areas are replaced. SCE must consult with the appropriate municipal jurisdiction (City or County) to determine the applicability of these plans.

Traffic Division (Eloy Ruvalcaba, PWE III, 909-387-1869):

A1-2

1. It appears by the Draft EIR that Reche Canyon Road between Prado Lane and Westwood Street, which is currently maintained by County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works, may be impacted by the overhead construction of Segment 2 of this project. For temporary road or traffic lane closure along this segment of Reche Canyon Road due to construction activities, a road permit must be obtained from County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works – Road Permit Section.

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Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Department of Public Works (cont.)

B. Blanchard, CPUC, CEQA/NEPA NOA Devers upgrade Project
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2. Prior to the start of construction, the Traffic Control Plans for Segment 2 of this project in particular for Reche Canyon Road must be reviewed by County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works – Road Permit Section. A1-3
3. Page D.16-7, Table D.16.1.2.3, Segment 3 (San Timoteo Canyon): Palomares Road and Smiley/Lisa Marie Ln are not maintained by County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works. It appears that these roads are under the City of Redlands jurisdiction. Please verify with the City. A1-4
4. Please clarify if there is going to be any long-term road closures during construction of this project. A1-5

Transportation Planning Division (Jinghui Bradley, PWE III, 909-387-8173):

1. Under impact T-4 on Page D.16-19: in addition to Caltrans special permits, moving permits from affected local agencies for loads exceeding legal weight and size limits on local roads will also be required. A1-6
2. Under T-4a on Page D.16-19:
 - a. Entire road used by the construction activities, instead of just 500 feet in each direction of project access points, should be covered. A1-7
 - b. In addition to repair roads to pre-construction condition after major construction, SCE should pay affected public agency for extra maintenance costs during the construction. A1-8

If you have any questions, please contact the individuals who provided the specific comment, as listed above.

Sincerely,



NIDHAM ARAM ALRAYES, MSCE, PE, QSD/P
Public Works Engineer III
Environmental Management

NAA:PE:sr/CEQAComment_CPUC_DEIR_WestofDeversUpgrade_2015-09-16-01.docx

Responses to Comment Set A1 – San Bernardino County Department of Public Works

A1-1 The commenter would like the Construction General Permit's requirements for permanent post-construction BMPs to be identified, and to have SCE refer to NPDES MS4 Phase I and II requirements for post-construction BMPs. Water Quality Management Plans may be necessary for those portions of the project where new impervious areas are created or replaced, and the appropriate municipal jurisdiction should be consulted to discuss the applicability of these plans.

Section D.19.2.1 (Water Resources and Hydrology, Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards, Federal) describing Federal Regulations, has been modified to include reference to post-construction BMPs in the Construction General Permit. Mitigation Measure WR-3a, requiring implementation of flood, erosion, and scour protection for aboveground and belowground improvements, has been modified to include reference to the MS4 requirements and preparation of Water Quality Management Plans. The discussion of Impact WR-4, describing potential water quality degradation, has been modified to include a discussion of the modified Mitigation Measure WR-3a.

A1-2 This comment notes the possibility of temporary road or lane closures on Reche Canyon Road for construction activity and that a road permit must be obtained.

SCE will be required to coordinate all road and lane closures with the agency having jurisdiction over an affected road. This is addressed in Section D.16.3.3 (Transportation and Traffic, Impacts and Mitigation Measures) by Mitigation Measure T-1b (Prepare Traffic Control Plans). Section A.4.4 (Permits Required for the Proposed Project) in the EIS discusses permits or approvals from other federal, tribal, State or regional, and local agencies that may be needed for the project, including road permits from San Bernardino County (see Table A-7, Permits that May Be Required for the West of Devers Upgrade Project).

A1-3 The commenter states that prior to construction, Traffic Control Plans must be reviewed by the County Department of Public Works.

This requirement is addressed by Mitigation Measure T-1b; see Response to Comment A1-2.

A1-4 The commenter identified two roads not under its jurisdiction. Table D.16-6 (Public Roadways along the Proposed Route – Segment 3: San Timoteo Canyon) has been amended to indicate the correct jurisdiction for Palomares Road and Smiley Road/Lisa Marie Lane is the City of Redlands, not San Bernardino County.

A1-5 The commenter requests clarification as to whether there will be long-term road closures for the project in San Bernardino County.

There are no planned long-term closures. The Proposed Project would not install any 220 kV transmission lines underground in roads or elsewhere. Except as noted below, most project work at or near roads would be overhead, with limited-duration closures, such as for stringing conductor across roads. The Proposed Project and some project alternatives include underground segments of various distribution, subtransmission, and communications lines. However, where these activities occur in roads, only short term lane closures and traffic controls would be required. The length of time for these activities would be similar to any underground utility installation requiring trenching (or directional drilling), placement of the utility infrastructure, and backfilling and repair of the disturbed area.

Furthermore, Section B.3.1.5 (Traffic Control) of the EIS states that construction activities completed within public-street ROWs would require the use of a traffic control service, and any lane closures would be conducted consistent with local ordinances and ministerial city permit conditions. These traffic control measures would be consistent with those published in the California Joint Utility Traffic Control Manual.

A1-6 The commenter notes that local road permits for over-weight and over-sized loads on local roads would be required.

Impact T-4 (Construction vehicles and equipment would potentially damage roads in the project area) in Section D.16.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures) has been amended to acknowledge the requirement for local permits for exceeding legal weight and size limits on local roads, in addition to any Caltrans required permits.

A1-7 The commenter suggests that the “entire road used by the construction activities” should be covered by Mitigation Measure T-4a, instead of 500 feet in each direction of access points, as stated in the mitigation measure.

In Section D.16.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures), Mitigation Measure T-4a (Repair roadways damaged by construction activities) has been amended to include an additional requirement that prior to construction road surface conditions be documented in areas where trenching or digging in a roadway would occur. The request that the “entire road used by the construction activities” be documented is overly broad and unwieldy, as construction vehicles could legally use many roads throughout the region in transiting between their points of origin and individual construction sites. Wear and tear from general construction traffic use of regional roads would be impossible to distinguish from wear and tear caused by all other vehicles using the roads. The mitigation measure, as amended, would adequately account for any damage near entrances to off-road construction areas and as well as where the road surface would be damaged by trenching.

A1-8 The commenter suggests that in addition to post-construction road repair, SCE should pay for “extra maintenance costs during the construction.”

Such a requirement is overly broad and would be exceedingly difficult to implement reasonably. It would require defining what constitutes “extra maintenance cost” as opposed to general maintenance, and what part of such cost would be attributed to the project as compared to other users of the roadway. The intention of Mitigation Measure T-4a (Repair roadways damaged by construction activities) is to document preconstruction conditions as described in the measure and to ensure that, following construction, the roadway is repaired to pre-construction conditions. This comment has not resulted in a change to the EIS.

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
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SEP 18 2015

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for Southern California Edison's Proposed West of Devers Upgrade Project, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, CA (CEQ#20150212)

Dear Mr. McMenimen:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Joint Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for Southern California Edison's Proposed West of Devers Upgrade Project pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and our NEPA review authority under § 309 of the Clean Air Act.

Based on our review, we have rated all three of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS/EIR as *Lack of Objections* (LO). Please see the enclosed "Summary of EPA Rating Definitions." To assist in providing improved analyses and additional disclosure in the Final EIS, our detailed comments include recommendations to ensure compliance with Clean Water Act Section 404 and EPA's general conformity regulations. The EPA understands that final engineering and design of the transmission line upgrade depends on selection of a preferred route, which has not been decided. Based on the information presented in the DEIS/EIR and our understanding that the transmission line would utilize the existing row for most of the upgrade, we anticipate that the environmental impacts would be limited; however, we recommend that the Final EIS include the results of a screening level analysis of impacts to waters of the U.S., as well as further information about the project's compliance with Clean Air Act general conformity requirements. The EPA also recommends selection of the phased build alternative and seasonal use of helicopters to minimize air quality impacts, in light of the non-attainment status for ozone in the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Draft EIS/EIR and are available to discuss our comments. Please send a hard copy of the Final EIS/EIR to this office (Mail Code: ENF-4-2) when it is officially filed with EPA's electronic EIS submittal tool: e-NEPA. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3521, or contact Scott Sysum, the lead reviewer for this project, at (415) 972-3742 or sysum.scott@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Martyn Goforth".

Kathleen Martyn Goforth, Manager
Environmental Review Section

- Enclosures:
- (1) Summary of EPA Rating Definitions
 - (2) EPA's Detailed Comments

A2-1

A2-2

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

SUMMARY OF EPA RATING DEFINITIONS*

This rating system was developed as a means to summarize the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) level of concern with a proposed action. The ratings are a combination of alphabetical categories for evaluation of the environmental impacts of the proposal and numerical categories for evaluation of the adequacy of the Environmental Impact Statement.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE ACTION

“LO” (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have disclosed opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

“EC” (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures may require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

“EO” (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative). EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

“EU” (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. The EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the Council on Environmental Quality.

ADEQUACY OF THE IMPACT STATEMENT

Category “1” (Adequate)

The EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

Category “2” (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

Category “3” (Inadequate)

The EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.

*From EPA Manual 1640, Policy and Procedures for the Review of Federal Actions Impacting the Environment.

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

**US EPA DETAILED COMMENTS ON THE JOINT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT/
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON’S PROPOSED WEST OF
DEVERS UPGRADE PROJECT, RIVERSIDE AND SAN BERNARDINO COUNTIES, CA, SEPTEMBER 18, 2015**

Aquatic Resources

Geographic Extent of Waters of the United States and Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines

Pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, discharge of dredged or fill material to waters of the United States requires a permit issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. According to the Draft EIS/EIR, the proponent’s Environmental Assessment contained a drainage assessment that makes a preliminary assessment of WUS potentially affected by the project (p. D.19-14). The extent of direct and indirect impacts to WUS cannot be determined without completion of a jurisdictional delineation. This information is necessary in order to ensure that, if a permit is required, only the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative is authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as required by the Federal Guidelines for Specification of Disposal Sites for Dredged or Fill Materials (40 CFR 230) (Guidelines), promulgated pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act.

Given the scale and nature of the action, a planning level assessment of aquatic resources would help identify the environmentally preferable alternative. Such an assessment includes utilization of existing water resource data contained in the National Hydrography Dataset, National Wetland Inventory, USGS topographic maps and high resolution digital photography, as well as necessary field checking of the alternatives. Once the environmentally preferable alternative is identified, a jurisdictional delineation should be conducted prior to final design of the selected transmission line alignment. With a jurisdictional delineation, the applicant can use the design flexibility inherent in transmission line design (e.g., adjust tower placement and access roads) to demonstrate that the alignment is the LEDPA, in compliance with the Guidelines.

Recommendations:

Discuss, in the Final EIS, how the project will comply with the CWA Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines.

Complete a planning level assessment for potential impacts to WUS prior to issuance of the Final EIS/EIR. Include, in the Final EIS/EIR, estimated acreage impacts to WUS based on the planning level assessment for each alternative.

Include, in the Final EIS, additional measures to further minimize impacts to aquatic resources, as appropriate, such as reducing the width of access roads, constructing bridges over WUS and including buffers to minimize indirect impacts to aquatic resources.

Ephemeral Washes and Other Aquatic Resources

Regardless of their jurisdictional status, natural ephemeral washes perform a diversity of hydrologic and biogeochemical functions that directly affect the integrity and functional condition of higher-order

A2-3

A2-4

A2-5

A2-6

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

waters downstream. Healthy ephemeral waters with characteristic plant communities control rates of sediment deposition and dissipate the energy associated with flood flows. Ephemeral washes also provide habitat for breeding, shelter, foraging, and movement of wildlife. Many plant populations are dependent on these aquatic ecosystems and adapted to their unique conditions. Potential damage that could result from disturbance of flat-bottomed washes includes alterations to the hydrological functions that natural channels provide in arid ecosystems: adequate capacity for flood control, energy dissipation, and sediment movement, as well as impacts to valuable habitat for desert species.

A2-6
cont.

Recommendations:

Quantify, in the Final EIS/EIR, the likely impacts to ephemeral waters from the proposed project, for each project alternative, and discuss potential mitigation.

Commit, in the Final EIS/EIR, to avoiding, to the greatest extent feasible, or minimizing direct and indirect impacts to ephemeral streams (such as erosion, migration of channels, and local scour).

Air Quality

General Conformity

A2-7

Section 176(c)(1) of the Clean Air Act requires Federal agencies to assure that their actions conform to applicable implementation plans for achieving and maintaining the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for criteria pollutants. Also, this section assigns primary oversight responsibility for conformity assurance to the agencies themselves, not to the Environmental Protection Agency or the States. Specifically, for there to be conformity, a Federal action must not contribute to new violations of standards for ambient air quality, increase the frequency or severity of existing violations, or delay timely attainment of standards in the area of concern (e.g., a State or a smaller air quality region).

According to EPA's regulations, the conformity determination applies only to the Federal action, which, in this case, pertains to activities occurring on federal land. Emissions from the portion of the project that would occur on nonfederal land could, however, be considered indirect emissions resulting from the Federal action.¹ The DEIS excludes those emissions from its conformity determination, but does not provide the rationale for doing so.

On page D.3-12 of the Draft EIS/EIR, Table D.3-7 is titled, "Construction-Phase Emissions and General Conformity (average tons per year)". Per EPA regulations, the general conformity de minimis levels apply to each year of the project, not the average tons per year of emissions.²

¹ For general conformity, EPA has defined the indirect emissions at 40 CFR 93.152

² See 40 CFR 93.153 (b) and page 25 of EPA's General Conformity Training Module
<http://www.epa.gov/airquality/genconform/training/files/General_Conformity_Training_Manual.pdf>

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

On page D.3-6, under the discussion of general conformity, the Draft EIS/EIR discusses regionally significant actions. Regionally significant action regulations have been removed from the general conformity regulations (75 FR 17254, April 5, 2010).

A2-7
cont.

Recommendations:

Provide, in the Final EIS/EIR, the rationale for excluding from the conformity analysis the emissions from the nonfederal portion of the project (e.g., BLM has no practical control or continuing program authority).

Include, in the Final EIS/EIR, an emissions estimate for each year of the project. It is allowable to estimate emissions for the year representing the maximum over the entire Federal action, if all years are de minimis, and provide a brief explanation of the reason the particular year represents the maximum emissions.

A2-8

Remove, in the Final EIS/EIR, the discussion on p. D.3-6 regarding regionally significant actions.

A2-9

Helicopter Emissions

The South Coast Air Quality Management District's Final 2012 Air Quality Management Plan states that, in the South Coast Air Basin, high concentrations of ozone are normally recorded during the late spring and summer months, when more intense sunlight drives enhanced photochemical reactions. High PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations can occur throughout the year, but occur most frequently in fall and winter in the Basin. Although there are changes in emissions by season, the observed variations in pollutant concentrations are largely a result of seasonal differences in weather conditions.³ The plan also states that the ozone standard was exceeded most frequently in the Central San Bernardino Mountains. Ozone exceedances extended through San Bernardino and Riverside County valleys in the eastern Basin, as well as the northeast and northwest portions of Los Angeles County in the foothill and valley areas.

A2-10

The Draft EIS/EIR states that in some cases, towers and poles do not have existing access roads and are accessed on foot, by helicopter, or by creating temporary access areas. Operation and Maintenance related helicopter activities could include transportation of transmission line workers, delivery of equipment and materials to structure sites, structure placement, hardware installation, and conductor or Optical Ground Wire stringing operations. Helicopter landing areas could occur where access by road is infeasible (p. B-54).

Recommendations:

Consider, in the Final EIS/EIR, minimizing helicopter construction during the spring and summer months and discuss the feasibility of scheduling the heaviest helicopter use during the fall and winter when ozone production is the lowest. Quantify the potential benefits to air quality and discuss whether impacts to other resources could result from construction during cooler, and potentially wetter, months.

³ Final 2012 Air Quality Management Plan, South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (cont.)

In the Final EIS/EIR, identify and commit to using the best available control technologies to reduce helicopter emissions.

A2-11

Climate Change

The DEIS/EIR includes quantification and a thorough analysis of greenhouse gas emissions, including those of sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆). The EPA believes that the Council on Environmental Quality's December 2014 revised draft guidance for Federal agencies' consideration of GHG emissions and climate change impacts in NEPA outlines a reasonable approach, and should be consulted to help frame the analysis of these issues in the Final EIS.

A2-12

Recommendations:

In the Final EIS, qualitatively describe relevant climate change impacts, and analyze practicable mitigation measures to reduce project-related GHG emissions. Consider whether any modifications to the design would be appropriate to facilitate GHG emission reductions or improve resilience to foreseeable climate change; for example, increased transmission line height to avoid sagging under higher temperature conditions.

Responses to Comment Set A2 – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

A2-1 The commenter asks that the Final EIS include the results of a screening level analysis of impacts to waters of the U.S.

This issue is addressed in Section D.4.1.1 (Biological Resources – Vegetation, Regional Setting and Approach to Data Collection) and in Section D.4.3.3 under Impact VEG-3 relating to impacts to jurisdictional waters. SCE has not completed a delineation of jurisdictional waters for the Proposed Project, but has prepared a “Drainage Assessment” as preliminary information related to potential jurisdictional waters to support project design. The Drainage Assessment estimates maximum potential permanent and temporary impacts to jurisdictional drainage features by linear feet and acreage of riparian vegetation. These estimates are shown in Tables D.4-5 (Maximum Potential Permanent Impacts to Jurisdictional Drainage Features) and D.4-6 (Maximum Potential Temporary Impacts to Jurisdictional Drainage Features). The Drainage Assessment estimates that approximately 26 of the drainage features have potential to meet federal wetland criteria. The drainage assessment is conservative, estimating maximum disturbance to jurisdictional features. Not all jurisdictional waters within the ROW or the Proposed Project study area would be affected by the Proposed Project.

A2-2 The commenter asks that the Final EIS include “further information about the project’s compliance with federal Clean Air Act general conformity requirements.” The commenter also recommends selection of the Phased Build Alternative and seasonal use of helicopters to minimize air quality impacts.

The Clean Air Act general conformity rule is described in Section D.3.2.1 (Air Quality, Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards, Federal). Only a small fraction of project activity would occur on federal lands, and the emissions attributable to the federal portions of the Proposed Project would be less than the applicability thresholds in the general conformity rule (Table D.3-7, Construction-Phase Emissions and General Conformity). As explained in Section D.3.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures), under Impact AQ-1 (Construction would generate dust and exhaust emission of criteria pollutants), the Proposed Project is exempt from the requirement that a comprehensive Air Quality Conformity Analysis be performed. Under Impact AQ-3 (Operation, maintenance, and inspections would generate dust and exhaust emissions), it was also determined that annual emissions would not likely exceed federal General Conformity thresholds, and no general conformity determination would be required.

The recommendation for the Phased Build Alternative is noted. The extent to which helicopters would be employed in construction of the Proposed Project is unknown. Final determination on construction methods for various tower structures and for conductor stringing will be on a case-by-case basis by SCE and/or its contractor. In Section D.3.3.3 (Air Quality, Impacts and Mitigation), Mitigation Measure AQ-1c (Control helicopter emissions) identifies measures to reduce emissions and fugitive dust from such activities.

A2-3 The commenter asks that the Final EIS discuss how the project will comply with CWA Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines.

This issue is addressed in Section D.4.3.3 (Biological Resources – Vegetation, Impacts and Mitigation Measures) by Mitigation Measure VEG-3a, requiring minimization of impacts and

no net loss for jurisdictional waters and wetlands. A textual clarification that compliance with 404 (b)(1) guidelines is required has been made in Section D.19.2.1 (Water Resources and Hydrology, Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards) under the discussion of Federal regulations.

- A2-4 The commenter again asks that a planning level assessment of the impacts to waters of the U.S. be performed prior to issuance of the Final EIS, including estimated impacts for each alternative.

Please see Responses to Comments A2-1 and A2-3, which identify information in the EIS addressing this request. All alternatives to the Proposed Project would result in a similar levels of impact to waters of the U.S. as the Proposed Project as incorporated in Section G (Comparison of Alternatives).

- A2-5 Comment recommends including additional measures to minimize impacts to aquatic resources, such as reduced access road width, bridges over jurisdictional waters, and buffers to minimize indirect effects to jurisdictional waters.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1c would require minimization of vegetation and habitat loss, and would apply throughout the project, including jurisdictional waters. Mitigation Measure VEG-1c is adequate to minimize impacts to aquatic habitat and jurisdictional waters; however, the text of the measure has been revised to more clearly state the requirement for the project to avoid and minimize impacts to jurisdictional waters. Mitigation Measure VEG-1c has also been revised to require the use of existing access routes or bridges over jurisdictional waters, as feasible. A requirement for construction or installation of new bridges over jurisdictional waters is not incorporated into the measure because the environmental effects of such construction or installation could be greater than the effects of access road crossings at grade. The noted revisions to Mitigation Measure VEG-1c clarify and strengthen the measure and do not introduce any additional environmental impact.

- A2-6 The commenter asks that the EIS quantify likely impacts to ephemeral waters and discuss potential mitigation. The commenter also asks for a commitment to avoiding or minimizing direct and indirect impacts to ephemeral streams.

See Responses to Comments A2-1 and A2-3. The drainage assessment referred to an evaluation of ephemeral washes. Mitigation Measure VEG-3a, which minimizes impacts and ensures no net loss for jurisdictional waters and wetlands, includes a discussion of ephemeral streams and the mitigation measures identified there avoid and/or reduce impacts to ephemeral waters. See Section D.4.3.3 (Biological Resources – Vegetation, Impacts and Mitigation Measures).

- A2-7 The comment notes that the portion of emissions caused by the federal actions must be considered in relation to the pollutant-specific applicability thresholds. The EIS show the direct and indirect emissions that could occur at the time of construction, after the federal actions of the tribal and BLM approvals. The majority of these construction emissions would occur outside of the Morongo reservation and outside of BLM lands. Therefore, these construction emissions are not counted as emissions that the agency can practically control or emissions for which the agency has continuing program responsibility. Since the emissions would be outside of the practical control of these federal agencies, these emissions were not included in the review of general conformity rule applicability presented in Table D.3-7 (Construction-Phase Emissions and General Conformity).

- A2-8 The comment requests a presentation of emissions estimates for each year of the project, rather than average calendar year emissions during construction. The detailed emission calculations for the entire Proposed Project are presented in EIS Appendix 6. The construction schedule and sequence is presented in Section B.3.10, and this preliminary information does not allow presentation of specific construction activities or emissions within any particular calendar year over the 36 to 48-month duration. The review of general conformity rule applicability presented in Table D.3-7 (Construction-Phase Emissions and General Conformity) shows that the average emission rates would be well below the thresholds for the life of the Project.
- A2-9 The commenter recommends deleting the discussion regarding regionally significant actions under the General Conformity Rule discussion in Section D.3.2.1 (Air Quality). As suggested, the EIS includes this revision, because this portion of the regulation was removed from the Rule in 2010.
- A2-10 The commenter recommends minimizing helicopter construction during the spring and summer months and, if feasible, scheduling heaviest helicopter use during fall and winter when ozone production is lowest. The commenter also requests quantification of potential benefits to air quality and a discussion of impacts to other resources from construction during cooler months.
- As stated in Response to Comment A2-2, the extent of helicopter use is not known. The construction of the Proposed Project over four years would be a complex undertaking, with towers and structures being erected and removed in various locations at various times, based on the final construction plan and the need to keep circuits energized while maintaining a safe working environment for crews. The number of hours of helicopter flight time, the locations of helicopter use, and when they would be used in the construction schedule are unknown. It is not feasible to quantify potential benefits except as generally presented within Mitigation Measure AQ-1c (Control helicopter emissions) in Section D.3.3.3 (Air Quality, Impacts and Mitigation). The mitigation measures pertaining to fugitive dust and helicopter flight will reduce the construction impacts to nonattainment ozone, PM10, and PM2.5 concentrations during all seasons of the year under any combination of helicopter activity with other construction activities.
- A2-11 The commenter recommends identifying and committing to using best available control technologies to reduce helicopter emissions.
- Mitigation Measure AQ-1c (Control helicopter emissions) addresses strategies for minimizing helicopter emissions. The measure requires minimizing helicopter idling and use of the smallest practical and available helicopter for the operation. This measure and Mitigation Measure T-7a (Prepare and implement a final helicopter use plan) ensure implementation of feasible controls and proper oversight of operating procedures for helicopters.
- A2-12 The commenter requests a qualitative description of climate change impacts and practicable mitigation measures to reduce project GHG emissions, and consideration of design modifications to improve resilience to climate change. The commenter recommends consulting the CEQ December 2014 revised draft guidance on consideration of GHG and climate change in NEPA.
- A qualitative and quantitative description of GHG emissions and impacts is provided in Section D.6.3.3 (Climate Change, Impacts and Mitigation Measures). No mitigation is iden-

tified. Transmission lines are designed to standards that take into account extremes in temperature and wind. These extremes include any likely effects of climate change during the life of the project. The CEQ 2014 guidance on GHG was considered and is discussed in Section D.6.2.1 (Climate Change, Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards, Federal).

Comment Set A3 – California Department of Transportation, District 8

STATE OF CALIFORNIA—CALIFORNIA STATE TRANSPORTATION AGENCY

EDMUND G. BROWN Jr., Governor

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 8
PLANNING (MS 725)
464 WEST 4th STREET, 6th FLOOR
SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92401-1400
PHONE (909) 383-4557
TTY 711
www.dot.ca.gov/dist8



*Serious Drought.
Help save water!*

September 14, 2015

Ms. Billie Blanchard
CPUC/BLM
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94104

Southern California Edison West of Devers Upgrade Project
08-SBd 215-PM 1.452; SBd-62 PM R1.374; RIV-10 PM 72.718-115.536

Dear Ms. Blanchard:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for Southern California Edison's Proposed West of Devers Upgrade Project. It will be located within the existing West of Devers transmission corridor in Riverside and San Bernardino counties, and traverses local and regional roadways including, Interstate 10 (I-10), Interstate 215 (I-215), and State Route (SR-62).

The project proposes upgrades to existing 220 kV transmission lines between San Bernardino Vista and Devers Substations; equipment changes at seven substations; relocation of 66kV sub-transmission lines and 12 kV distribution lines; and installation of telecommunication lines and equipment. Temporary road or traffic lane closures and traffic controls would be required during stringing of overhead conductors and ground wire across roads, movement of large equipment, and trenching or boring in locations where lines would be placed underground. The project would require overhead conductors be strung across I-10, I-215, and SR-62 at various points.

Although portions of the proposed project are within Riverside, San Bernardino Cities, and County jurisdiction, policies and regulations that govern the State Highway System (SHS) take precedence and are applicable to all activities that impact the SHS. Public utility facilities will be granted permission to cross State highways; however the placement of longitudinal utilities within freeway and expressway right of way is prohibited under Caltrans policy.

Permits

This project as proposed will require a Caltrans Encroachment Permit; "Chapter Six-Utilities" of the Encroachment Permit Manual is most applicable to this project. The following noted sections of Chapter 6 are a few standards, which should be reviewed and incorporated into the project

A3-1

"Provide a safe, sustainable, integrated and efficient transportation system
to enhance California's economy and livability"

Comment Set A3 – California Department of Transportation, District 8 (cont.)

Ms. Billie Blanchard
September 14, 2015
Page 2

process. However, these sections may not represent all of the applicable requirements for the proposed utility work.

- **606 ENCROACHMENTS ON FREEWAYS AND EXPRESSWAYS**
This section describes requirements for transverse and longitudinal utility encroachments on freeways and expressways.
- **606.3 Transverse Encroachments - Table 6.1**

Please refer to Caltrans Encroachment Permit Chapter 600-Utilities Permits website for further information:

http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/developserv/permits/encroachment_permits_manual/index.html

Caltrans has the discretionary authority to issue special permits for the movement of vehicles/loads exceeding statutory limitations on the size, weight, and loading of vehicles contained in Division 15 of the California Vehicle Code. Requests for such special permits require the completion of, and application for a Transportation Permit. Information regarding Transportation Permit application can found on the website: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/permits/>

D.16.3.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- Preparation of a Construction Transportation Plan and Traffic Control Plan as noted in **Mitigation Measures for Impact T-1 (page D.16-14)** Correct the first sentence to read "...conductors be strung across regional routes I-10, I-215 and **SR-62** (not SR-68).
- It is recommended that there be appropriate signage notifications of construction traffic throughout the construction period.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments concerning this project. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me at (909) 383-4557 or Rebecca Forbes at (909) 388-7139.

Sincerely,



MARK ROBERTS
Office Chief
Community and Regional Planning

A3-1
cont.

A3-2

A3-3

Responses to Comment Set A3 – California Department of Transportation

A3-1 Caltrans cites in its comment letter the requirements for encroachment permits and for special permits for movement of vehicles/loads exceeding statutory limitations. The comment is noted.

A3-2 Caltrans notes that on roadway named in the EIS was numbered wrong. The correction has been made in Section D.16.3.3 of the EIS, under Impact T-1, changing SR-68 to SR-62.

A3-3 Caltrans recommends “appropriate signage notifications for construction traffic throughout the construction period.”

In Section D.16.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures), Mitigation Measure T-1b (Prepare Traffic Control Plans) requires that traffic control measures be consistent with the California Joint Utility Traffic Control Manual and other guidelines. This will ensure proper signage and controls where work is occurring in or adjacent to roadways. Each jurisdiction may have somewhat different requirements. For clarity, Caltrans has been named as one of the agencies to receive the Traffic Control Plans, in addition to local agencies who are to receive the plans.

Comment Set A4 – City of Colton



September 22, 2015

Billie C. Blanchard (CPUC)/Frank McMenimen (BLM)
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94104-3002

**Re: West of Devers Upgrade Project – Draft EIR/EIS
(SCH #2014051041)**

Dear Ms. Blanchard and Mr. McMenimen:

The City of Colton is pleased to participate in the scoping process for the West of Devers Upgrade Project by providing comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). As you are aware, Segment 2 of the project is located, in part, within the City of Colton. City of Colton staff has reviewed the Draft EIR/EIS in light of this, and in consideration of our previous comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP). Our comments are as follows:

A4-1

Visual Resources (D.18)

The visual simulation depicted on Figures D.18-9A and 9B (vicinity of Canyon Vista Drive, just west of East Chase Canyon Lane) and the accompanying narrative finds that there will be “low to moderate change in visual character.” The primary recommended mitigation is to “minimize visual contrast in project design.” Visual impacts will likely increase with the addition of “FAA hazard marker balls.” We request that the project proponent keep the City informed regarding FAA requirements regarding the marker balls as the project is designed in greater detail.

The accompanying narrative to the visual simulation (page D.18-39) also states that the taller structures will be placed lower on the slope, thereby minimizing the visual contrast. However, from the visual simulation it does not appear that the taller structures are being placed lower on the slope. Please provide more

A4-2

CIVIC CENTER
650 N. La Cadena Drive
Colton, CA 92324
(909) 370-5099

Comment Set A4 – City of Colton (cont.)

West of Devers Upgrade Project Draft EIR/EIS
September 22, 2015
Page 2

detailed information on the placement of towers, including the linear feet from existing pad(s) to proposed pad(s).

A4-2
cont.

Although we welcome the visual simulation provided from the vicinity of Canyon Vista Drive, we request additional visual simulation of views of the towers from the following two neighborhoods (with and without the project): Mohave Drive east of Skyview Drive; vicinity of Prado Lane and East Ridge View Drive.

A4-3

We are disappointed to read that the “Segment 2 Underground Alternative: East of I-215” and the “Segment 2 Underground Alternative: East of Vista Substation” were eliminated from further analysis after preliminary screening. Due to the potentially significant impacts on views from residential areas, we again request further, detailed analysis of Segment 2 underground alternatives.

A4-4

Land Use and BLM Realty (D.11)

Chapter D.11 references the Reche Canyon Specific Plan, and the proposed project’s impact on 71.3 acres. However, the accompanying exhibits do not depict the approved land uses within the Specific Plan (land uses are only identified as “Specific Plan”). We request that this chapter include an exhibit of the land uses permitted and planned by the Reche Canyon Specific Plan, including identification of any areas yet to be developed, and their proximity to the utility corridor.

A4-5

Wildland Fire (D.20)

We note that Mitigation Measure WF1a requires preparation of a Fire Management Plan which will be reviewed by State and local fire prevention authorities. We would appreciate the opportunity to review the Fire Management Plan at least 30 days prior to adoption.

A4-6

Transportation and Traffic (D.16)

Chapter D.16 references truck haul routes from the Material and Equipment Staging Area located at the northeast corner of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Canal Street in Grand Terrace: Barton Road – between Reche Canyon Dr. & Mt. Vernon Ave.; Mt. Vernon Ave. – between I-215 & Van Buren St.; and La Cadena Dr. – between I-215 & Agua Mansa Rd. Segments of each of these proposed truck routes are located within the City of Colton. The City of Colton is in the process of adopting new citywide truck routes. Please ensure that the Colton Public Works Department receives the Construction Transportation Plan and Traffic Control Plan for review and approval at least 30 days prior to commencing construction activities.

A4-7

Recreation (D.15)

Table D.15-1 and the accompanying narrative identifies the common area of the Rancho Mediterrania Mobile Home Park as a “park.” Please add clarifying language that this area is a private common area, consisting of clubhouse, pool and tot lot for the mobile home park.

A4-8

Comment Set A4 – City of Colton (cont.)

West of Devers Upgrade Project Draft EIR/EIS
September 22, 2015
Page 3

Noise (D.13)

Due to the potential noise and safety impacts of helicopter traffic on Reche Canyon area residents, please submit a copy of the Helicopter Land Use Plan to the City of Colton for review and comment at least 30 days prior to approval by the FAA. We note that “safety precautions may require homes near helicopter activity to be temporarily vacated” (page D.13-16). We request that the Helicopter Land Use Plan identify conditions that may require vacation of homes, and advanced notification requirements.

A4-9

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the environmental review process for this project. We look forward to ongoing input and dialogue as final planning and design proceeds for the West of Devers Upgrade Project. Should you have follow-up questions or require clarification of our comments, please contact me at 909-370-5185.

Respectfully,



MARK R. TOMICH
Development Services Director

C: G. Harold Duffey, City of Grand Terrace City Manager
T. Jarb Thaipejr, City of Loma Linda City Manager
Bill Smith, City Manager, City of Colton
David X. Kolk, Colton Electric Utility Director
Amer Jakher, Colton Public Works Director

Responses to Comment Set A4 – City of Colton

A4-1 The commenter requests to be informed by SCE regarding FAA requirements for marker balls as the project is designed in greater detail. The comment is noted. SCE has also received a copy of this comment.

A4-2 The commenter questions the accuracy of the structure location description in the discussion of KOP 2 and requests additional location information.

The original project proposal along this portion of Segment 2 placed the new structures lower on the slope relative to the existing structures. However, a subsequent realignment of the Proposed Project moved the new structures upslope to elevations approximately 10 to 15 feet higher than the existing structures. The discussion of KOP 2 in Section D.18.3.3 (Visual Resources, Impacts and Mitigation Measures) did not reflect that change and has been corrected. However, the overall impact conclusions do not change because, even with the slight increase in structure elevations, in the structural context of the two remaining transmission lines, the proposed structures would remain co-dominant landscape features and the incremental increases in the associated visual contrast and view blockage would remain low. As a result, the overall visual change would also remain low. Lateral distances between the proposed new structure locations and the locations of the structures being replaced range from approximately 25 feet to approximately 260 feet along this portion of Segment 2.

A4-3 The commenter requests visual simulations of two additional residential views along Segment 2. KOP 2 was selected to be representative of residential views along this portion of Segment 2.

The viewpoint location was selected following a field review and a digital terrain analysis in order to acquire a viewing location that would be representative of the types of visual impacts that would be experienced along this portion of Segment 2. KOP captures a foreground view of multiple tower locations (both new and to be replaced).

Although the additional viewpoints requested in the comment would provide different viewing perspectives of the Proposed Project, the viewing experiences would be very similar in that the views at both requested locations would encompass multiple existing structures to be replaced by new structures that would exhibit similar structural appearance, scale, skylining, and location relative to the existing structures to be replaced. The resulting visual impacts would be similar to those described for KOP 2 and, therefore, the simulation and analysis provided for KOP 2 adequately documents and characterizes the visual impacts that would typically be experienced at the two new requested locations.

A4-4 The commenter requests that the Segment 2 underground alternatives that were eliminated during the alternatives screening stage be further evaluated in light of the potential for significant visual impacts on residential views.

As documented in the KOP 2 analysis in Section D.18.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures), the typical visual impact on residential views along Segment 2 was evaluated and determined to be adverse, but the underground alternatives were not considered necessary to mitigate these visual impacts.

A4-5 The commenter notes that in Section D.11 (Land Use and BLM Realty) the Draft EIR/EIS references the Reche Canyon Specific Plan but does not depict the approved land uses within the Specific Plan. The commenter requests an exhibit of permitted and planned land uses in the Specific Plan be added, including identification of areas yet to be developed and their proximity to the utility corridor.

The Specific Plan area is crossed by the existing SCE ROW in Segment 2 of the Proposed Project, as shown in Figure D.11-1b (General Plan Land Use, Segment 2) and Figure D.11-2b (Zoning, Segment 2) of the EIS. The project would entail upgrades within this existing corridor. See Figure B-3a (Proposed Transmission Line Route Segment 2) at the end of Chapter B (Description of the Proposed Project). In the EIS, Appendix 2 (Detailed Project Maps) shows details of the alignment and project area, including the Reche Canyon Specific Plan area. See Figures Ap.2-4 and Ap.2-5. Although specific uses within the Specific Plan area are not identified, the aerial photograph base for the maps (2013) shows developed and undeveloped areas, with the location of existing and proposed towers superimposed, so areas yet to be developed can be identified in proximity to the utility corridor.

A4-6 The City of Colton requests the opportunity to review the project's Fire Management Plan at least 30 days prior to adoption.

In Section D.20.3.3 (Wildland Fire, Impacts and Mitigation Measures), Mitigation Measure WF-1a (Prepare and implement a Fire Management Plan) requires a draft plan be provided to each fire agency, including local municipal fire agencies, having jurisdiction over the areas through which the alignment passes. Resolution of comments on the Fire Management Plan is to occur at least 30 days prior to initiation of construction activities.

A4-7 The commenter requests that the Colton Public Works Department receive the required Construction Transportation Plan and Traffic Control Plan at least 30 days prior to construction.

Mitigation Measures T-1a (Prepare Construction Transportation Plan) and T-1b (Prepare Traffic Control Plans) include the requirement for submission at least 30 days prior to construction.

A4-8 The commenter requests additional language be included in the description of the Rancho Meditterrania Mobile Home Park recreation facilities.

In Section D.15 (Recreation), additional language was included in Table D.15-1 (Recreational Resources within the Project Study Area), and Section D.15.1.2.2, Segment 2: Colton and Loma Linda to clarify the amenities of this park.

A4-9 The commenter requests a copy of the "Helicopter Land Use Plan" for review and comment 30 days prior to approval by the FAA. The commenter also requests the Plan identify conditions where homes may need to be temporarily vacated and include advanced notification requirements.

That some homes might need to be vacated for safety reasons during helicopter operations is in error and is omitted from Section D.13.3.3 (Impacts and Mitigation Measures) of the Final EIS.

The Helicopter Use Plan is described in Mitigation Measure T-7a (Prepare and implement a final helicopter use plan), in Section D.16.3.3 (Transportation and Traffic, Impacts and Mitigation Measures). As stated in the mitigation measure, the FAA has exclusive jurisdiction

over aircraft and aircraft operations. The Helicopter Use Plan is to impose requirements that aid CPUC and BLM in the monitoring of helicopter use, but that do not conflict with any FAA requirements. The Plan is not approved by FAA. Under FAA rules, helicopters are not permitted to carry external loads over structures, but may fly over structures if not carrying an external load. It has not been determined whether, where, and when helicopter use would occur. This would be determined on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, operations must comply with FAA requirements.

However, once the plan is made final, a copy will be provided as a courtesy to each affected jurisdiction through which the project passes. Mitigation Measure T-7a has been modified in Section D.16 (Transportation and Traffic) of the Final EIS to include this requirement. Review and approval of the plan and ensuring implementation through mitigation monitoring is the responsibility of CPUC and BLM.

Comment Set A5 – City of Redlands



City of REDLANDS

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OSCAR ORCI
Development Services Director
ROBERT D. DALQUEST, AICP
Assistant Development Services Director

September 22, 2015

CPUC/BLM
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94104

Regarding: Comments on Draft EIS/EIR for SCE West of Devers Upgrade Project

To Whom It Concerns:

This letter is in regards to the Notice of Availability of a Draft EIS/EIR (referred to as "EIS/EIR" for the SCE West of Devers Upgrade Project (Project) that was received by the City of Redlands. The City would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the EIS/EIR. The following provides the City of Redlands' comments and concerns on the portions of the Project that are proposed within its boundaries:

I. Alternatives

The City of Redlands supports the Phased Build Alternative as the environmentally superior alternative. The City supports this alternative as it would avoid significant permanent visual impacts, as well as severe short-term construction related impacts associated with the 66 kV subtransmission line relocation.

The City of Redlands would be supportive of the Iowa Street 66 kV Undergrounding alternative if the subtransmission line were to be undergrounded from Citrus Avenue to Barton Road along Iowa Street. The City does not support the Iowa Street 66 kV Undergrounding alternative as it is currently proposed and would represent a significant aesthetic impact within a residential and office environment.

II. Project Description

Table B-8. Typo correction. Redlands is within San Bernardino County, not Riverside County.

Page B-25. 2nd Paragraph states "A majority of materials associated with the construction efforts would be delivered by truck to designated staging yards..." What other modes of delivery would occur? Please account for how all materials would be delivered to the Lugonia Avenue staging yard.

A5-1

A5-2



Comment Set A5 – City of Redlands (cont.)

III. Agricultural Resources

Page D.2-4, Last paragraph. Correction. The City of Redlands has three agricultural zones (A-1, A-1-20, and A-2).

A5-3

IV. Climate Change

No mitigation is recommended. Though the EIS/EIR states no mitigation is required, should there be measures related to construction equipment operation in order to minimize GHG emissions, such as idling time?

A5-4

V. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Mitigation measures are appropriate, however, should specific reference be made to a requirement for a SWPPP as there is in Section D.19? Will local agencies also review/approve the Soil Management Plan?

A5-5

VI. Noise

D.13-7. City of Redlands Municipal Code, 2nd Paragraph. The interpretation of the Redlands Noise Ordinance is incomplete. The proper reading of the ordinance is as follows "Construction And/Or Demolition: Operating or causing the operation of any tools or equipment used in construction, drilling, repair, alteration or demolition work between weekday hours of six o'clock (6:00) P.M. and seven o'clock (7:00) A.M., including Saturdays, or at any time on Sundays or holidays, such that the sound therefrom creates a noise disturbance across a residential or commercial real property line, except for emergency work by public service utilities, the city or another governmental entity. All mobile or stationary internal combustion engine powered equipment or machinery shall be equipped with exhaust and air intake silencers in proper working order, or suitable to meet the standards set forth herein."

A5-6

D.13-7. Third Paragraph, last sentence. Operations at night or outside of work hours would be inconsistent with the City of Redlands' Noise Ordinance.

D. 13-7 Fourth Paragraph, first sentence. Define helicopter routes within the City of Redlands and provide the proximity of sensitive receptors. The City is concerned with the noise generated by helicopters when flying over residences and other sensitive receptors.

A5-7

VII. Paleontological Resources

Mitigation measures are appropriate, however, should paleontological work undertaken on lands not overseen by BLM still be completed by qualified paleontologists with appropriate permitting from the applicable local agency?

A5-8



Comment Set A5 – City of Redlands (cont.)

VIII. Transportation and Traffic

Impact T-4 will require an analysis of the quantity of large construction vehicles operating on local roads in order to allow appropriate mitigation analysis and estimation. How is deterioration to be evaluated? Mitigation measures presented only discusses surface damage. Surface damage can be agreed upon but deterioration of subgrade is based upon load of vehicles, quantity of vehicles, and design of structural section. The mitigation measure should specifically state Project should “make the local agency whole” in regards to accelerated deterioration of the road as a result of project construction traffic. Wording of T-4a could cause problems because roads cannot be repaired to pre-construction condition. i.e., if a section of road requires reconstruction, it cannot be reconstructed to be a 22 year old road. Reconstruction would put an onerous burden on the project. But only repairing surface damage excuses the project from deterioration. Would a specific charge of EAL/mile be appropriate mitigation, i.e., \$0.67/EAL/mile driven on a secondary truck route?

A5-9

IX. Visual Resources

Section 18.1.2.3. 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence. “For the most part, the Proposed Project would parallel existing transmission lines...” In what instances would the Proposed Project not parallel the existing line? Where would this occur?

A5-10

Section 18.3.2. Significance Criteria #1, second to last sentence. “...there are no officially designated or community recognized scenic vista view-points per se in the Proposed study area.” Please explain the meaning of “per se” in this instance. Are there or are there not officially designated or community recognized scenic vista view-points in the proposed study area?

A5-11

VR-8a. Would local agencies have the opportunity to review the landscape mitigation plan prior to its approval and implementation?

A5-12

VR-9a. Define “excessive glare”. The EIS/EIR states colors and finishes of structures are to be “consistent with local policies and ordinances”. How would the applicant and/or the lead agency ensure compliance with local policies and ordinances?

A5-13

X. Water Resources and Hydrology

Mitigation measures are appropriate, however, will local agencies have oversight of the SWPPP for work done within their jurisdiction? i.e., working similar to D.20 – “Plan reviews shall include CPUC, BLM, CAL FIRE, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, and local municipal fire agencies with jurisdiction over areas where the project is located.”

A5-14



Comment Set A5 – City of Redlands (cont.)

XI. Miscellaneous

How shall the public within the Project study area be notified? The City of Redlands recommends incorporation of a mitigation measure requiring public information and notification prior to and during construction. Additionally, CEQA/NEPA and public hearing notices concerning the Project must be sent to City residents, not only those residences within 300 feet, but to all City residents impacted by the construction and operation of the Project

A5-15

Appendix 9, Page 40. Typo in the determination paragraph of 7.41b.

In conclusion, it is the City of Redlands' opinion that Draft EIS/EIR requires clarification on the above mentioned items and supports the environmentally superior Phased Build Alternative. Further, the City of Redlands is requesting receipt of any and all CEQA/NEPA and public hearing notices regarding the Project.

A5-16

If you have any questions concerning the above comments, please contact me at (909) 798-7555 ext. 1797 or by email at: emilyelliott@cityofredlands.org.

Sincerely,



Emily Elliott
Associate Planner



Responses to Comment Set A5 – City of Redlands

A5-1 The commenter expresses support for the Phased Build Alternative and states that it would be supportive of the Iowa Street 66 kV Underground Alternative if the 66 kV subtransmission line is undergrounded from Citrus Avenue to Barton Road along Iowa Street. See Response to Comment F3-441 and F3-559 regarding a revised simulation of the proposed new Iowa Street 66 kV line.

The commenter’s support for the Phased Build Alternative is noted.

The Iowa Street 66 kV Underground Alternative focuses on the segment of the proposed overhead route where significant visual impacts have been identified, which is by the existing residential subdivision, as explained in EIS Section D.18 (Visual Resources). The commenter is suggesting extending the undergrounding north of where it is proposed to start near Orange Avenue.

SCE noted in its Response to CPUC Data Request #15 (ALT-28, dated March 30, 2015) that extending the alternative to the north of its current overhead-to-underground transition location would require installation of an underground conduit system through a single-lane bridge that crosses a historic drainage feature located approximately 325 feet north of the centerline intersection of Orange Avenue and Iowa Street. Although technically feasible, the engineering and construction requirements would be more involved depending on how the underground conduit would be installed or attached to the bridge.. The additional costs of underground construction, as well as the additional construction impacts from extended lane and/or road closures during the conduit and vault installation process, are not justified where impacts based on existing visual conditions.

A5-2 The commenter notes a typographical error and to request information on materials that would be delivered to the Lugonia Avenue staging yard and what methods of delivery would be used.

As requested, Table B-8 (Potential Water Providers to WOD Upgrade Project) in Section B (Description of the Proposed Project) has been corrected to show the City of Redlands in San Bernardino County.

Section B.3.1.1 (Project Description, Staging Areas and other Work Areas) states that “[a] majority of materials associated with the construction efforts would be delivered by truck to designated staging yards, while some materials may be delivered directly to the temporary transmission and subtransmission construction areas.” To clarify, all materials delivered to Lugonia Yard would be by truck or van.

A5-3 The City of Redlands notes that they have three agricultural zones. Agricultural District A-2 has been added in Section D.2.1.2 under zoning Designations for the City of Redlands.

A5-4 The commenter suggests minimizing GHG emissions by such measures as reducing equipment idling. Idling and emission reduction are addressed in Section D.3 (Air Quality). Presently, all equipment owners are subject to a five-minute idling restriction under CARB rules (13 California Code of Regulations, Chapter 10, Section 2449). See also Mitigation Measure AQ-1b (Control off-road equipment emissions) and AQ-1c (Control helicopter emissions) in Section D.3.3.3 (Air Quality, Impacts and Mitigation).

- A5-5 The commenter believes that the Hazards and Hazardous Materials mitigation measures are appropriate, but asks if specific reference should be made to a SWPPP. The commenter also asks if local agencies will review/approve the Soil Management Plan.
- A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required under the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and the General Construction Permit. Section D.19 (Water Resources and Hydrology), Mitigation Measure WR-2a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits) addresses this issue. The SWPPP discussion in Section D.19 is now cross-referenced in Section D.10.3.3 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Impacts and Mitigation Measures).
- Section D.10.3.3 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Impacts and Mitigation Measures), under Mitigation Measure HH-2a (Prepare a Soil Management Plan) states that the Plan shall be submitted to the lead agencies (CPUC and BLM) for review and approval prior to the start of construction. However, any contaminants discovered during construction will be reported to local CUPA agencies and/or RWQCB. Once the plan is made final, a copy will be provided as a courtesy to each jurisdiction through which the project passes. Mitigation Measure HH-2a has been modified in Section D.10 (Hazards and Hazardous Materials) of the Final EIS to include this requirement. Review and approval of the plan and ensuring implementation through mitigation monitoring is the responsibility of CPUC and BLM.
- A5-6 The commenter notes that the presentation of the Redlands Noise Ordinance is incomplete and that operations at night or outside of work hours would be inconsistent with the City of Redlands' Noise Ordinance. The discussion of the Noise Ordinance in Section D.13.2.2 (Noise) has been edited to be consistent with the comment. The comment on night noise is noted. No change in the text is required.
- A5-7 The commenter requests a definition of helicopter routes within Redlands and the proximity of sensitive receptors. The City of Redlands is concerned with noise generated by helicopters over residences and sensitive receptors. Please see Response to Comment A4-9, which notes that FAA has complete jurisdiction over helicopters and pilots. The Helicopter Use Plan would specify transit routes for helicopters.
- A5-8 The commenter asks whether qualified paleontologists will be used on Proposed Project lands that are not administered by the BLM. Mitigation Measure V-1a (Develop Paleontological Resource Mitigation and Monitoring Plan) explains that all paleontological work undertaken by the Applicant on public lands administered by BLM shall be conducted by qualified paleontologists with a current Paleontological Resources Use Permit for BLM lands in California. To clarify, there are no permitting requirements for non-BLM-administered lands.
- A5-9 The city questions how road deterioration is to be evaluated and requests that the mitigation measures specify that the project should "make the local agency whole" in regards to accelerated deterioration of the road as a result of project construction traffic. The comment goes on to state that while surface damage can be agreed upon, deterioration of subgrade is based on vehicle load, quantity of vehicles, and design of the road section. Requiring repair to pre-construction conditions is problematic if a section requires reconstruction, it cannot be reconstructed to an old status or standard. Repairing surface damage does not address subgrade deterioration. The city suggests a specific charge, such as \$0.67/Equivalent Axle Load (EAL)/mile driven on a secondary truck route.

The project would be located in two counties and multiple cities, and would require use of roads under these jurisdictions as well as roads under Caltrans jurisdiction. Accounting for which vehicles were on which roads in which jurisdictions and for how many miles would be impossible to administer. Mitigation Measure T-4a (Repair roadways damaged by construction activities) has been amended to clarify that unless an alternative method for determining roadway condition is required by a given jurisdiction, the approach would be as specified in the mitigation measure.

- A5-10 The commenter requests clarification of the language used in Section D.18.1.2.3 (Segment 3: San Timoteo Canyon) that suggests not all of the proposed Project parallels existing transmission lines in San Timoteo Canyon.

The language in Section D.18.1.2.3 has been changed to more clearly communicate that the entire proposed Project does, in fact, parallel existing transmission lines in San Timoteo Canyon.

- A5-11 The commenter requests clarification in the first impact significance criterion discussion presented in Section D.18.3.2 (CEQA Significance Criteria) as to whether there are officially designated or community recognized scenic vista viewpoints in the proposed study area.

Significance criteria apply analysis under to CEQA, but not NEPA. The discussion of impact significance criterion one has been modified to clarify that there are no officially designated or community recognized scenic vista viewpoints in the proposed study area.

- A5-12 The commenter asks whether local agencies would have the opportunity to review the landscape mitigation plan prior to approval and implementation.

A Project Design Plan, which addresses earthwork, vegetation, and reclamation and restoration, is described in Mitigation Measure VR-8a (Minimize visual contrast in project design). Once the plan is made final, a copy will be provided as a courtesy to each jurisdiction through which the project passes. Mitigation Measure VR-8a has been modified in Section D.18 (Visual Resources) of the Final EIS to include this requirement. Review and approval of the plan and ensuring implementation through mitigation monitoring is the responsibility of CPUC and BLM.

- A5-13 The commenter requests clarification of what is meant by excessive glare and the mechanism by which compliance with local policies and ordinances will be achieved.

Excessive glare, in this case, refers to the visibility of reflected sunlight off of structural surfaces that is either visually distracting to a viewer or causes noticeable eye stress (discomfort glare). Local policies and ordinances are considered (See for example Appendix 9 [Policy Screening Report]); however, the CPUC has State jurisdiction over the siting and design of the construction of investor-owned public utility facilities. Such projects are exempt from local land use and zoning regulations and permitting in accordance with General Order No. 131-D, which is applicable to all components of a project. However, Section XIV.B requires “the utility to communicate with, and obtain the input of, local authorities regarding land-use matters and obtain any non-discretionary local permits.” The City of Redlands General Plan’s Guiding Policies and Implementing Policies were considered with regard to Visual Resources and it was determined that the project was consistent with these. Please see Appendix 9, Section 4.3 (City of Redlands).

A5-14 The commenter asks if local agencies will have oversight of the SWPPP for work done within their jurisdiction.

See the response to Comment A1-1. Local agency oversight is now included in Section D.19.3.3 (Water Resources and Hydrology, Impacts and Mitigation) under Mitigation Measure WR-3a, requiring implementation of flood, erosion, and scour protection for aboveground and belowground improvements. The California Construction General Permit requires the discharger to certify that all State and local requirements have been met in accordance with the General Permit.

A5-15 The commenter asks about public notification and requests a mitigation measure requiring public information and notification prior to and during construction and that all City residents affected by the project be notified of CEQA/NEPA and public hearings.

CPUC General Order 131-D requires public notification within 300 feet of the right-of-way; however, the CPUC and BLM notified property owners within 600 feet of the project route alignment. Prior to the CEQA/NEPA public informational meetings on the Draft EIR/EIS, notice of the meetings was published in four newspapers, including Redlands Daily Facts on Tuesday August 11, 2015, which serves the area of the City of Redlands.

EIS Section I (Public Participation and Consultation) describes the public involvement process. Announcements of public meetings and other information on the environmental review process are available on the BLM and CPUC project websites. During project construction, weekly reports and all project variances and Notices to Proceed will be posted on the CPUC website.

The BLM hosts a project website that contains project-related documents and announcements. The BLM project website is located here:

<http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/fo/palmsprings/transmission/WestOfDeversProject.html>

On the CPUC project website, there is also a link to the project's General Proceeding (A.13-10-020) webpage where the public is able to subscribe to receive announcements when documents are docketed and meetings are scheduled outside of the CEQA process.

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/westofdevers/westofdevers.htm>

In the EIS, APM REC-2 requires SCE to prepare a construction notification plan identifying procedures for notifying the public of the location and duration of construction. The specific requirements of the construction notification plan are detailed in Section D.11 (Land Use and BLM Realty) under Mitigation Measure LU-1a (Prepare construction notification plan), including public notice mailers, newspaper advertisements, public venue notices, and a toll-free information hotline. The construction notification plan will detail a complete notification and public inquiry process and ensure that residents, landowners and others potentially impacted are informed of construction activities, and procedures are established and documented for taking and responding to construction comments and concerns.

A5-16 A typographical error was noted by the commenter in Appendix 9 (Policy Screening Report) under Policy 7.41b in Section 4.3 (City of Redlands, California). The commenter reiterates support for the Phased Build Alternative and requests receipt of all CEQA/NEPA and public meeting notices.

The topographical error has been deleted and the policy determination column now states “The Proposed Project and alternatives would not preclude the continued operation of existing livestock/dairy farms.”

The commenter’s support for the Phased Build Alternative is noted. The City of Redlands is on the EIR/EIS mailing list, and thus will receive any future notices and will be notified in the event any future CEQA/NEPA public meetings are held. See Response to Comment A5-15 for information on how to subscribe to receive notification for public hearings related to the CPUC’s General Proceeding.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates

ORA Comments on the
Draft Environment Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement Issued in
Southern California Edison’s
Application 13-10-020, West of Devers Upgrade Project

1. PROPOSED PROJECT

A6-1

On October 25, 2013, Southern California Edison Company (SCE) filed Application (A.)13-10-020 seeking California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) approval for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to construct the West of Devers Upgrade Project (WODUP or Proposed Project). SCE proposes to replace or upgrade four 220 kilovolts (kV) circuits along approximately forty-five corridor-miles, approximately eight of which are across the Trust Lands of the Morongo. Such upgrades would increase the system transfer capacity from 1,600 MW to 4,800 MW.¹ SCE claims the proposed increase is needed to provide Full Capacity Delivery Service (FCDS) for renewable power projects that are new and proposed or planned to be located in the Blythe and Desert Center areas east of the Devers Substation.² SCE’s estimates the Proposed Project would cost approximately \$955 million in 2013 constant dollars, including 35% contingency.³

The Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), dated August 7, 2015, identifies three CPUC and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) basic project objectives under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)⁴ as follows:

- To upgrade the West of Devers (WOD) 220 kV transmission lines between Devers, El Casco, Vista, and San Bernardino Substations to increase system deliverability by at least 2,200 MW;
- To support achievement of State and Federal renewable energy goals; and
- To maximize the availability of remaining space in the corridor to the extent practicable, so future use of the corridor for additional transmission line upgrades is not precluded.

¹ DEIR at pp. A-2 to A-5.

² *Id.* at p. A-5.

³ SCE’s Appl. at 14.

⁴ DEIR at pp. A-11 to A-12.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

The DEIR evaluated fourteen alternatives⁵ to the Proposed Project and selected three for further consideration. In addition, the DEIR identified three (3) No-Project alternatives (Options 1, 1B, and 2), each of which includes substantial new 500 kV and/or 220 kV facilities and rights-of-way.⁶ Of these fourteen alternatives, the DEIR identified the Phased Build Alternative (PBA) as the environmentally superior overall.⁷

The PBA would install “795 Drake” Aluminum Conductor Composite Reinforced (ACCR) conductor on the identified circuits instead of the 2B-1590 Aluminum Conductor Steel Reinforced (ACSR) conductor identified in the Proposed Project, while maintaining the design across the Morongo land that would be similar to the Proposed Project.

ORA supports several aspects of the DEIR, as follows:

- Recognition that simply because generation projects are in the interconnection queue does not indicate that they will come to fruition.⁸
- Of the 1,179 interconnection requests submitted to the CAISO for study, only 8% have gone commercial.⁹
- The Proposed Project results in transmission capacity that exceeds the identified need by a wide margin.¹⁰
- The efforts of the DEIR to redefine the need for transmission to a lesser capacity.

On the other hand, ORA disagrees with the following aspects of the DEIR:

- Forecasted congestion on this portion of the transmission system is a more reasonable metric of project need than generator requests for deliverability.
- A security-constrained production cost simulation is a more reasonable tool for assessing potential congestion than a power flow model.
- The power flow study presented in the DEIR¹¹ overestimates the transmission capacity needed for renewable generation.

⁵ Eleven (11) of the fourteen (14) alternatives were eliminated after a detailed evaluation process while three alternatives were fully analyzed in the EIR/EIS (DEIR at secs. C.3.1 and C.3.2).

⁶ DEIR at sec. C.6.3.

⁷ *Id.* at sec. G.5.

⁸ *Id.* at p. A-6.

⁹ *Id.* at append. 5, “Project Alternatives Assessment – A Power Flow Analysis (ZGlobal Study),” at 6.

¹⁰ *Id.* at p. A-6.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

- A Project alternative with a more reduced scope than the DEIR’s alternatives should be considered.

A6-1
cont.

2. DISCUSSION

A6-2

2.1 Congestion is a more reasonable metric for transmission need than deliverability.

The focus on deliverability in both the SCE application and the DEIR is misplaced. Full Capacity Deliverability Service (FCDS) is a value added element for generators so that their capacity may potentially count towards the Load Serving Entities (LSE’s) Resource Adequacy (RA) requirements. Though most of the renewable power projects that are new and proposed or planned to be located in the Blythe and Desert Center areas east of the Devers Substation request FCDS transmission service,¹² this does not justify WODUP as needed and reasonable or in California and the ratepayers’ interest.

For the WODUP, SCE has chosen to fund the upgrades, instead of collecting initial funding from generators located in the Blythe and Desert Center areas east of the Devers Substation that are requesting FCDS.¹³ Consequently, the generators receive no economic signal as to the cost of the WODUP upgrades and would likely request such services. Therefore, the generators’ request for FCDS at no cost to them does not support the need for WODUP.

2.2 California is not in need of additional system resource capacity.

A6-3

The Commission’s 2014 LTPP does not have an identified need for system capacity before 2033.¹⁴ Notwithstanding this projected surplus of capacity, the ability of solar generation to contribute capacity is expected to significantly diminish as California transitions to Effective Load Carrying Capability (ELCC) methodology of resource counting.¹⁵ The Commission’s RPS Calculator indicates

¹¹ *Id.* at append. 5.

¹² *Id.* at p. A-5.

¹³ FERC EL11-10. Even if SCE had not decided to release the generators from this funding requirement for these Transition Cluster generators, under the CAISO Generation Interconnection and Deliverability Allocation Procedures (GIDAP) beginning with Cluster 5, the cost of Area Deliverability Network Upgrades (ADNUs) such as the WODUP are not allocated to the individual generators.

¹⁴ CPUC Energy Division 2014 LTPP Scenario Tool for R.13-12-010 (Scenario tab row# 51), March 2015.

¹⁵ The implementation of the ELCC methodology, as compared with the current exceedance-based methodology, would result in different dependable capacity (NQC) values for wind and

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

that based on the ELCC metric, a solar PV resource would have its NQC value reduced from 85%-90% to about 15%-30% of its nameplate capacity as solar penetration increases.¹⁶

If deliverability were considered at all, the focus should be narrowed to existing Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs). Because the Commission has reviewed and approved PPAs that have generators located in the Blythe and Desert Center areas east of the Devers Substation and has assumed the availability of FCDS on that basis, the need for deliverability in the Project area of the electric system should be restricted to those projects with approved PPAs.

The California mandate that retail sellers to procure 33% of their electric supply from eligible renewable resources by 2020 is an energy-based requirement.¹⁷ As such, whether the energy from a specific renewable generator has received FCDS does not impact how such received energy counts toward the retail sellers' procurement goals. Also, whether a generator has received FCDS does not impact whether a generator is allowed to connect to the electric system in a safe and reliable manner. Generators located in the Blythe and Desert Center areas east of the Devers Substation can continue to connect to the grid irrespective of whether the WODUP is constructed.¹⁸ Such generators have the option to connect as Energy-Only projects and still count toward State and Federal renewable energy goals without depending upon the WODUP.¹⁹

A6-3
cont.

solar resources. In particular, the ELCC studies have shown significant decrease in the solar resources' NQC in the areas with higher solar penetration. This would lower the RA value associated with such resources.

¹⁶ See CPUC RPS Calculator v6.1, available at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Procurement/LTPP/2012+LTPP+Tools+and+Spreadsheets.htm>.

¹⁷ Senate Bill 2 (1X) (Simitian, Energy: renewable energy resources. Stats. 2011, ch.1), available at http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_0001-0050/sbx1_2_bill_20110412_chaptered.pdf.

¹⁸ SCE Data Response PD-25.

¹⁹ The WODUP may even be detrimental to such projects as the proposed construction work would necessitate transmission circuits being taken out of service and reducing the transmission capacity serving this area.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

2.2 A better metric to assess whether renewable energy can reach the system load and therefore count towards the State and Federal renewable energy goals is congestion.

A6-3
cont.

Congestion on a path indicates that generation had to be reduced and therefore not delivered.²⁰ An economically and environmentally sensitively designed electric system will experience some level of congestion. It would be unreasonable and not in ratepayers' interests to build an electric system that includes excess capacity to accommodate all potential generation pattern options.

In the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) markets, congestion is managed through pricing signals, where generation on the congested side of a path is given a price signal to reduce its output. The response of each generator will depend on its sensitivity to the market prices. More price-sensitive generation – such as the conventional gas fired generation in this area as well as imports from Arizona that pass through this area – will be curtailed first to clear any congestion. Price insensitive generation, such as the renewable generation, would be the last to curtail production.

Therefore, congestion metric to determine whether the existing transmission capacity should be increased would look at both the amount of energy curtailed and generators that would experience the curtailment.

2.4 A security-constrained production cost simulation tool is a power-flow model for assessing potential congestion.

One of the Proposed Project's objectives listed in the DEIR is to increase the system deliverability and then assesses the alternative's ability to meet this objective by using a power-flow model.²¹ Such a model is widely used in transmission system reliability assessments and used to determine a maximum transfer capability of a portion of the electric system. However, such a model only provides a snapshot of how the system would perform under an assumed single system condition. The system condition modeled is commonly selected so as to result in a high stress on the portion of the system under study. Therefore, it provides little insight into how frequently, if ever, such conditions might exist or the amount of energy that may be impacted by a transmission constraint.

²⁰ In this particular circumstance, the energy could be scheduled east towards Arizona rather than curtailed. However, such rescheduling would not support California's renewable energy goals.

²¹ WODUP DEIR, append. 5, ZGlobal Study at 7.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

A more effective industry tool for investigating congestion is a security-constrained production cost simulation model. Such a model looks at multiple hours in a time period (frequently one year), the spatial system loads, the capacity of the transmission system, and the production cost curve of each generator to simulate how the system would operate over the course of a year. Levels of congestion and changes in congestion associated with system improvements can then be assessed. Furthermore, it can be determined whether and to what extent renewable generators in an area may be curtailed

Therefore, ORA recommends a security-constrained production cost simulation model should be utilized, since it is a better tool to assess whether increases in transmission capacity are needed to support achievement of the State and Federal renewable energy goals.²²

2.5 The power-flow study presented in the DEIR overestimates the transmission capacity needed for renewable generation.

In order to assess the performance of alternatives to the WODUP, the DEIR includes a power system analysis using a power flow model.²³ This power system study investigates how the Proposed Project, the Phased Build alternative, and the No Project alternatives perform under two alternate renewable generation development portfolios: (i) the Cluster 7 Phase I resource portfolio; and (ii) the CAISO 2024 Summer Peak Reliability base case portfolio. The study also includes sensitivity studies within these portfolios of the impact of increased imports from the Imperial Irrigation District (IID).

The DEIR notes that the Cluster 7 Phase I base case was created by the CAISO which focused on the reliability and deliverability of *all* generation projects that had applied under Cluster 7, as well as higher-queued generation still active in the CAISO's interconnection queue, irrespective of whether it is a reasonable assumption that all of these generators would be built.²⁴ As the DEIR notes, historically only 8% of the generation projects that have requested studies in the CAISO interconnection process have gone into commercial operation.²⁵ Therefore this case includes a highly speculative amount of generation which should be excluded from consideration. Even the CAISO does not consider such levels of

²² In the event of congestion that could impact renewable generation, CPUC RPS Calculator is also a useful tool to understand whether there are locational alternatives for renewable generation so that the goals could be met without additional transmission capacity.

²³ WODUP DEIR, append. 5, ZGlobal Study at 7.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 6

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

generation as reasonable and does not use it in their interconnection process to determine whether there is a need for Area Delivery Network Upgrades, such as the WODUP.

A6-3
cont.

The CAISO 2024 Summer Peak Reliability base case portfolio also includes speculative generation. The generation model shown in Table A4 of the DEIR Power System Study includes unspecified generation at both Colorado River (Pgen²⁶ = 329.4 MW) and Red Bluff (Pgen = 274.6 MW), as well as specific generators without PPAs. Consequently, this pattern is speculative and overstates the need for deliverability.

The California Energy Commission (CEC) and the Commission use the RPS Calculator²⁷ to develop renewable resource portfolios that are studied in the CAISO's annual Transmission Planning Process (TPP). The RPS Calculator (version 5) was used to develop the resource portfolios. The RPS calculator makes assessment of overall cost, including the cost of transmission upgrades triggered by the resources while selecting the lowest cost resources based on certain criteria.²⁸

The renewable resource portfolio of 3,800 MW of renewable development in Riverside East used in the reference base case in the 2014-2015 TPP²⁹ is based on the assumption that the WODUP had been built to the full scale of the Proposed Project.³⁰ Because the RPS Calculator would have assumed the WODUP as a foregone conclusion and not subject to an economic test, it would tend to assume higher resource development in the Riverside East area.

In the prior planning cycle (2013-14), only 964MW were modeled in the Riverside East area, because the RPS calculator used at that time assumed 964 MW could be accommodated on the existing system without WODUP.³¹ The latest version of

²⁶ The term “Pgen” means the dispatched individual generation level in a power flow case.

²⁷ See RPS Calculator, available at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Procurement/LTPP/2012+LTPP+Tools+and+Spreadsheets.htm>.

²⁸ The tool ranks and sorts individual resources within 48 resource zones to meet local requirements and to fill existing transmission capacity. It develops bundles to be delivered over minor upgrades and new backbone transmission. It then selects resources and transmission bundles until the specified RPS standard is met.

²⁹ See 2014-2015 TPP, available at <http://www.caiso.com/Documents/2014-2015RenewablePortfoliosTransmittalLetter.pdf>.

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ See RPS Calculator, available at <http://www.caiso.com/Documents/2013-2014RenewablePortfoliosTransmittalLetter.pdf>.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

the RPS Calculator (v6.1)³² selects only 1,200 MW of resources in the Riverside East area, including only 124MW of new generic resource, all of which can be accommodated on the existing transmission. In other words, the RPS Calculator (v6.1) does not identify any need for WODUP. Moreover, under this RPS portfolio, there would be no additional transmission capacity needed elsewhere in the State to make up for a smaller amount of generation selected in the Riverside East area relative to the CAISO 2024 Summer Peak Reliability base case portfolio.

As noted previously, if the need for deliverability is to be considered in this assessment despite the current state surplus in generation capacity, the amount of generation modeled as needing deliverability should be restricted to those generation projects with PPAs. This would be substantially fewer generators than shown in Table A4 of the DEIR Power System Study.

Table 1 below shows an estimate of the existing deliverability available through the West of Devers corridor, as well as the PPA-contract capacity relying on this deliverability. The existing deliverability is estimated by summing the entire serial-group generator queue capacities that have received FCDS plus the Path 42 Maximum Import Capability (MIC) and the capacity added by the Interim Upgrades. Table 1 shows that there is approximately, 1,112MW of FCDS capacity currently available the WOD corridor in excess of the existing and PPA-projects seeking FCDS.

A6-3
cont.

³²See RPS Calculator (v6.1), available at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Renewables/hot/RPS+Calculator+Home.htm>.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

Table 1. Calculation of Existing System FCDS Capacity Not Utilized By Generation Projects PPAs

Queue Position	Technology	Cluster	POI	Capacity (MW)
1	W	Serial	Devers-Garnet 115 kV line (Tap)	*
3	NG	Serial	Devers Substation 230 kV Bus	850
11A	NG	Serial	Julian Hinds Substation 230kV	520
17	NG	Serial	Colorado River Substation 500kV bus	520
49	W	Serial	Devers Substation	*
138	W	Serial	Devers-Vista 230kV #1	150
146	PV	Serial	Red Bluff Substation 230kV	150
147	PV	Serial	Red Bluff Substation 230kV	400
219	NG	Serial	Colorado River Substation 500kV bus	50
WDT263	PV	Serial	Chanslor 33 kV (Blythe 161 kV)	21
Subtotal of Serial Gen. Allocated FCDS				2661
Path 42 MIC**				462
WOD Interim Upgrades				1050
Existing FCDS Capacity				4173
Technology - W=Wind, NG=Natural Gas, PV=Solar Photovoltaic, ST=Solar Thermal				
* No longer in CAISO Queue, but not shown as being either completed nor withdrawn - total = 117 MW				
Power Purchase Agreements				
Queue Position	Technology	Cluster	POI	PPA Capacity (MW)
3	NG	Serial	Devers Substation 230 kV Bus	728
11A	NG	Serial	Julian Hinds Substation 230kV	490
146	PV	Serial	Red Bluff Substation 230kV	150
147	PV	Serial	Red Bluff Substation 230kV	400
193	ST	Transition	Colorado River Substation 500kV	500
294	ST	Transition	Colorado River Substation 500kV	110
365	ST	Transition	Red Bluff Substation 230kV	**
WDT263	PV	Serial	Chanslor 33 kv (Blythe 161 kV)	21
Subtotal of PPAs in CAISO Area				2399
Target 2020 Path 42 MIC***				662
PPA Contracted Capacity				3061
FCDS Capacity in excess of PPAs				1112

Technology - W=Wind, NG=Natural Gas, PV=Solar Photovoltaic, ST=Solar Thermal

** PPA Terminated

*** 62 MW is the current MIC from the Dever Path 42 into Devers and

the 62 MW reflects the target MIC in 2020 as per the CAISO 2014-15 Transmission Plan

The contingencies selected for consideration in the power system study were excessive, thereby understating the capacity of the system and overstating the need for additional capacity. The ZGlobal Study states that the assessment of the transmission system performance included about 70 single contingencies and

A6-3
cont.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

2,300 double contingencies.³³ From the information presented in power-flow analysis contingency tables located in the DEIR, these 2,300 double contingencies included overlapping outages (commonly referred to as *N-1-1* contingencies). When planning for *N-1-1* contingencies, the normal practice is to assume that there is an opportunity to redispatch the system following the initial contingency to avoid system performance violation following the second contingency. This is the approach used in the CAISO’s Generator Interconnection and Deliverability Study Methodology Technical Paper which states that the CAISO deliverability methodology only considers multiple contingencies associated with a single initiating event (common mode and bus outages).³⁴

A6-3
cont.

Therefore, many of the double contingencies studied in the DEIR should be excluded from the power system study since the system can be redispatched between events for overlapping outages. Excluding such contingencies is expected to show greater transmission transfer capability and less need for new transmission capacity.

2.6 ORA recommends that the Commission adopt and approve a project alternative that is more limited in scope than any of DEIR’s stated alternatives.

A6-4

Based on the foregoing, ORA disagrees with the DEIR’s Basic Objective 1 to upgrade the transmission lines to increase system deliverability by at least 2,200 MW. There has been no forecast of congestion presented that would support a need to the Project to facilitate access to renewable energy in the Riverside East area. Furthermore, there is no need for system capacity in California to justify a major transmission expansion to increase the pool of capacity resources. Even if there were such a need, transition to an ELCC method of capacity counting would diminish the value of solar resources in fulfilling such a need.

If despite this lack of need for capacity, the need for transmission capacity to support the existing PPAs were considered, the existing system capacity with the interim WOD upgrades is sufficient. SCE’s Proponent’s Environmental Assessment (PEA) lists in Table 1-1 the interconnection requests in the CAISO queue that may benefit from the Project, including the PPA status of each. Since

³³ WODUP DEIR, append. 5, ZGlobal Study at 9.

³⁴ See CAISO’s Generator Interconnection and Deliverability Study Methodology Technical Paper at 6, available at <http://www.caiso.com/Documents/TechnicalPaper-GeneratorInterconnection-DeliverabilityStudyMethodology.pdf>.

Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocates (cont.)

the SCE application, Q365 has lost its PPA.³⁵ Therefore only 500 MW of interconnection requests remain, which is well within the capacity of the interim upgrades.³⁶ Furthermore, when considering pre-Transition Cluster projects that have been allocated deliverability but do not have a PPA, even more system margin becomes apparent.

A6-4
cont.

3. CONCLUSION

A6-5

A Project Alternative that maintains the existing transmission capacity, including the interim upgrades, should be considered the initial phase in a Phased Build approach. This would likely include only the upgrades through the Morongo lands as described in the Proposed Project. Such an alternative would meet a refined Basic Objective 1 and well as Basic Objectives 2 and 3. Such a reduced scope would also have a lesser environmental impact than either the Proposed Project or the Phased Build Alternative.

ORA supports the DEIR's acknowledgement that the interconnection queue is not a measure of what generation projects may materialize. ORA also supports the DEIR in considering alternatives that have reduced environmental impact while still meeting California's needs. However, there has not been sufficient demonstration that a transmission capacity increase is needed or why a project of reduced scope that simply maintains the current transmission capacity is not only adequate but also provides margins for future uses.

A6-6

Therefore, ORA recommends: (1) a congestion analysis be used in the power system studies to determine the value of upgrading the transmission system west of the Devers substation; and (2) an evaluation of an additional project alternative that maintains the existing system capability by restricting the WODUP scope of work to that portion of the transmission system which transverses the Morongo lands.

³⁵ Queue 365 is identified as a 500 MWW solar thermal project. The CAISO queue identifies the Proposed Project as connecting to Red Bluff substation. Because solar thermal projects of this size are permitted by the CEC, the Palen project is the only project that meets these parameters.

³⁶ See CPUC RPS Monthly Project Status Tbl (updated Aug. 20, 2015), available at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUC/energy/Renewables/>.

Responses to Comment Set A6 – CPUC Office of Ratepayer Advocate

- A6-1 This comment from ORA first summarizes the alternatives presented in the Draft EIR/EIS. The commenter supports the Draft EIR/EIS with the position that the CAISO queue includes a large number of generation projects that will likely never be constructed and that the Proposed Project would result in transmission capacity exceeding identified need. The comment disagrees with certain aspects of the Draft EIR/EIS, and these are addressed in detail in the subsequent individual comments.
- A6-2 The comment states that congestion should be used as a metric in determining whether the Proposed Project would be needed and reasonable. See General Response GR-1 for information on the question of project need in the context of the environmental review process. The ORA is a party to the CPUC proceeding, and as such, ORA may address the topic of the need for the Proposed Project in the CPUC evidentiary hearing. Although congestion may be a reasonable metric, rather than a consideration of deliverability, the EIS recognizes that a basic objective of the Proposed Project is to increase the power transfer capability of the West of Devers transmission facilities to interconnect and fully deliver the electrical power from planned generation resources (Section A.2.1.4, Interconnecting Planned Generation Resources). As noted in GR-1, the EIS does not define any specific level of need for the Proposed Project because such a discussion is not appropriate in the NEPA context.
- A6-3 This comment states that California does not need system capacity and that the value of solar generation may diminish in future years. The comment presents information on the level of generation that has received power purchase agreements (PPAs) and information on options available to generators as “energy-only” projects, rather than seeking or receiving Full Capacity Deliverability Status (FCDS).
- The EIS recognizes that planned generation resources could be designated as “energy-only” although most do not pursue this option. Because of the tendency of generators to pursue deliverability and FCDS, the EIS includes an in-depth discussion of the transmission system improvements that could be implemented as alternatives to the project and in the No Project/No Action Alternative Scenario (Section C.6.3). As noted above, the EIS does not define any specific level of need for the Proposed Project because such a discussion is not appropriate in the NEPA context. The question of whether the Proposed Project is needed is clearly within the scope of the CPUC evidentiary hearing. No additional EIS analysis would be necessary. Please also see General Response GR-1.
- A6-4 The comment reiterates the position that congestion should be used as a metric in determining the need for transmission capacity. Please see Response to Comment A6-2.
- A6-5 The comment recommends using a production cost simulation model as the tool in determining the need for transmission capacity. As noted above, the EIS does not define any specific level of need for the Proposed Project. The power flow analysis in the EIS need not include a formal study of deliverability or a security-constrained production cost simulation, as suggested by the comment. Conducting these types of studies would be beyond the scope of the EIS, which focuses on determining whether the project and alternatives are feasible. Please also see General Response GR-1.

- A6-6 The comment claims that the power flow study in the Draft EIR/EIS overestimates the level of transmission capacity needed for the West of Devers corridor. As noted above, the EIS does not define any specific level of need for the Proposed Project. The purpose of the power flow modeling presented in the Draft EIR/EIS was limited to assessment of the ability of the Proposed Project and the Phased Build Alternative to meet Basic Project Objective 1. General Response GR-2 (Agency-defined Basic Project Objectives) notes that the power flow analysis in the EIS does not include a formal study of deliverability. The power flow modeling analysis compared the Proposed Project with the Phased Build Alternative in different power flow scenarios, and the purpose of the analysis was to assess whether the Proposed Project and Phased Build Alternative could feasibly satisfy various levels of potential generation and scenarios of system operation.
- The comment also presents information on the level of generation that has requested review for interconnection purposes and the level of generation identified within power flow modeling cases and within the CAISO annual Transmission Planning Process. The comment uses this information in support of the position that California does not need system capacity. This topic is addressed in Response to Comment A6-3.
- A6-7 The commenter disagrees with Basic Project Objective 1 and setting a goal to increase deliverability by at least 2,200 MW because the commenter asserts that no congestion study documents a need for this level of additional capacity. The rationale for selecting each of the CPUC and BLM Basic Project Objectives is presented in EIS Section A.2.3, and General Response GR-2 provides a discussion of the agency-specific Basic Project Objectives.
- The commenter believes that the existing system, including the 2013 West of Devers Interim Project, would be adequate as an alternative to the Proposed Project, and that the existing system capacity is sufficient, in light of the documented demand. The comment recommends that this concept be considered as an EIS alternative.
- In consideration of the comment, the EIS now includes a new alternative, the “Retain WOD Interim Facility Alternative.” It is evaluated in EIS Appendix 5 (Alternatives Screening Report), Section 5.13, and also in Section C.5.12, as an alternative that has been considered but eliminated from detailed evaluation because it would not meet the Basic Project Objectives.
- A6-8 The commenter indicates that the “Retain WOD Interim Facility Alternative” would reduce environmental impacts when compared with the Proposed Project or the Phased Build Alternative. However, the alternative recommended in the comment would not meet the Basic Project Objectives. Please see Response to Comment A6-7.
- A6-9 Please see Responses to Comments A6-2 and A6-7.

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services
Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office
777 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Suite 208
Palm Springs, California 92262



In Reply Refer To:
FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335

Billie C. Blanchard, California Public Utilities Commission, Project Leader
Frank McMenimen, Bureau of Land Management, Project Leader
C/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, California 94104

OCT - 9 2015

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Southern California Edison West of Devers Upgrade Project, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California

Dear Ms. Blanchard and Mr. McMenimen:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the subject Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Southern California Edison (SCE) West of Devers (WOD) Upgrade Project (Project). The DEIR was prepared to identify the proposed Project's direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts; to discuss alternatives; and to propose mitigation measures that avoid, minimize, or offset significant environmental impacts. The primary concern and mandate of the Service is the protection of public trust fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The Service has legal responsibility for the welfare of migratory birds, anadromous fish, and endangered animals and plants occurring in the United States. The Service is also responsible for administering the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (Act), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). We are providing the following comments as they relate to the Project's effects on wildlife resources and species listed under the Act.

The purpose of the proposed Project is to upgrade over 48 miles of SCE's existing 220 kilovolt (kV) transmission lines, associated structures, and telecommunication lines from the Devers substation to the San Bernardino substation. The Project is divided into six segments. The Project includes 1) replacing approximately 562 miles of 220 kV transmission line with 1,199 miles of higher capacity 220 kV lines; 2) upgrade equipment at the Devers, El Casco, Etiwanda, San Bernardino, Timoteo, Tennessee, and Vista substations; 3) remove and replace approximately 598 tower and pole structures with 470 higher capacity structures; 4) relocation of 3 miles of transmission line and right of way (ROW) located on Morongo Tribal lands to the south; 5) removal and relocation of 2 miles of 66 kV subtransmission lines and 4 miles of 12 kV electric distribution lines; 6) the construction of temporary structures and bypass lines to facilitate electrical distribution during the project, 8) the rehabilitation of 130 miles of existing access roads; and 7) the construction of 20 miles of temporary and permanent access roads.

The Project is located primarily within the existing WOD transmission corridor in the counties of Riverside and San Bernardino and through the cities of Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Colton, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, and Redlands. The project's transmission route begins at the Devers substation

A7-1

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335) 2

south of Desert Hot Springs, Riverside County, California, and travels west through the San Gorgonio pass north of Interstate 10 (I-10), through Morongo Tribal Lands (Segments 6, 5, and 4, respectively). The line then crosses the I-10 and follows the San Timoteo Canyon northwest and splits (Segment 4 and 3); one segment terminates to the north at the San Bernardino substation (Segment 1) and the other at the Vista substation south of Colton, San Bernardino County, California; the west edge of Interstate 215 (Segment 2).

A7-1
cont.

Comments

Impact Analysis of Project Alternatives

The DEIR analyzes five potential project alternatives: the Tower Relocation Alternative, the Iowa Street 66 kV underground Alternative (Iowa Street Alternative), the Phased Build Alternative (PB Alternative), and two No Project/No Action alternatives. These alterations will have varied effects on the biological resources and will be discussed further.

The Tower Relocation Alternative rebuilds 54 towers, 50 feet (ft.) farther from residential areas but within SCE ROW to compensate for visual impacts. This alternative does impact vegetation and wildlife by increasing construction time as well as vegetation removal and ground disturbance in potential coastal sage scrub (CSS) habitat. The Service does not recommend this alternative over the Project as proposed.

A7-2

The Iowa Street Alternative moves the 66 kV sub-transmission line from an overhead line to underground along Iowa Street in the City of Redlands (Figure ES-2). The sub-transmission line would travel 1,600 ft. underground, then transition from underground to overhead on the existing overhead San Bernardino–Redlands–Tennessee 66 kV subtransmission line. This underground alternative would replace a similar length of proposed new over-head subtransmission line that is part of the proposed Project. This alternative would eliminate the permanent loss of habitat at each pole footing and a result in reduction in bird and bat collisions; however, there is an increase in construction impact to biological resources. The alternative requires substantial ground disturbance including open trenching along the length of the alternation for an extended amount of time, increased air pollution due to additional traffic, vegetation clearing, and the alternative may increase non-native invasive plant colonization. The biological resource impact between the proposed project and this alternative is negligible.

A7-3

The PB Alternative (G.4) retains and remodels as many existing double-circuit tower structures as possible and the installation of lighter weight but higher performance conductors on the retained towers; thereby reducing construction and its environmental impacts. However, the retention of old infrastructure decreases capacity of the transmission line and reduces the time until other upgrades are needed; the alternative may provide adequate capacity for 10 years or more. The capacity difference between the proposed Project and this alternative is 1,800 megavolts (MV); the alternative will still comply with the 2024 Reliability Base Case; as shown in Table Ap5.1-6, plus an additional 1,400 MV. This alternative would reduce impacts to several threatened and endangered species while allowing the Project to be completed.

A7-4

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335) 3

The two No Project/No Action Alternatives (labeled as No Project 1 and No Project 2 respectively) will likely occur in the absence of the proposed Project. Section G.7 examines the impacts to biological resources and finds the No Project/No Action Alternative would have more severe environmental impacts than either the proposed Project or the alternatives considered in the DEIR.

A7-5

No Project Option 1 includes:

1. Remove the current 220 kV transmission line between Devers and El Casco substations, Devers to Vista substations, and Devers to San Bernardino substations.
2. Install approximately 23.5 miles of new 500 kV circuit between Devers and the Valley substations. A new ROW would be required for the transmission line to be established; it would run south of the I-10 through the San Gorgonio pass, see figure ES-4a.
3. Construct a new substation in the city of Beaumont, which would include a 40 acre ROW.
4. Construct replacement 220 kV line between El Casco to Vista and San Bernardino substations, and two Vista substations.
5. The new transmission line would travel through Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, Santa Rose and San Jacinto National Monuments and adjacent to San Bernardino National Forest including designated wilderness.

No Project Option 2 includes:

1. Construction of a new single circuit 500 kV transmission line in the 40.5 mile corridor between the Valley and Serrano substations, see figure ES-4b.
 - a. This route extends through southwest Riverside County and into Cleveland National Forest, Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve, western Riverside Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) conserved lands, and land managed by the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency for Stephen's Kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensii*, SKR).
 - b. Construction would require a helicopter.
2. The WOD transmission line segment between the Outlet Mall and the eastern border of the city of Banning would be removed and a new line and ROW would be constructed south of I-10.

Both No Project Options 1 and 2 have the potential to affect several listed species and their habitats, mostly due to the need to create a new transmission ROW with new tower structures and substations, and access roads. The new transmission line south of the I-10 would require large areas of vegetation removal and ground disturbances as tower structures and roads are constructed in the new ROW. If none

A7-6

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

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of the proposed project alternatives is adopted and No Project Option 1 or 2 is selected and pursued it would be subject to the appropriate level of environmental analysis.

A7-6
cont.

Connected Actions

A7-7

There are seven solar projects that depend upon the proposed Project for energy transmission: Palen Solar Electric Generating System II, Desert Harvest LLC, Blythe-Eagle Mountain 161 kV line, Red Bluff Substation 230 kV line, and three additional unnamed solar projects connecting to the Colorado River Substation. The Service has already commented on the Palen Solar Electric Generating System II and the Desert Harvest LLC projects. The other proposed solar projects will need to have their own project level impact analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act and National Environmental Policy Act.

Applicant Proposed Measures

A7-8

The Service has concerns regarding the DEIR and the proposed Project's potential impacts on sensitive flora and fauna. We recommend that the following items be updated and addressed in the FEIR.

Revegetation Plan

Mitigation measure BIO-1 of the DEIR provides for revegetation of temporary disturbance areas and thoroughly lays out the goals and provisions of the revegetation plan. The Service requests the inclusion of language that prohibits the planting of non-native and/or invasive plants and provides for the use of native local seed stock in measure BIO-1. We also recommend that equipment be cleaned between job sites to reduce the spread of invasive plants.

Biological Monitors

A7-9

The DEIR includes measure BIO-2 providing Biological Monitors in areas where special-status species or unique resources are known to occur in the proposed Project, including, at least one dedicated Biological Monitor in active desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*, tortoise) habitat. Given the significant number of State and federally listed and special status-species throughout the project alignment we request that a dedicated Biological Monitor be present any time there is construction where native vegetation is present.

Migratory Birds

A7-10

The DEIR includes measure Nesting Birds BIO-3 to address potential impacts to breeding birds, which includes the development of a Nesting Bird Management Plan. SCE's has worked with us and others to complete the Nesting Bird Management Plan. We appreciate the coordination and effort to complete the plan and recommend that it be included in the FEIR as an appendix.

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335)

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Golden Eagle

The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is a State fully protected species, and is federally protected under the MBTA and under Executive Order 13186 - Responsibility of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds. In addition to MBTA, eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA). Under the BGEPA statute, “take” is defined as “pursue, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, or molest or disturb” (50 C.F.R. § 22.3). “Disturb” is defined as “to agitate or bother a bald or golden eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, based on the best scientific information available, 1) injury to an eagle; 2) a decrease in its productivity, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior; or 3) nest abandonment, by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior.”

The DEIR states that the golden eagles were observed foraging and nesting within 1.5 to 5 miles of the ROW in a 2013 survey in all segments save for segments 1 and 2. Because there are recent records of golden eagles in the proposed project area and the presence of suitable habitat, we strongly recommend pre-construction survey for eagles within a 10-mile buffer of the project site. If golden eagles are found to be using areas within the survey area, avoidance measures will need to be incorporated into the FEIR.

Burrowing Owl

The DIER cited the need for SCE to develop a Burrowing Owl Management Plan. The Service agrees that a management plan is necessary. Focused surveys were conducted for the species in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013; owls and burrows were found within the project’s ROW. The Burrowing Owl Management Plan should place a strong emphasis on ensuring that, to the greatest extent feasible, burrowing owls are not evicted from or otherwise caused to lose the use of occupied burrows. Maximum effort should be directed at ensuring that burrows are not lost to project development. The project should then be constructed such that occupied burrows are buffered from disturbance.

BIO-4 proposed measures to avoid impacts to burrowing owls including the establishment of buffers determined by an avian biologist. The Service recommends buffers to be set at no fewer than 500 ft.

Desert Tortoise

The DEIR included several measures to avoid impact to tortoise. The portion of the alignment identified in the DEIR as tortoise habitat extends from the Devers substation west to Deep Creek Road, and after review of satellite imagery of the area, the Service recommends extending the tortoise habitat area to Mathews Road, approximately 2.62 miles to the west to fully cover tortoise habitat.

The Service requests that the following be included in the FEIR:

1. A sensitive resource education program should be presented to all personnel who will be working on the project, including staff, surveyors, construction engineers, contractors, supervisors, inspectors, and visitors.

A7-11

A7-12

A7-13

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335)

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- a. The program will include briefing sessions and handouts developed by biologists familiar with the biological requirements of tortoise.
 - b. The program will cover tortoise distribution, general behavior, ecology, sensitivity to human activities, legal protection, penalties for violation of State and Federal laws, reporting requirements, and project avoidance measures.
 - c. The program will identify fire prevention measures to be implemented by employees during project activities.
2. Important features, such as burrows, within 300 ft. of the project area will be flagged to alert biological and work crews to their presence.
 - a. Prior to the beginning of each work day, all personnel will be briefed on locations of the flagged avoidance areas.
 - b. Only authorized biologists will be allowed to enter flagged areas.
 3. Previously disturbed areas within the ROW will be used for the stockpiling of excavated materials, storage of equipment, and parking of vehicles when possible. The authorized biologist will review and survey any area to be used for stockpiling of material and parking prior to use.
 - a. The authorized biologist will work with the field contact representative to select appropriate sites that minimize affect. The area of disturbance will be confined to the smallest practical area, considering topography, placement of facilities, and location of burrows.
 - b. Work area boundaries will be delineated with flagging to avoid surface disturbance associated with vehicle straying.
 4. Equipment and vehicle operators will watch for desert tortoise when driving.
 - a. Vehicle speeds will not exceed 20 miles per hour to allow for adequate visibility.
 - b. Biological Monitors provide clearance for tortoise when heavy equipment is driven or tracked to new areas of the proposed project or areas that have not been actively in construction.
 5. SCE shall restrict work to daylight hours, except during an emergency, in order to avoid nighttime activities when desert tortoise may be more active and possibly present on roads/trails.

**A7-13
cont.**

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335) 7

6. All project vehicles in desert tortoise habitat will only use existing roads and trails. An authorized biologist will conduct tortoise surveys immediately prior to the onset of system road maintenance in desert tortoise habitat.
7. Trenches or other excavations will be fenced with temporary desert tortoise-proof fencing, or covered at the close of each working day. All excavations will be inspected for tortoises prior to backfilling.
8. Dust control watering within tortoise habitat will be conducted in a manner that does not result in the pooling of water. In the event of pooling, these areas will be checked on a regular basis for the presence of tortoise. If a tortoise is attracted to the water, an authorized biologist will capture and relocate the animal and the individual will be monitored to ensure it does not return to the pooled water.
9. Project personnel will not be permitted to bring pets to the worksites.
10. During project activities, all trash at project sites shall be removed from work sites or completely secured at the end of each work day in common ravens (*Corvus corax*, raven) proof trash containers.
 - a. This will reduce the potential for attracting tortoise predators and the opportunity for tortoises to ingest trash and toxins.
 - b. Any road kill found in the vicinity of the work site should be disposed of in raven-proof containers then removed from the site each day.
11. Observations of tortoises and their sign during project activities will be conveyed to the field contact representative or authorized biologist immediately.
12. We recommend that the agencies require the development of an on-site management plan to eliminate or minimize ravens. We also recommend the installation of tubular steel poles instead of lattice structures to reduce the surfaces upon which common ravens could perch, roost, or nest.

A7-13
cont.

Least Bell's Vireo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo

BIO-6 of the DEIR examines avoidance measures for Least Bell's Vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*, vireo), Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*, flycatcher), and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). The measure states, "SCE avian biologist would establish a buffer where construction activities are prohibited around active vireo [or other listed riparian bird] nest(s)...the buffer would be established and may be subsequently adjusted." We recommend the buffer be no less than 300 ft. at all times.

The proposed measure states, "temporary and permanent impacts to least Bell's vireo and its habitat that may occur in Segments 3 and 4 would be mitigated by obtaining an incidental take authorization." We

A7-14

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard and Mr. Frank McMenimen (FWS-SB-WRIV-14B0011-15CPA0335) 8

would clarify that obtaining a permit is not mitigation and request that a mitigation strategy be included in the FIER.

A7-14
cont.

Special Status Plants

A7-15

The DEIR includes a section for measures to avoid impact to Special Status Plants BIO-7; we appreciate the scope and detail of these measures.

Nevin’s Barberry

A7-16

Nevin’s Barberry (*Berberis nevinii*, barberry) has been found near the ROW in Segment 3 and San Bernardino Junction. Surveys should be conducted for barberry before the beginning of construction and an avoidance strategy should be included in the FEIR. Barberry is a shrub with very limited distribution; every effort should be made to avoid impacts to individuals of this species.

Triple-ribbed Milk-Vetch

A7-17

Triple-ribbed milk-vetch (*Astragalus tricarinatus*) has been documented near Whitewater Wash within or near the ROW. We request that the FEIR include pre-construction surveys and avoidance measures.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher

A7-18

Mitigation measure BIO-10 contains avoidance measures for the coastal Californian gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*, gnatcatcher). It includes pre-construction surveys in areas containing CSS and designated critical habitat areas in San Bernardino County, but defers the development of mitigation measures for impacts to the gnatcatcher or its designated critical habitat to a future consultation under section 7 of the Act. We recommend that impacts to gnatcatcher and its critical habitat be avoided. If avoidance is not possible, a strategy for mitigating unavoidable impacts to gnatcatcher and its habitat should be included in the FEIR.

BIO-10 also states, “restoration of temporary impacted coastal sage habitat; and additional restoration of degraded areas within the SCE right-of-way as compensation for permanent impacts to coastal sage habitat, such that there is no net loss of habitat value for coastal California gnatcatcher”. The DEIR does not identify the area of habitat to be temporarily or permanently impacted by project activities. The Service requests a complete description of the area and location of impacted CSS habitat and identification of the amount and location of degraded CSS to be restored be included in the FEIR.

Stephen’s Kangaroo Rat

A7-19

The DEIR recognized the potential for SKR to be present within the project area. We are concerned that direct effects to SKR could also occur from excavation and construction activities in occupied SKR habitat. SKR and other kangaroo rats often create burrows along road edges because of the bare ground they provide (Thomas 1975). Grading, stabilization, and road leveling could result in impacts to the SKR by causing loss or alteration of their habitat, but the DEIR doesn’t provided avoidance measures to

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

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avoid or minimize these impacts. We ask that road maintenance and clearing measures (Best Management Practices) be developed for SKR including:

1. Limiting road repairs to daylight hours;
2. Minimize vehicle traffic outside of establish dirt roads;
3. When vehicle travel off of established roads cannot be avoided, in occupied SKR habitat, the vehicles will drive on sheets of plywood to distribute the weight of the vehicle and minimize the collapse of burrows.
4. Employ road grading techniques which create little or no berm on the roadsides;
5. Do not borrow material for road repair within occupied habitat; instead designate borrow sites in areas not occupied by SKR (as demonstrated by negative trapping results);
6. Do not import material from outside the area that may contain weeds; and
7. For the class “roads need improvement” and other areas needing repair, a permitted biologist will survey for kangaroo rat sign, and if found, SKR will be trapped, held during the road repair, and then released back onto the site.

BIO-11 states that a qualified biologist will check construction pipes, poles, culverts, or similar structures for SKR when such material is left out uncovered overnight. We appreciate this measure and the overall thoroughness of the analysis. The service does request this measure be extended to any piles of soft compacted or non-compacted dirt left at construction sites within SKR habitat, as SKR will create burrows in these areas.

Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp and Spreading Navarretia

Vernal pool habitat suitable for western spadefoot toads (*Spea hammondi*, toad), also provide habitat for listed vernal pool species, including the threatened vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*, fairy shrimp) and *Navarretia fossalis* (spreading Navarretia). The DEIR noted several areas of suitable toad habitat and the presents of the toads or tadpoles, these areas should be assessed for the potential to pond water prior to ground disturbing activities. The FEIR should include avoidances measures for fairy shrimp and spreading Navarretia. If evidence of ponding or areas which support ponding is detected in the ROW, these areas should be avoided. If they cannot be avoided, then surveys for fairy shrimp and vernal pool plant species should be conducted prior to ground disturbance or vegetation removal.

Unauthorized Access

Dirt and gravel roads leading to and in the pipeline ROW can result in unauthorized uses such as operation of off-highway vehicles in closed areas, dumping, and target shooting. These activities can impact federally listed and special status species and their habitat, including rare plant communities. We

A7-19
cont.

A7-20

A7-21

Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (cont.)

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would appreciate the inclusion of a Vehicle Access Management Plan (VAMP) for all existing and planned roads. The VAMP would include measures such as signs, gates, locks, and fences to deter unauthorized use before, during, and after construction. We also ask that the VAMP include measures which provide for the ongoing, regular inspection and repair of the fences, gates, locks, and signs installed to prevent unauthorized use.

A7-21
cont.

Incidental Take

The DEIR mentions SCE's intent to obtain incidental take authorization for the gnatcatcher, vireo, and SKR. If incidental take cannot be avoided, it must be authorized under section 7 or section 10 of the Act. The Project alignment traverses three regional habitat conservation plans: the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan, the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, and the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. If the Project cannot avoid incidental take of listed species covered by one or more of those plans, SCE can pursue a Certificate of Inclusion under the appropriate plan or plans to receive incidental take authorization. In order to obtain a Certificate of Inclusion the project and SCE would need to implement the relevant habitat conservation plan. Coordination with the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC), and or the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency would be required. Implementation of the multiple species plans may require consideration of non-listed species.

A7-22

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the DEIR. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact Amanda Swaller of the Service at 760-322-2070, extension 204.

Sincerely,



Kennon A. Corey
Assistant Field Supervisor

cc: Jeff Brandt, CDFW, Ontario

LITERATURE CITED

Thomas, J.R. 1975. Distribution, population densities, and home range requirements of the Stephen's kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*). M. A. thesis, California State Poly. Univ., Pomona.

Responses to Comment Set A7 – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

- A7-1 This introductory text summarizes the Proposed Project, and does not require a response.
- A7-2 The commenter states that the Tower Relocation Alternative creates impacts by increasing construction time and vegetation removal and ground disturbance in coastal sage scrub habitat. The USFWS does not recommend this alternative over the Proposed Project. USFWS's preference is acknowledged.
- Vegetation impacts from the Tower Relocation Alternative are discussed in Section D.4.4.1 (Biological Resources – Vegetation, Tower Relocation Alternative) under Impact VEG-1 (Land clearing for construction and future operations and maintenance would cause loss or degradation of vegetation and habitat, including sensitive habitats).
- As with the Proposed Project, construction, post-construction restoration, and O&M activities for the Tower Relocation Alternative would necessitate temporary and permanent removal of vegetation and habitat as shown in Table D.4-4 (Maximum Potential Permanent and Temporary Vegetation Removal) of the EIS. The EIS concludes that the adverse effect on vegetation and habitat due to land clearing for this alternative would be similar to the Proposed Project. There may be minor differences in total acreages of habitat types impacted, but they would not exceed the amounts analyzed for the Proposed Project. Impacts to vegetation and habitat would be reduced through implementation of Mitigation Measures VEG-1a (Conduct biological monitoring and reporting), VEG-1b (Prepare and implement worker environmental awareness program [WEAP]), VEG-1c (Minimize native vegetation and habitat loss), VEG-1d (Restore or revegetate temporary disturbance areas), and VEG-1e (Compensate for permanent habitat loss).
- A7-3 The commenter states that the difference in biological impacts between the Proposed Project and the Iowa Street Underground Alternative is negligible. This observation by the USFWS is acknowledged.
- A7-4 The commenter notes that the Phased Build Alternative would reduce impacts to threatened and endangered species while allowing the Project to be completed. This comment is acknowledged.
- A7-5 This text summarizes the component of the No Project/No Action Alternatives, and does not require a response.
- A7-6 USFWS is correct that if either of the No Project/No Action Options were to be pursued, they would be subject to appropriate environmental analysis.
- A7-7 USFWS is correct that each of the Connected Action projects would be subject to individual project-level analysis prior to approval or implementation. The analysis of Connected Actions is included in this EIS in order to disclose the potential impacts of these connected projects to the decisionmakers that are considering approval of the WOD Upgrade Project.
- A7-8 The commenter requests that planting of non-native or invasive plants be prohibited and equipment be cleaned between job sites to prevent spread of invasive plants, and cites what the commenter identifies as Mitigation measure BIO-1.

(Note of clarification: The commenter misidentifies BIO-1 and other measures beginning with the BIO prefix. These are Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) proposed by SCE and

not EIS mitigation measures. Mitigation measures for vegetation are identified with the prefix VEG- and for wildlife with the prefix WIL-. For example, Mitigation Measures VEG-1a, VEG-1b, VEG-2a, WIL-1a, etc.)

As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1 (Biological Resources, Applicant Proposed Measures) the Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. Applicant Proposed Measure (APM) BIO-1 (Revegetation Plan) is superseded by Mitigation Measure VEG-1d (Restore or revegetate temporary disturbance areas) in the EIS.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1d would require SCE to prepare and implement a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan (HRRP), to restore or revegetate all temporary disturbance areas. Mitigation Measure VEG-1d would require the HRRP to incorporate planting and seeding palettes to include only native, locally sourced materials. Mitigation Measure VEG-2a (Prepare and implement an Integrated Weed Management Plan) in the EIS would require vehicles, equipment, and tools to be inspected and cleaned of dirt and mud that could contain weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes before entering or moving between areas of the project right-of-way (ROW).

A7-9 The commenter notes that there are a number of listed and special-status species throughout the project alignment and recommends a biological monitor be present any time there is construction where native vegetation is present.

As stated in Section D.5.3.3.1 (Applicant Proposed Measures), all of the Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. APM BIO-2 (Biological Monitoring) is superseded by Mitigation Measure VEG-1a in the EIS. Mitigation Measure VEG-1a requires biological monitoring of all work activities in any area where there is a potential to impact sensitive biological resources (including native vegetation) and including listed and special-status species.

A7-10 The commenter notes that SCE has worked with USFWS and others to develop a Nesting Bird Management Plan (NBMP) and recommends that the NBMP be included in the Final EIS as an appendix.

Mitigation Measure WIL-1c (Prepare and implement a Nesting Bird Management Plan) requires preparation of a project-specific NBMP and specifies the contents and requirements of that NBMP. In order to ensure timely completion of the NBMP, CPUC and SCE convened a technical working group (TWG) of SCE, BLM, CPUC, CDFW, and USFWS biologists to prepare the NBMP. The TWG held a series of meetings to outline the necessary NBMP contents, and then to review and revise several working draft versions of the NBMP. The final NBMP is included with the Final EIS as Appendix 14. The final NBMP reflects the input and discussion of each TWG member to effectively manage nesting birds. The final NBMP includes some minor departures from Mitigation Measure WIL-1c as presented in the Draft EIR/EIS. Text of Mitigation Measure WIL-1c has been revised in the Final EIS to add default nest buffers and ensure conformance with the NBMP.

A7-11 The commenter notes that golden eagle has been observed nesting and foraging with five miles of the ROW and recommends pre-construction surveys and avoidance measures.

In preparing the response to this comment and Response to Comment F3-185 from Southern California Edison, Aspen contacted the USFWS to confirm its recommendations regarding golden eagle avoidance. Mitigation Measure WIL-2f (Conduct surveys and avoidance for golden eagle) requires pre-construction golden eagle surveys and avoidance measures, but it has been revised in the Final EIS with guidance from USFWS as follows.

The text of Mitigation Measure WIL-2f has been revised in the Final EIS to remove the requirement for winter surveys, reduce the survey buffer to 2 miles on either side of the transmission line, delete the permit requirement, and remove the requirement for a monitoring and adaptive management plan. Mitigation Measure WIL-2f retains the requirement for nesting season surveys using methods described in the Golden Eagle Technical Guidance (Pagel et al., 2010) or more current guidance from the USFWS. A requirement for a one mile line-of-sight and one-half mile no line-of-sight buffer for active eagle nests has been added to Mitigation Measure WIL-2f, and the measure retains the requirement for adaptive management if there is any evidence of project-related disturbance to nesting golden eagles. The revised measure is substantially comparable to Mitigation Measure WIL-2f in the Draft EIR/EIS in that it specifies a buffer distance and specifies monitoring and adaptive management requirements, both based on most current guidance from the USFWS, and would avoid or minimize impacts to golden eagle. No take of golden eagle is anticipated and therefore no permit would be required.

A7-12 The commenter recommends a burrowing owl management plan and burrowing owl buffers be set at no less than 500 feet.

As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1, all Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add specific requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. APM BIO-4 (Burrowing Owl) is superseded in the EIS by Mitigation Measure WIL-2g (Conduct surveys and avoidance for burrowing owl). Buffers for burrowing owl are established by the NBMP, as specified in Mitigation Measure WIL-1c (Prepare and implement a Nesting Bird Management Plan). The NBMP specifies default buffers for burrowing owl as 300 feet for ground construction, and 300 feet horizontal and 200 feet vertical for helicopter construction. In addition, SCE will prepare and implement a plan to avoid impacts to burrowing owl, to be appended to the NBMP. The text of Mitigation Measure WIL-2g has been revised to include the default buffers listed above. A buffer of 500 feet is not necessary to avoid and minimize impacts to the resource.

A7-13 The commenter makes a number of recommendations regarding desert tortoise. Each is presented below, followed by responses to each item.

- a. Extend western boundary of tortoise habitat area from Deep Creek Road to Mathews Road, 2.62 miles to the west.

Protocol surveys were done for desert tortoise on project Segments 5 and 6 in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Desert tortoise and tortoise sign were found on the east end of Segment 5, east of Deep Creek Road. No sign was observed west of Deep Creek Road. Although no desert tortoise sign was observed west of Deep Creek Road, Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) would require biological monitoring of construction activities in all areas with the potential to support desert tortoise.

- b. Include a sensitive resource education program in the Final EIS to include information on desert tortoise and fire prevention.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1b (Prepare and implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP)) would require preparation and implementation of a project-specific WEAP to educate on-site workers about the Proposed Project's sensitive environmental issues, including desert tortoise and fire prevention and protection measures.

- c. Flag tortoise burrows and other important features within 300 feet of the project area and alert construction crews to avoid these areas.

As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1 of the EIS, all of the Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) supersedes APM BIO-5 (Desert Tortoise) in the EIS. Mitigation Measure WIL-2a would require surveys for desert tortoise burrows and pallets in disturbance areas and a surrounding buffer of 100 feet within suitable habitat. Tortoise burrows and pallets encountered within the disturbance area (if any) would be conspicuously flagged by the surveying biologist(s) and avoided during construction activities.

- d. Conduct surveys of areas to be used for parking and stockpiling and delineate work area boundaries with flagging to avoid vehicle straying.

Please see Response to Comment A7-13, part c. Mitigation Measure VEG-1c (Minimize native vegetation and habitat loss). This measure requires that, prior to any construction, equipment or crew mobilization at each work site, work areas will be marked with staking or flagging to identify the limits of work. Staking and flagging will clearly indicate the work area boundaries.

- e. Watch for desert tortoise when driving, keep vehicle speeds below 20 mph, and have biological monitors clear for tortoise when heavy equipment is driven to new areas of the project.

Mitigation Measure WIL-1b (Ensure wildlife impact avoidance and minimization) would require a maximum 15 mile per hour vehicle speed limit on access roads within the ROW and project vicinity. Mitigation Measure VEG-1a (Conduct biological monitoring and reporting) would require biological monitoring of all activities in any area where there is a potential to impact sensitive biological resources, including desert tortoise. Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) would require project personnel to inspect for desert tortoises under parked vehicles or equipment prior to moving.

- f. Restrict work to daylight hours.

It is expected that work will occur primarily during daylight hours. As noted in Section B.3.1 (Description of the Proposed Project, General Construction), it is not anticipated that lighting would be used at construction sites unless a permit condition, an outage requirement, critical work activity, and/or an emergency situation would require work to be conducted during off hours. Mitigation measures to avoid and minimize impacts

to wildlife, including Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance), would apply at night as well as during the day.

- g. Use only existing roads and trails. Conduct tortoise surveys prior to road maintenance.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1c (Minimize native vegetation and habitat loss) would require final engineering of the project to minimize the extent of disturbance, including disturbance for new access roads. All work activities, vehicles, and equipment will be confined to approved roads and staked and flagged work areas. Mitigation Measure VEG-1a (Conduct biological monitoring and reporting) would require biological monitoring of all activities in any area where there is a potential to impact sensitive biological resources, including desert tortoise. Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) would require desert tortoise surveys prior to construction within suitable habitat. Surveys would include 100 percent of the area to be disturbed and a surrounding buffer of 100 feet.

- h. Fence or cover trenches and other excavations. Inspect excavations for tortoise before backfilling.

Mitigation Measure WIL-1b (Ensure wildlife impact avoidance and minimization) would require that excavations be secured to prevent wildlife entry and entrapment. Holes and trenches shall be securely covered, or fenced. Excavations that cannot be fully secured shall incorporate appropriate wildlife ramp(s) to allow trapped animals to escape. At the end of each work day, a biological monitor shall ensure that excavations have been secured or provided with appropriate means for wildlife escape.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1a (Conduct biological monitoring and reporting) would require that biological monitors daily inspect construction areas where animals may have become trapped and release any trapped animals.

Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) would require that desert tortoise shall be handled only by a USFWS/CDFW permitted and authorized biologist (Authorized Biologist) following appropriate USFWS protocols and in compliance with appropriate regulatory permits. A biological monitor shall monitor construction activities in all areas with the potential to support desert tortoise.

- i. Avoid pooling of water during dust control watering. Check areas of pooling for tortoise and relocate tortoise as needed.

Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) would require that if a desert tortoise is found in a work area, the tortoise shall be allowed to passively traverse the site while construction in the immediate area is halted. If the tortoise does not move out of harm's way after 20 minutes, the tortoise may be moved by an Authorized Biologist, subject to conditions and authorization by CDFW and USFWS.

Mitigation Measure WIL-2b (Prepare and implement Raven Monitoring, Management, and Control Plan) would require preparation and implementation of a Raven Management Plan to include identification of project activities that could provide predator subsidies or attractants, including potential pooling from leaks, dust control, or wastewater, and management practices to avoid or minimize those conditions.

- j. Do not allow pets in worksites.
- Mitigation Measure WIL-1b (Ensure wildlife impact avoidance and minimization) would prohibit workers from bringing pets to the project site.
- k. Remove or secure trash. Remove road kill.
- Mitigation Measure WIL-1b (Ensure wildlife impact avoidance and minimization) would require that all trash and food-related waste be contained in vehicles or covered trash containers and removed from the site regularly. Dead animals of non-special-status species found on unpaved project roads, work areas, or the ROW shall be reported to the appropriate local animal control agency within 24 hours. A biological monitor shall safely move the carcass out of the road or work area and secure it as needed.
- Mitigation Measure WIL-2b (Prepare and implement Raven Monitoring, Management, and Control Plan) would require preparation and implementation of a Raven Management Plan to include identification of project activities that could provide predator subsidies or attractants, including road killed animals, and management practices to avoid or minimize those conditions.
- l. Immediately communicate observations of tortoise or tortoise sign to authorized biologist.
- The text of Mitigation Measure WIL-2a (Conduct desert tortoise surveys, monitoring, and avoidance) has been revised in the Final EIS to include the requirement for a biological monitor to immediately notify the Authorized Biologist if a desert tortoise or sign is observed.
- m. Develop a raven management plan.
- Mitigation Measure WIL-2b (Prepare and implement Raven Monitoring, Management, and Control Plan) would require the preparation and implementation of a Raven Monitoring, Management, and Control Plan (Raven Plan), consistent with USFWS raven management guidelines, to minimize project-related predator subsidies and prevent any increases in raven numbers or activity within desert tortoise habitat during construction, restoration, and Operations and Maintenance (O&M) phases.
- n. Utilize tubular steel poles instead of steel lattice towers to minimize raven perching, roosting, and nesting sites.
- The USFWS preference for tubular steel poles over lattice structures is acknowledged. The decision on what structure types to use at various locations must balance geotechnical and design needs, as well as various environmental considerations, such as biological and visual impacts.
- A7-14 The commenter requests that a mitigation strategy for least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, and western yellow-billed cuckoo be included in the Final EIS and recommends a buffer around active nests of no less than 300 feet.
- As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1, all Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. APM BIO-6 (Least Bell's Vireo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, & Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo) is superseded in the EIS by Mitigation Measure WIL-2c (Conduct surveys and avoidance for threatened or endangered riparian birds). Mitigation Measure WIL-2c

provides a mitigation strategy for threatened or endangered riparian birds and would require a 500-foot disturbance-free ground buffer and 1,000-foot vertical helicopter buffer to be established around active nests of threatened or endangered riparian birds.

A7-15 USFWS notes that the discussion of Special Status Plants (Impact BIO-7) is appropriately detailed. No response is required. It should be noted that Mitigation Measure VEG-4a would incorporate and supersede APM BIO-7 and APM BIO-8 by providing additional detail on pre-construction surveys and either avoidance (through design modifications) or detailed procedures to replace or offset special-status plant occurrence that cannot be avoided.

A7-16 The commenter states that pre-construction surveys should be conducted for Nevin's barberry and the Final EIS should include an avoidance strategy.

Mitigation Measure VEG-4a (Minimize and mitigate impacts to special-status plants) would require pre-construction focused surveys for federal- and state-listed and other special-status plants, including Nevin's barberry and triple-ribbed milk-vetch. Mitigation Measure VEG-4a also specifies mitigation for impacts to listed and special-status plants, including avoidance.

A7-17 The commenter states that pre-construction surveys should be conducted for triple-ribbed milk-vetch and the Final EIS should include an avoidance strategy.

Please see Response to Comment A7-16.

A7-18 The commenter recommends that impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher be avoided. If avoidance is not feasible, a mitigation strategy should be included in the Final EIS. The comment also requests that the Final EIS include a complete description of the area and location of impacted coastal sage scrub (CSS) habitat and identification of amount and location of CSS habitat to be restored.

As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1, all Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. APM BIO-10 (Coastal California Gnatcatcher and Designated Critical Habitat) is superseded in the Final EIS by Mitigation Measure WIL-2e (Conduct surveys and avoidance for coastal California gnatcatcher). Mitigation Measure WIL-2e provides a mitigation strategy for coastal California gnatcatcher (CAGN), including avoidance.

Regarding CSS habitat that would be impacted by the Proposed Project, Table D.5-5 provides potential impacts to CSS habitat within CAGN critical habitat. Table D.4-4 lists the maximum potential permanent and temporary vegetation removal for the project by habitat types and segment. Figure Ap.7-1 in Appendix 7 shows CAGN critical habitat on the project ROW and Figure Ap.7-2 shows CSS habitat on the project ROW.

The amount and location of CSS habitat to be restored has not yet been determined. Take of CAGN breeding and foraging habitat and incidental take of gnatcatcher nests, eggs, and nestlings would be covered within the WR-MSHCP area if SCE becomes a Participating Special Entity and implements the requirements of the WR-MSHCP. Potential impacts to CAGN and its habitat, including designated critical habitat, in San Bernardino County requires Section 7 Consultation and may require incidental take authorization. Potential impacts within the reservation require Section 7 Consultation and may require incidental take authorization.

In addition, Mitigation Measure VEG-1d (Restore or revegetate temporary disturbance areas) would require preparation and implementation of a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan to replace the habitat values present prior to disturbance. Mitigation Measure VEG-1e (Compensate for permanent habitat loss) would require compensation for permanent or long-term habitat loss through off-site habitat acquisition and management or through participation in an approved in-lieu fee compensatory mitigation bank.

A7-19 The commenter recommends a number of measures to avoid impacts to Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR). Each is presented below, followed by responses to each item.

- a. Grading, stabilization, and road leveling could result in impacts to Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR), but the Draft EIR/EIS does not provide avoidance measures.

As stated in Section D.5.3.1.1, all Biological Resources APMs have been superseded by mitigation measures that add requirements and provide details not found in the APMs. APM BIO-11 (Stephens' Kangaroo Rat) is superseded in the EIS by Mitigation Measure WIL-2d (Conduct surveys and avoidance for Stephens' kangaroo rat). Mitigation Measure WIL-2d would require pre-construction surveys for SKR sign, and focused trapping surveys if sign is present. If SKR are present, then additional measures shall be implemented to prevent or minimize take, such as installation of exclusion fences or other measures, subject to authorization by USFWS and CDFW.

- b. Seven road maintenance and clearing measures are recommended:

1. Limit repairs to daylight hours.

Repairs would typically be limited to daylight hours. Please see Response to Comment A7-13, part f.

2. Minimize vehicle traffic outside of established dirt roads.

Mitigation Measure VEG-1c (Minimize native vegetation and habitat loss) would require final engineering of the project to minimize the extent of disturbance, including disturbance for new access roads. All work activities, vehicles, and equipment will be confined to approved roads and staked and flagged or marked work areas.

3. Outside of established roads, drive on sheets of plywood to avoid collapsing burrows.

All work activities, vehicles, and equipment will be confined to approved roads and staked and flagged or otherwise marked work areas which have undergone a biological clearance.

4. Use road grading techniques that create little or no berm.

The Proposed Project would require maintenance of existing access roads and construction of new access roads, which may result in the creation of berms or disturbance of existing berms. See Section B (Description of Proposed Project) of the EIR for additional details. Mitigation Measure WIL-2d (Conduct surveys and avoidance for Stephens' kangaroo rat) would require pre-construction surveys for SKR sign, including surveys of new and existing access roads, and focused trapping surveys if sign is present. If SKR are present, then additional measures would be implemented to prevent or minimize take, such as installation of exclusion fences or other measures, subject to authorization by USFWS and CDFW.

5. Do not borrow material for road repair within occupied SKR habitat.

Section B (Description of the Proposed Project) does not indicate that road repair will require any borrow material.

6. Do not import material that may contain weeds.

Mitigation Measure VEG-2a (Prepare and implement an Integrated Weed Management Plan) would require preparation and implementation of an Integrated Weed Management Plan (IWMP) describing the proposed methods of preventing or controlling project-related spread of weeds or new weed infestations. The IWMP will specify guidelines for any soil, gravel, mulch, or fill material to be imported into the Proposed Project area, transported from site to site within the Proposed Project area, or transported from the Proposed Project area to an off-site location, to prevent the introduction or spread of weeds to or from the Proposed Project area.

7. Prior to road repairs, survey and trap for SKR.

Mitigation Measure WIL-2d (Conduct surveys and avoidance for Stephens' kangaroo rat) would require pre-construction surveys for SKR sign, and focused trapping surveys if sign is present. If SKR are present, then additional measures shall be implemented to prevent or minimize take, such as installation of exclusion fences or other measures, subject to authorization by USFWS and CDFW.

- A7-20 The commenter states that vernal pool habitat should be assessed for vernal pool fairy shrimp and spreading navarretia.

None of the seasonally ponded depressions found during the vernal pool assessment survey conducted between November 2011 and March 2013 met the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (WR-MSHCP) criteria for vernal pools. Focused fairy shrimp surveys were conducted in the seasonally ponded depressions during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 wet seasons and 2012 dry season. No special-status fairy shrimp were detected. Because the Project Study Area is outside of the known range of vernal pool fairy shrimp and none was observed during focused surveys, it is considered absent from the Project Study Area.

Spreading navarretia was not observed during special-status plant surveys of the Project Study Area in 2012 and 2013 and was not identified as having any potential for occurrence. There are no California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) records for spreading navarretia in San Bernardino County. In Riverside County, all CNDDDB occurrences for spreading navarretia are over five miles from the project site. It is therefore considered absent from the Project Study Area.

- A7-21 The commenter states that project access roads can facilitate unauthorized uses such as trash dumping, target shooting, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use and resulting impacts to special-status species and requests inclusion of a project Vehicle Access Management Plan (VAMP).

The Proposed Project would be constructed in an existing transmission line corridor. In areas where access control is appropriate and feasible, those controls already exist. If existing access controls (i.e., gate closure) are utilized during project implementation, any unauthorized public use associated with the Proposed Project would be similar to existing conditions and not a new impact requiring mitigation. To ensure that existing access

controls are utilized during project implementation, the text of Mitigation Measure VEG-1c (Minimize native vegetation and habitat loss) has been revised in the Final EIR to require that, as feasible and consistent with project safety and other applicable requirements, existing gates on project access roads will be closed and secured when project personnel enter or leave an area.

A7-22 The commenter states that incidental take must be authorized under Section 7 or Section 10 of the federal Endangered Species Act and SCE may participate in the WR-MSHCP or Coachella Valley MSHCP.

The project route traverses land in two different Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plans (MSHCPs). It also crosses Morongo Tribal land and portions of San Bernardino County that are not within an MSHCP area. In addition, it crosses BLM land within the Coachella Valley MSHCP (CV-MSHCP) area, but not covered by USFWS and CDFW take authorization for the CV-MSHCP. SCE intends to participate in both MSHCPs as a Participating Special Entity (PSE), but the PSE application process is not complete as of October 2015. Where mitigation is identified in the EIR, the analysis indicates whether each mitigation measure would be applicable within each jurisdictional area, based in part on whether MSHCP participation would mitigate the impact independently from mitigation measures identified herein.

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