

1. Introduction

This Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) presents information on existing environmental conditions that was compiled for the proposed Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project in the high desert region of San Bernardino County, California. The Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project was a proposal by Southern California Edison (SCE) to construct a high-voltage transmission line between the Coolwater Switchyard in Daggett and the Lugo Substation in the City of Hesperia. The proposed transmission line was approximately 64 miles in length and traversed portions of Barstow, Stoddard Valley, North Lucerne Valley, western Lucerne Valley, southern Apple Valley, and Hesperia. SCE filed an application with California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in August 2013, followed by an amended application in April 2014, seeking permission to construct and operate the Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project in order to address transmission congestion problems in the region. Because a portion of the proposed transmission line route crossed lands administered by the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM), SCE also submitted an application to the BLM for a right-of-way grant on federal lands.

The CPUC determined that an environmental impact report (EIR) needed to be prepared to address the impacts of SCE's proposed project. Similarly, the BLM determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) needed to be prepared for the project. The two agencies agreed to prepare a joint EIR/EIS to satisfy the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). A Notice of Preparation for the EIR and a Notice of Intent for the EIS were published in August 2014. Preparation of a Draft EIR/EIS for the Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project was initiated in mid-2014 thereafter and was ready for publication in January 2015.

Publication of the Draft EIR/EIS for the proposed Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project was put on hold due to developments that called into question the need for the project. One of the primary objectives of the project was to bypass congestion on existing transmission lines between the Kramer Substation in Kramer Junction and the Lugo Substation by providing additional capacity and an additional pathway for delivery of power to Lugo Substation. A portion of the capacity of the existing transmission lines between the Kramer and Lugo substations was utilized by the Coolwater Generating Station in Daggett, contributing to the congestion on these lines. The owners of the Coolwater Generating Station decided to permanently close the facility on January 1, 2015, thereby freeing up capacity on the Kramer-Lugo transmission lines. With congestion reduced on the Kramer-Lugo transmission lines, the additional capacity to be provided by the Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project was no longer needed. In May 2015, the CPUC dismissed SCE's application to construct the project and, as a result, the Draft EIR/EIS was never published.

1.1 The Study Area

The information in this MEA was compiled for the Draft EIR/EIS. Information is presented by topic on environmental conditions in the areas traversed by the proposed Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project, including the alternative alignments evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS. The information was current as of late 2014. Environmental conditions are primarily described for the areas within and immediately adjacent to the proposed and alternative transmission corridors, but in some cases

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environmental conditions are described for a larger area. Generally, environmental conditions are described along corridors through the following areas, progressing from northeast to southwest, which represents the general alignment of the Coolwater-Lugo Transmission Project:

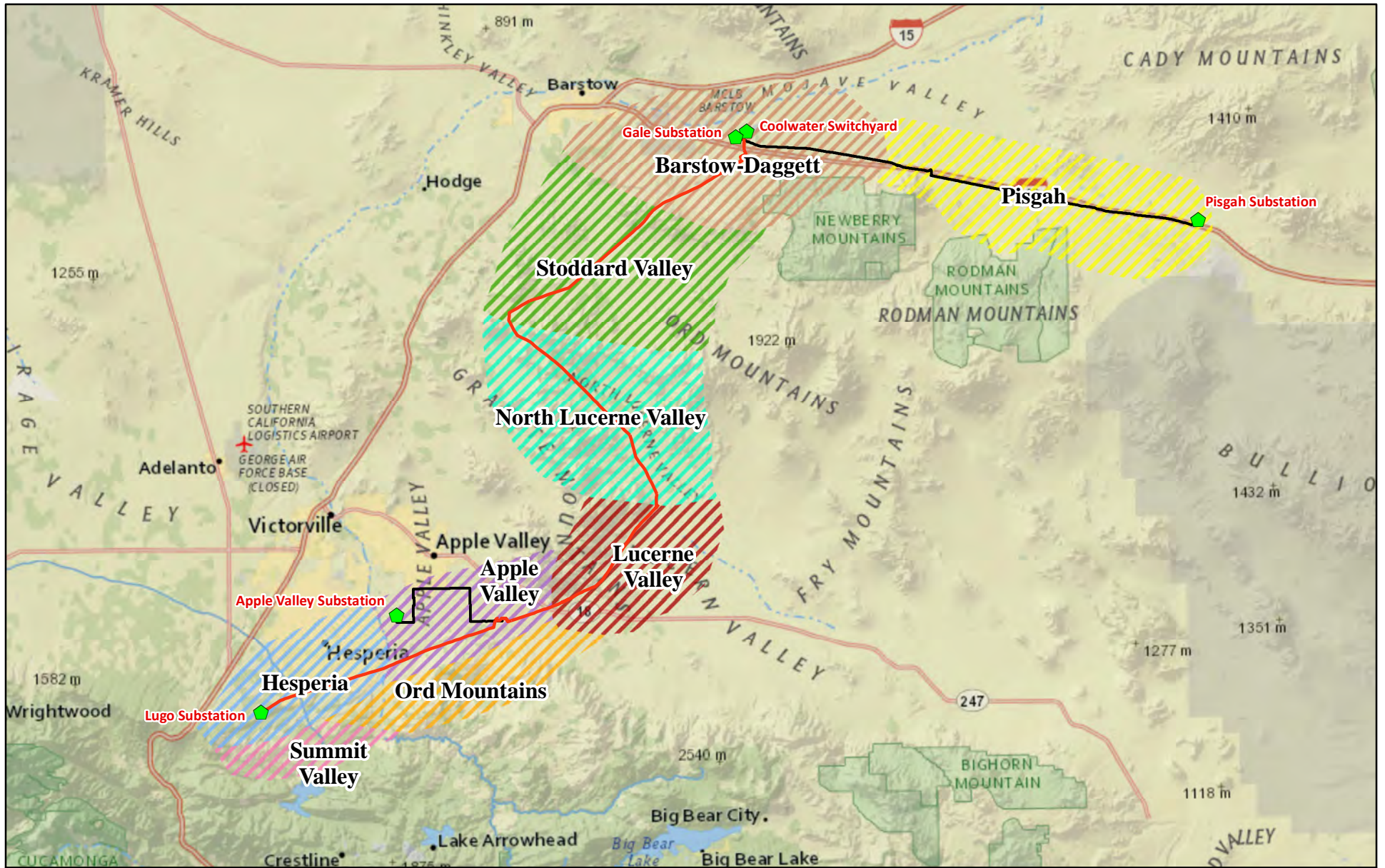
- **Interstate 40/Route 66.** This area represents the alignment for a proposed telecommunications line between Daggett and Pisgah that was to be installed on existing wood poles. This area includes the community of Newberry Springs. Because no new transmission structures were proposed in this area, there is generally less information presented for this area in the MEA compared to other areas.
- **Barstow-Daggett area.** This area includes the unincorporated community of Daggett and the southern side of the City of Barstow, which is north of Daggett Ridge and Stoddard Valley. This area includes BLM-administered lands and portions of the Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow.
- **Stoddard Valley.** This is area between Daggett Ridge and Stoddard Ridge that is traversed by Barstow Road (State Route 247), Stoddard Valley Road, and Stoddard Wells Road. This area contains a substantial amount of BLM-administered lands.
- **North Lucerne Valley.** This is a valley generally bounded by Stoddard Ridge to the north and Sidewinder Mountain to the south. Lucerne Valley Cutoff runs the length of this valley. The area contains a mix of private, BLM-administered, and State lands.
- **Western Lucerne Valley.** This area is the northwestern edge of Lucerne Valley between Lucerne Lake and the Granite Mountains. It includes the area known as Sunset Cove. There are BLM-administered lands in the area, primarily in the lake bed and in the adjacent mountains.
- **Southern Apple Valley.** This is the area between Lucerne Valley to the east and the Mojave River to the west. The Granite Mountains and the Town of Apple Valley are located to the north and the Ord Mountains and other foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains are located to the south. It is a rural residential area traversed by portions of State Route 18, Desert View Road, Tussing Ranch Road, Roundup Way, and a network of rural roads.
- **Hesperia.** This is the southern side of the City of Hesperia, generally south of Main Street and west of the Mojave River. This area consists primarily of single-family residences.
- **Ord Mountains and Summit Valley.** Summit Valley is located south of Hesperia and west of the Mojave River. The Ord Mountains are located just east of the Mojave River and south of Apple Valley. There are substantial BLM-administered lands in the Ord Mountains area.

The CPUC decided to prepare this MEA in order to share the substantial environmental information that was collected and compiled for the unpublished EIR/EIS. By publishing this information, it can serve as a resource that can be used by others who may be planning projects in the study area.

1.2 About Master Environmental Assessments

A Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) is a document described in State CEQA Guidelines section 15169 that a lead agency may elect to prepare to provide information that may be used or referenced in EIRs or Mitigated Negative Declarations. A MEA typically contains an inventory of the physical and biological characteristics of a study area, as well as other information that describes the environmental setting of the area. Its purpose is to provide information on existing environmental conditions in the study area that may be useful to others in planning future projects or in analyzing the environmental effects of planned projects. There are no mandatory requirements for the content or organization of a MEA—these are left to judgment and discretion of the CEQA lead agency that is preparing the MEA.

A MEA is not a CEQA review document for any project and does not provide environmental clearance under CEQA or any other laws. It is prepared for information purposes only.



- ◆ Substations
 ▨ Apple Valley
▨ North Lucerne Valley
▨ Summit Valley
- Proposed Coolwater-Lugo
 ▨ Barstow-Daggett
▨ Ord Mountains
- Transmission Project Route
 ▨ Hesperia
▨ Pisgah
- Telecommunication Lines
 ▨ Lucerne Valley
▨ Stoddard Valley

MEA Study Areas

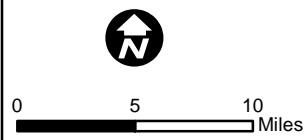


Figure 1-1