

Devers-Palo Verde #2 Transmission Project

From: Sosa, Ivan [Ivan.Sosa@yuma.army.mil]
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2006 1:46 PM
To: 'dpv2@aspeneq.com'
Cc: English, Randy
Subject: DPV2 Project PEA
Importance: High

To whom it may concern:

According to subject PEA available on your project website:

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/dpv2/dpv2.htm>, you are supposed to cross YPG for 0.1 miles.

Secs. 5.1.8.1 and 5.1.12.1 talk about impacts to Arizona Natural and Cultural resources respectively. We need to know if the area within YPG was surveyed for cultural resources or not. Also we need to know specific impacts to YPG Natural and Cultural resources, if any, and appropriate mitigation if applicable.

Of course, we also need to know with who you coordinated the proposed crossing into YPG.

Please get back to us as soon as you can.

Thank you,

Ivan

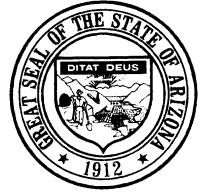


THE STATE OF ARIZONA
GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

2221 WEST GREENWAY ROAD, PHOENIX, AZ 85023-4399
(602) 942-3000 • AZGFD.GOV

Yuma Office, 9140 E 28th Street, Yuma, AZ 85365-3596 (928) 342-0091

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR
STEVE K. FERRELL



January 12, 2006

Billie Blanchard
California Public Utilities Commission
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco CA 94104-3002

Re: Notice of Preparation Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission line Project

Dear Ms. Blanchard:

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) has reviewed the above-referenced Notice of Preparation for a Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project (DPV2). The following comments are provided for your consideration.

The Department's Heritage Data Management System has been accessed and current records show that the special status species listed on the attachment have been documented as occurring in the vicinity of the project. General status information, county and watershed distribution lists and abstracts for some special status species are also available on our website at <http://www.azgfd.gov/hdms>.

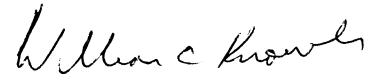
The Department understands that the Southern California Edison (SCE) proposes to construct a 500 kV electrical transmission line from the Harquahala Generating Station switchyard to Devers substation. The proposal includes four alternative routes across Arizona.

The Department notes that one alternative is to construct the transmission line adjacent to the existing Palo Verde-Devers transmission line. The Department believes that constructing new transmission lines in existing utility corridors with existing lines will minimize new impacts to wildlife. For this reason we prefer this alternative. We further note that Subalternate Route 2 is through important wildlife habitat in the Plomosa and Dome Rock Mountains and will have significant adverse impacts to bighorn sheep and other wildlife species. Subalternate Routes 3 and 4 may also have significant adverse impacts to wildlife, depending on details of the proposal.

Billie Blanchard
January 12, 2006
2

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these scoping comments. The Department appreciates the opportunity to participate in this process and would appreciate an opportunity to review the draft EIR/EIS when it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact me at 928-341-4047.

Sincerely,



William C. Knowles
Habitat Specialist
Region IV, Yuma

Attachment

cc: Russell Engel, Habitat Program Manager, Region IV
Larry Voyles, Regional Supervisor, Region IV
Bob Broscheid, Proj. Eval. Prog. Supervisor, Habitat Branch

AGFD 12/30/05 (20)

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Preferred Route)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 010N080W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 020N180W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 030N080W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 030N200W |
| <i>Macrotus californicus</i> | California Leaf-nosed Bat | SC | | S | WSC | 030N200W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 030N210W |
| <i>Ardea alba</i> | Great Egret | | | | WSC | 030N220W |
| <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> | Southwestern Willow Flycatcher | LE | S | | WSC | 030N220W |
| <i>Xyrauchen texanus</i> | Razorback Sucker | LE | S | | WSC | 030N220W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N210W |

Critical Habitat for the razorback sucker in project area: Colorado River.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Harquahala Alternate Route)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 020N110W |

No Critical Habitats in project area.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Palo Verde Alternate Route)

| NAME | COMNAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 010N080W |
| <i>Opuntia echinocarpa</i> | Straw-top Cholla | | | | SR | 010S060W |

No Critical Habitats in project area.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Subalternate Route 1)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 030N170W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 030N200W |
| <i>Macrotus californicus</i> | California Leaf-nosed Bat | SC | | S | WSC | 030N200W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N160W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N170W |

No Critical Habitats in project area.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Subalternate Route 2)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N160W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N180W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N200W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 050N170W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 050N180W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 050N190W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 050N200W |

Critical Habitat for the razorback sucker in project area: Colorado River.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Subalternate Route 3)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> | Southwestern Willow Flycatcher | LE | S | | WSC | 010N240W |
| <i>Xyrauchen texanus</i> | Razorback Sucker | LE | S | | WSC | 010S240W |
| <i>Ardea alba</i> | Great Egret | | | | WSC | 030N220W |
| <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i> | Southwestern Willow Flycatcher | LE | S | | WSC | 030N220W |
| <i>Xyrauchen texanus</i> | Razorback Sucker | LE | S | | WSC | 030N220W |

Critical Habitat for the razorback sucker in project area: Colorado River.

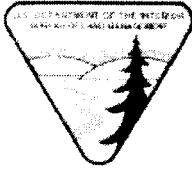
Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.

Special Status Species within 2 Miles of the Devers Palo Verde Transmission Line (Subalternate Route 4)

| NAME | COMMON NAME | ESA | USFS | BLM | STATE | TOWNRANGE |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N170W |
| <i>Gopherus agassizii</i> (Sonoran Population) | Sonoran Desert Tortoise | SC | | | WSC | 040N180W |

No Critical Habitats in project area.

Arizona Game and Fish Department, Heritage Data Management System, January 6, 2006.



U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Scoping Comments

Proposed Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project

Date: 1-17-06

Name*: Greg Glassco

Affiliation (if any)*: Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe

Address*: 530 East Merritt

City, State, Zip Code*: Prescott, AZ 86301

Telephone Number*: 928-445-8790 x135

Email*: gglassco@ypit.com

Comment: The Arizona portion of the Devers 2 transmission line will cross the aboriginal homeland of the Yavapai. The tribe would like to have thorough archaeological surveys of the alternatives, and would like the opportunity to identify traditional cultural properties. We are concerned about shipping clean power out of the state of Arizona to California. We are concerned about effects on cultural resources, wild life, irrigated farmland, tribal land, the wildlife refuge, BLM lands, recreation, and aesthetics. Bighorn sheep are culturally significant to the Yavapai, and we are concerned of impacts to Bighorn Sheep.

**Please print. Your name, address, and comments become public information and may be released to interested parties if requested.*

Please either deposit this sheet at the sign-in table before you leave today, or fold, stamp, and mail. Insert additional sheets if needed. Comments must be received by January 20, 2006. Comments may also be faxed to the project hotline at (800) 886-1888 or emailed to dpv2@aspeng.com.



January 6, 2006

Mr. Jeff Hatch-Miller
Chairman, Arizona Corporation Commission
1200 West Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007

SUBJECT: Devers – Palo Verde 500kV Transmission Line No. 2

Dear Chairman Hatch-Miller,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the above referenced electrical transmission project. Given the tremendous growth occurring in Arizona and California, we recognize that new electrical transmission lines are necessary to deliver adequate and reliable power throughout the region.

Based on the information we have received, it appears that there are two potential transmission line corridors being considered in western Maricopa County. One of these routes, identified as the "preferred" route, parallels the existing Devers – Palo Verde No. 1 500kV transmission line north of Interstate 10 into neighboring La Paz County. Another potential corridor, identified as an alternative transmission line route, proceeds directly west from the Harquahala Generating Station south of Interstate 10. Our understanding is that this alternative would not parallel existing lines, but would rather establish a new transmission line corridor through the Harquahala Valley.

We strongly protest establishment of a new transmission line. The Harquahala Valley has historically been a farming community but will rapidly develop as urbanization approaches. The impact of a new transmission line would have a devastating effect on the Harquahala community and its future. We urge the Commission to approve the "preferred" route that parallels the existing Devers-Palo Verde No. 1 north of Interstate 10. This will help mitigate impacts to the Harquahala Valley by placing the new transmission lines along a route where comparable transmission lines already exist.

Fulton Brock
District 1

Don Stapley
District 2

Andy Kunasek
District 3

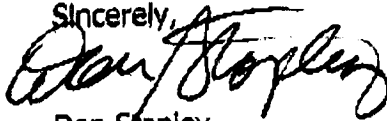
Max W. Wilson
District 4

Mary Rose Garrido Wilcox
District 5



Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss our comments and recommendations in greater detail. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on this project. We look forward to working with you and the Commission to help identify a transmission corridor that meets the electrical needs of the region, and reduces the economic and environmental impacts to the Harquahala Valley.

Sincerely,



Don Stapley
Chairman
Board of Supervisors



Mary Rose Wilcox
Supervisor, District 5

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

District 11 · 2829 Juan Street
P. O. BOX 85406, M.S. 50
San Diego, CA 92110-2799
PHONE (619) 688-6954
FAX (619) 688-4299



*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

January 19, 2006

11-IMP-078
PM ~ 95

Mr. John Kalish
BLM, c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94104-3002

RE: **Devers – Palo Verde #2 Transmission Line (DPV2) (App. # A.05-04-015)**

To Mr. Kalish:


The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) appreciates the opportunity to review the Devers – Palo Verde #2 Transmission Line project, which appears to cross State Route 78 (SR-78) near Palo Verde in Imperial County. We have the following comments.

Any work performed within Caltrans Right of Way (R/W) will require an encroachment permit. Improvement plans for construction within State R/W must include: typical cross sections, adequate structural sections, traffic handling plans, and signing and striping plans stamped by a professional engineer. Also, for those portions of the project within the Caltrans R/W, the permit application must be stated in both English and Metric units (Metric first, with English in parentheses). Additional information regarding encroachment permits may be obtained by contacting the Caltrans Permits Office at (619) 688-6158. Early coordination with Caltrans is strongly advised for all encroachment permits.

Furthermore, for any work or improvements within Caltrans R/W, the project's environmental studies must include such work. The developer is responsible for quantifying the environmental impacts of the improvements (project level analysis) and completing all appropriate mitigation measures for the impacts. The indirect effects of any mitigation within Caltrans R/W must also be addressed. The developer will be responsible for procuring any necessary permits or approvals from the regulatory and resource agencies for the improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project proposal. If you have general questions regarding the Department's comments, please contact Brent McDonald at (619) 688-6819.

Sincerely,


for MARIO H. ORSO, Chief
Development Review Branch



U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Scoping Comments

Proposed Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project

Date: 1-19 06

Name*: Gerrit Ramirez

Affiliation (if any):* _____

Address*: 2243 E. Gila Ridge Road

City, State, Zip Code*: Yuma AZ 85365

Telephone Number*: (927) 317.2106

Email*: gramirre@AZDOT.gov

Comment: Time Frame for beginning of work in Arizona

How many times will the line cross I-10 and US-95
and specify locations.

For any crossings, you will need encroachment
permits from ADOT.

**Please print. Your name, address, and comments become public information and may be released to interested parties if requested.*

Please either deposit this sheet at the sign-in table before you leave today, or fold, stamp, and mail. Insert additional sheets if needed. Comments must be received by January 20, 2006. Comments may also be faxed to the project hotline at (800) 886-1888 or emailed to dpv2@aspeneg.com.



U.S. BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Scoping Comments

Proposed Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project

Date: 01/20/06

Name*: William D. Baker, Esq.

Affiliation (if any)*: Marquahala Valley Irrigation District

Address*: 7310 North 16th Street, Suite 320

City, State, Zip Code*: Phoenix, AZ 85020

Telephone Number*: 602-956-8878

Email*: wdb@ellisbaker.com

Comment: SEE ATTACHED

*Please print. Your name, address, and comments become public information and may be released to interested parties if requested.

Please either deposit this sheet at the sign-in table before you leave today, or fold, stamp, and mail. Insert additional sheets if needed. Comments must be received by January 20, 2006. Comments may also be faxed to the project hotline at (800) 886-1888 or emailed to dpv2@aspenerg.com.

To supplement comments at the Public Scoping Meeting at Estrella Mountain Community College on January 18, 2006 and to supplement my comments of November 28, 2005, Harquahala Valley Irrigation District ("HVID") owns a substantial number of miles of irrigation distribution system constructed of reinforced concrete. If the Harquahala West Alternative route is chosen, this high voltage transmission line could, through its electromagnetic force, adversely interact with the reinforcing steel embedded in the District irrigation structures. Further, we do not believe that this alternative route is financially viable because, even if it is shorter than the proposed route thereby eliminating a number of towers, the cost of land acquisition would reduce those savings considerably. In addition, I note from the Devers Palo Verde No. 2 Project Update of August 2004 and the Fact Sheet put out by Southern California Edison, this sub-alternative route is not even shown or mentioned in either of those publications. Since this alternative route was rejected when DPV #1 was being proposed and since Southern Cal. Ed. has a utility corridor for DPV #1 that is wide enough to accommodate DPV #2, it would seem that the DPV #1 routing should be adopted. By not accepting this alternative route, it will save the landowners and tax payers in Harquahala Valley and Southern Cal. Ed. a considerable amount of money in having to re-fight the 1978 battle, which Southern Cal. Ed. lost the first time around.

Message

Page 1

William D. Baker

From: William D. Baker [wdb@ellisbaker.com]
Sent: Monday, November 28, 2005 3:17 PM
To: 'SLee@aspeneg.com'
Cc: 'rwarren@isp.com'; 'smartori@martorifarms.com'; 'wferguson@cox.net'; 'Jack Doughty'; 'Jay Moyes'; 'mark@marklewis.com'
Subject: Application A.05-04-015 DPV-2 500kV line

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Harquahala Valley Irrigation District, a municipal corporation and political subdivision of the State of Arizona (HVID), this office submits the following comments for the CPUC CEQA.

First of all, we deplore the lack of notice given to affected entities in Arizona concerning this proposed project. We only learned of this on November 23, 2005 and requested an extension of the comment period, which was not granted. To our knowledge, none of the affected landowners in this District were notified of this matter, which we find incomprehensible since one of the alternative routings goes east to west through the middle of the District, bifurcating the District and interfering with its operations.

HVID is an active irrigation district comprised of approximately 33,400 acres. It supplies irrigation water to these acres. These acres are productive agricultural lands located 60 miles west of Phoenix. Its remoteness benefits its agricultural lands because there are no impediments to farming. The scenic views of the mountains surrounding the valley are breath taking because of the clean air.

The Harquahala Generating Station is located on the eastern boundary of HVID. One the proposed alternative routes, dubbed "Harquahala West Subalternate Route", is an anathema to HVID and its landowners. This 12 mile route would impact the residents of the valley by destroying the rural atmosphere of the valley, impair visual impacts and destroy scenic quality; it would remove cropland from production; interfere with tilling and irrigation practices; cause interference with crop dusting and defoliating operations; it would adversely impact endangered species and other wildlife, and would devalue the land in the district.

All of these adverse impacts to the valley could be avoided if the HGC line to PVNGS was utilized and then the new line could use the already existing corridor from PVNGS that is used for the existing DPV-1 500 kV line.

We appreciate this opportunity to submit these comments even if they are submitted on such short notice.

Respectfully submitted,

William D. Baker
Ellis & Baker
Attorneys at Law
7310 N. 16th St. #320
Phoenix, AZ 85020
Tele. (602) 956-8878
Fax: (602) 224-9663
wdb@ellisbaker.com

*Benefit - HGC
+ SLE*

Ellis & Baker
Attorneys at Law
7310 N. 16th St. #320
Phoenix, AZ 85020
Tele. (602) 956-8878



Water Resources

9388 E. San Salvador Dr.
Scottsdale, AZ 85258

PHONE 480-312-5685
FAX 480-312-5615

January 20, 2006

Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94104-3002

Re: Proposed Devers-Harquahala 500 kV Transmission Line

The City of Scottsdale Water Resources Department is providing the following comments regarding the above referenced transmission line. Our comments are limited to the transmission line alignments in Arizona in the vicinity of the Harquahala Valley Irrigation District, which include the Proposed Alignment and the Harquahala Subalternate Route.

The City of Scottsdale owns 1,215 acres of agricultural land within the Harquahala Valley Irrigation District. This property is currently under lease for agricultural purposes and is in production. The farmland was provided to the City of Scottsdale by private developers for its water rights. In the future, water from this farmland will be transported to the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal through a new pipeline.

The City of Scottsdale has identified the pipeline corridor to transport the water from the farmland to the CAP canal. Easements and/or rights-of-way are in-place for a majority of this pipeline corridor. Our identified pipeline corridor south of Interstate 10 (I-10) runs in a north/south direction along Harquahala Valley Road from I-10 to about 9 miles south of the interstate. Our identified pipeline corridor north of I-10 runs in a west-northwesterly direction along Salome Road for about 8 miles, ending at the CAP canal. The final selected alternative must not impact our future ability to utilize the identified pipeline corridor. Based on available maps, it appears that the Harquahala Subalternate Route would cross our pipeline corridor at Harquahala Valley Road (south of the I-10). It is unclear whether the Proposed Alignment would cross our pipeline corridor along Salome Road (north of I-10).

In addition, the final selected alternative must not interfere with, or have a negative impact on, the following:

- Continued farm uses on the City of Scottsdale property
- Continued water deliveries to our property from irrigation canals
- Existing and future property values

If you have any question on this information, please contact Mr. Greg Crossman of my staff at (480) 312-5319.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David M. Mansfield".

David M. Mansfield
General Manager, Water Resources Dept.

c: Greg Crossman, Sr. Water Resources Engineer



Devers-Palo Verde #2 Transmission Project

From: Sosa, Ivan [Ivan.Sosa@yuma.army.mil]
Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2006 6:55 PM
To: 'dpv2@aspenerg.com'
Cc: English, Randy
Subject: DPV2 Project PEA

Thanks for your quick and detailed response.
We certainly do not have any issues.
However, Randy had the suggestion of: having the lines be constructed in accordance with "raptor-safe" specifications (i.e. be built to minimize electrocution hazards to perching/nesting raptors).

Ivan

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

<http://www.dfg.ca.gov>
Eastern Sierra-Inland Deserts Region
3602 Inland Empire Blvd., Suite C-220
Ontario, California 91764
Phone (909) 484-0459
Fax (909) 481-2945



January 31, 2005

John Kalish/Billie Blanchard
BLM/CPUC
c/o Aspen Environmental Group
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935
San Francisco, CA 94140-3002

Re: Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact Report Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project (DPV2)

Dear Mr. Kalish and Ms. Blanchard:

The California Department of Fish and Game (Department) thanks you for the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation/Notice of Public Scoping Meetings for a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR) for the Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project (DPV2) proposed by Southern California Edison. Southern California Edison has filed an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for the proposed project. The California Public Utilities Commission is the lead agency for the State of California and will prepare a joint EIR/EIS with the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

The Department is responding as a Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources [Fish and Game Code sections 711.7 and 1802 and the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA) section 15386] and as a Responsible Agency regarding any discretionary actions (CEQA Guidelines section 15381).

Southern California Edison is proposing to construct a new 230-mile, 500 kV electric transmission line between California and Arizona (the Harquahala Generating Station west of Phoenix, Arizona) and replace 48.2 miles of 230 kV transmission lines in California. The portion of the project in California consists of 128 miles.

The Notice of Preparation includes a summary of potential issues or impacts, including biological resources. The document notes that impacts may occur to the following species: Coachella Valley milkvetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus var coachellae*) (FE), cushion foxtail cactus (*Escobaria alversonii*) (F/CSC), flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcalli*) (Proposed Threatened), desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizi*) (ST/FT), Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (*Uma inornata*) (SE/FT), Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel (*Spermophilus tereticaudus var chlorus*) (Federal Candidate/California Species of Concern), coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*)

(Federal Threatened), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) (SE/FE), Stephens' kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*) (ST/FE), southern bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (SE/FT), Yuma clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris yumanensis*) (ST/FE), western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) (FT), mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) (California Species of Concern), western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) (California Endangered), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) (SE/FE), California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*), western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*), pale big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens*) (Federal and State Species of Concern), and pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) (State Species of Concern).

The Department expects that the applicant will consult the Natural Diversity Data Base, the draft Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan for additional species and species that may have special survey requirements. The project traverses portions of the Reche Canyon/Badlands planning area of the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (WRMSHCP). The WRMSHCP planning species for Subunits 2 and 3 of this planning area include: Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) (Federal and State Species of Concern), bobcat (*Felis rufus*), Stephens' kangaroo rat *Dipodomys stephensi*, Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) (ST/FT), cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*) (State Species of Concern), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) (Federal and State Species of Concern), Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) (Federal and State Species of Concern), Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) (State and Federal Species of Concern), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*) (California Species of Special Concern) and San Bernardino kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys merriami parvus*) (Federal Endangered).

The project will also traverse the proposed Coachella Valley MSHCP. Some of the covered species include the: Mecca aster (*Xylorhiza cognata*), Coachella Valley milkvetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus var coachellae*) (FE), triple ribbed-milkvetch (*Astragalus tricarinatus*) (FE), orocopia sage (*Salvia Greatae*), desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) (FT/ST) flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*) (CSC), Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (*Uma inornata*) (FT/SE), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) (CSC), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) (SE/FE), and Palm Springs pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris bangsi*) (CSC).

The EIR/EIS should include a discussion of the project in relation to the approved Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and the draft Coachella Valley MSHCP. The potential habitat impacts should be categorized as permanent, temporary or maintenance/management. These impacts should be mitigated in accordance with the approved and proposed MSHCPs and with current state environmental regulations. The project should also distinguish between mitigation required for the previous transmission line project in order to differentiate areas of new impact from previously mitigated for areas.

To enable Department staff to adequately review and comment on the proposed project, we suggest that updated biological studies be conducted prior to any environmental or discretionary approvals. The following information should be included in any focused

biological report or supplemental environmental report:

1. A complete assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the project area, with particular emphasis upon identifying endangered, threatened, and sensitive species and sensitive habitats.
 - a. Conduct an updated (within the last 2 years) general biological study of the site to determine if any sensitive species or habitat (including, but not limited to, those mentioned above) may be potentially impacted by the proposed project. A complete assessment of sensitive fish, wildlife, reptile, and amphibian species should be included in the DEIR. Seasonal variations in use of the project area should also be addressed;
 - b. If appropriate habitat for any listed species occurs on the site, have a qualified biologist conduct focused surveys according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and/or Department protocol;
 - c. Have a qualified botanist conduct a focused rare plant survey during the appropriate time of year following USFWS and/or Department protocols;
 - d. The Department's California Natural Diversity Data Base program in Sacramento should be contacted to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat, including Significant Natural Areas identified under Chapter 12 of the Fish and Game Code.
 - e. If any listed species will potentially be impacted by the proposed project, consultation with the Department and/or the USFWS will be required to establish appropriate mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for impacts. An incidental take permit may be required pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2080 *et seq* and/or Section 7 or 10 of the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Early consultation with the Department is recommended, since modification of the proposed project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to listed species. Please refer to Item 4 below for more detailed information regarding compliance with the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).
 - f. The Department requests that impacts to State- and Federally-listed species and potential avoidance, alternative and mitigation measures be addressed in the CEQA document and not solely in subsequent negotiations between the applicant and the agencies.
2. A thorough discussion of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts expected to adversely affect biological resources, with specific measures to offset such impacts.
 - a. CEQA Guidelines, 15125(a), direct that knowledge of the regional setting is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts and that special emphasis should be placed on resources that are rare or unique to the region.
 - b. Project impacts should be analyzed relative to their effects on off-site habitats.

Specifically, this should include nearby river, streams, or lakes located downstream of the project, public lands, open space, adjacent natural habitats, and riparian ecosystems. Impacts to and maintenance of wildlife corridor/movement areas, including access to undisturbed habitat in adjacent areas, should be fully evaluated and provided.

- c. The zoning of areas for development projects or other uses that are nearby or adjacent to natural areas may inadvertently contribute to wildlife-human interactions. A discussion of possible conflicts and mitigation measures to reduce these conflicts should be included in the environmental document.
 - d. A cumulative effects analysis should be developed as described under CEQA Guidelines, 15130. General and specific plans, as well as past, present, and anticipated future projects, should be analyzed relative to their impacts on similar plant communities and wildlife habitats.
 - e. The DEIR should include an analysis of the effect that the project may have on completion and implementation of regional and/or subregional conservation programs. Under 2800-2840 of the Fish and Game Code, the Department, through the Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP) program is coordinating with local jurisdictions, landowners, and the Federal Government to preserve local and regional biological diversity. Coastal sage scrub is the first natural community to be planned for under the NCCP program. The Department recommends that the lead agency ensure that the development of this and other proposed projects do not preclude long-term preserve planning options and that projects conform with other requirements of the NCCP program. Jurisdictions participating in the NCCP should assess specific projects for consistency with the NCCP Conservation Guidelines.
3. A range of alternatives should be analyzed to ensure that alternatives to the proposed project are fully considered and evaluated. A range of alternatives which avoid or otherwise minimize impacts to sensitive biological resources should be included. Specific alternative locations should also be evaluated in areas with lower resource sensitivity where appropriate.
- a. Mitigation measures for project impacts to sensitive plants, animals, and habitats should emphasize evaluation and selection of alternatives which avoid or otherwise minimize project impacts. Off-site compensation for unavoidable impacts through acquisition and protection of high-quality habitat elsewhere should be addressed.
 - b. The Department considers Rare Natural Communities as threatened habitats having both regional and local significance. Thus, these communities should be fully avoided and otherwise protected from project-related impacts.
 - c. The Department generally does not support the use of relocation, salvage, and/or transplantation as mitigation for impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species. Department studies have shown that these efforts are experimental in nature and largely unsuccessful.

4. A California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Incidental Take Permit must be obtained, if the project has the potential to result in “take” of species of plants or animals listed under CESA, either during construction or over the life of the project. CESA Permits are issued to conserve, protect, enhance, and restore State-listed threatened or endangered species and their habitats. Early consultation is encouraged, as significant modification to the proposed project and mitigation measures may be required in order to obtain a CESA Permit. Revisions to the Fish and Game Code, effective January 1998, require that the Department issue a separate CEQA document for the issuance of a CESA permit unless the project CEQA document addresses all project impacts to listed species and specifies a mitigation monitoring and reporting program that will meet the requirements of a CESA permit. For these reasons, the Department recommends including the following information:
 - a. Biological mitigation monitoring and reporting proposals should be of sufficient detail and resolution to satisfy the requirements for a CESA Permit.
 - b. A Mitigation Agreement and Mitigation Plan, approved by the Department, are required for plants listed as rare under the Native Plant Protection Act.
5. The Department opposes the elimination of watercourses and/or their channelization or conversion to subsurface drains. All wetlands and watercourses, whether intermittent or perennial, should be retained and provided with substantial setbacks which preserve the riparian and aquatic values and maintain their value to on-site and off-site wildlife populations.
 - a. Under Section 1600 *et seq* of the Fish and Game Code, the Department requires the project applicant to notify the Department of any activity that will divert, obstruct or change the natural flow or the bed, channel, or bank (which includes associated riparian resources) of a river, stream or lake, or use material from a streambed prior to the applicant’s commencement of the activity. Streams include, but are not limited to, intermittent and ephemeral streams, rivers, creeks, dry washes, sloughs, blue-line streams, and watercourses with subsurface flow. The Department’s issuance of a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement for a project that is subject to CEQA will require CEQA compliance actions by the Department as a responsible agency. The Department, as a responsible agency under CEQA, may consider the local jurisdiction’s (lead agency) Negative Declaration or EIR for the project. However, if the CEQA document does not fully identify potential impacts to lakes, streams, and associated resources (including, but not limited to, riparian and alluvial fan sage scrub habitat) and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, monitoring and reporting commitments, additional CEQA documentation will be required prior to execution (signing) of the Streambed Alteration Agreement. In order to avoid delays or repetition of the CEQA process, potential impacts to a lake or stream, as well as avoidance and mitigation measures need to be discussed within this CEQA document. The Department recommends the following measures to avoid subsequent CEQA documentation and project delays:
 - (1) Incorporate all information regarding impacts to lakes, streams and associated habitat within the DEIR. Information that needs to be included within this

document includes: (a) a delineation of lakes, streams, and associated habitat that will be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed project; (b) details on the biological resources (flora and fauna) associated with the lakes and/or streams; (c) identification of the presence or absence of sensitive plants, animals, or natural communities; (d) a discussion of environmental alternatives; (e) a discussion of avoidance measures to reduce project impacts; and (f) a discussion of potential mitigation measures required to reduce the project impacts to a level of insignificance. The applicant and lead agency should keep in mind that the State also has a policy of no net loss of wetlands.

- (2) Include in the DEIR a discussion of potential adverse impacts from any increased runoff, sedimentation, soil erosion, and/or urban pollutants on streams and watercourses on or near the project site, with mitigation measures proposed to alleviate such impacts must be included.
- (3) The Department recommends that the project applicant and/or lead agency consult with the Department to discuss potential project impacts and avoidance and mitigation measures. Early consultation with the Department is recommended, since modification of the proposed project may be required to avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please call Robin Maloney-Rames, Environmental Scientist, at (909) 980-3818.

Sincerely,



Scott Dawson
Senior Environmental Scientist

cc: State Clearinghouse, Sacramento
Doreen Stadlander, USFWS, Carlsbad
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