

A. INTRODUCTION

This Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report (SDEIR) for the El Casco System Project (Project) has been prepared to inform the public of changes to the Project and the associated environmental impacts resulting from new design information provided by Southern California Edison (SCE) for the 115 kV subtransmission line. SCE provided this information subsequent to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) certifying the Final EIR and approving the Project on December 18, 2008. Please refer to the CPUC's El Casco System Project website for all project-related documents: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/en/elcasco/elcasco.htm>.

The legal requirements for completion of and circulation of a supplemental EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) are provided in Section A.1 below. An overview of the environmental review process required under CEQA is provided in Section A.2. A brief overview of the approved Project is provided in Section A.3 followed by an overview of the proposed modifications to the Project in Section A.4. Section A.5 provides an overview of the contents of this Supplemental Draft EIR.

A.1 LEGAL AUTHORITY

A.1.1 Requirements for a Supplemental EIR under CEQA

Per CEQA Guidelines §15162(a), when an EIR has been certified for a project, a subsequent EIR shall be prepared if the Lead Agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record, that one or more of the following occur:

- (1) Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
- (2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
- (3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete, shows any of the following:
 - a. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR;
 - b. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
 - c. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible, and would substantially reduce significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
 - d. Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects

on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

Per CEQA Guidelines §15163(a), the Lead Agency may choose to prepare a supplement to an EIR rather than a subsequent EIR if:

- (1) Any of the conditions described in §15162 would require the preparation of a subsequent EIR, and
- (2) Only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation.

The CPUC has determined that the new information provided by SCE regarding the change in the design of the 115 kV subtransmission line would result in a new significant visual resources impact; however, only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequate. Therefore, the CPUC is preparing a Supplemental EIR.

Per CEQA Guidelines §15163(b), the supplement to the EIR need contain only the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised.

A.1.2 Public Noticing Requirements

Noticing and public review of a supplemental EIR must be given in the same manner as the previously circulated draft EIR per CEQA Guidelines §15087 but may be circulated by itself without recirculating the previous draft or final EIR (CEQA Guidelines §§15163(c), (d)). Accordingly, notice of this Supplemental Draft EIR will be provided to all organizations and individuals who previously requested notice in writing and by at least one of the methods specified in CEQA Guidelines §15087(a); i.e., publication in a newspaper of general circulation, posting, and/or direct mailing to neighboring property owners. All of the noticing procedures set forth in CEQA Guidelines §15087 for circulation of a draft EIR will be complied with for the Supplemental Draft EIR. Additionally, the CPUC will provide notice to every agency, person, or organization that commented on the original EIR (including the Draft EIR and Recirculated Draft EIR).

The CPUC has chosen to circulate the supplement to the EIR by itself without recirculating the previous Draft or Final EIR, and therefore, requests that comments be submitted only on the supplemented portions of the EIR (CEQA Guidelines §§ 15163 (d), 15088.5(f)(3)).

Prior to granting any further discretionary approvals, the CPUC's decision-making body shall consider the previous EIR as revised by the supplemental EIR and make a finding under CEQA Guidelines §15091 (Findings) for each significant effect shown in the previous EIR as revised (CEQA Guidelines §15163(e)).

A.1.3 Public Review Period Requirements

The review period for the Supplemental Draft EIR should be the same as the review period of the originally circulated EIR (CEQA Guidelines §§15105 and 15163(c)). In the case of an EIR submitted to the State Clearinghouse for review by State agencies, the review period must be at least 45 days (CEQA Guidelines §15105(a)). Therefore, the review period for this Supplemental Draft EIR is 45 days as discussed in Section A.3.2, below.

A.2 OVERVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

A.2.1 Background on the Project's Environmental Review Process

The CEQA environmental review process for the proposed El Casco System Project started on July 16, 2007, with the CPUC's issuance of a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR. The public involvement milestones associated with the environmental review process for the proposed El Casco System Project are described below.

- **Scoping Process.** As required by CEQA Guidelines §15082, the CPUC issued a NOP on July 16, 2007 that summarized the Proposed Project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments from interested parties. The NOP also included notice of the CPUC's Pre-Hearing Conference for the Proposed Project, and public scoping meetings that were held on August 1, 2007 in the cities of Banning and Beaumont, California. The NOP was filed with the State Clearinghouse on July 16, 2007 (SCH# 2007071076), which initiated the 30 day public scoping period. The review period for the NOP ended on August 14, 2007. Public notification of the NOP included direct agency and public notification, newspaper announcements in five newspapers, and posting on the project website (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/elcasco/elcasco.htm>).
- **Draft EIR Public Review Process.** The CPUC published the Draft EIR for the El Casco System Project on December 12, 2007 (Aspen, 2007), commencing the 45-day public review period. The Draft EIR included a detailed project description, analysis of impacts in eleven environmental disciplines, cumulative and growth inducing impacts analysis, analysis and comparison of alternatives including the No Project Alternative, and mitigation to reduce or eliminate environmental impacts of the Proposed Project.
- **Draft EIR Informational Workshops and Public Participation Meetings.** Two Informational Workshops were held on January 9, 2008 at the City of Banning Council Chambers. The Informational Workshops were intended as an opportunity for the public to learn more about the content and analysis provided in the Draft EIR. The Informational Workshops were conducted in an "open house" format that allowed members of the public and government agencies to view displays, review handouts, and ask questions about the Draft EIR and the environmental review process from the Draft EIR authors. No verbal comments were accepted or recorded at the Informational Workshops; only written comments were accepted. In addition to the Informational Workshops, two Public Participation Meetings were held on January 9, 2008 at the City of Banning Council Chambers. During the Public Participation Meetings, a short presentation was provided regarding the Proposed Project, the CEQA review process, and the conclusions of the Draft EIR. After the presentation, members of the public, organizations, and agencies had an opportunity to present verbal comments on the Draft EIR. All verbal comments presented at the Public Participation Meetings were transcribed by a court reporter and were included in the Final EIR. Written comments were also accepted at these meetings.
- **Final EIR.** The Final EIR was published on April 11, 2008 (Aspen, 2008a). Per the requirements of California Public Resources Code §21092.5 and CEQA Guidelines §15089, the CPUC provided a response to each public agency, organization, and individual that commented on the Draft EIR. In addition, the Final EIR contained text revisions to the Draft EIR and a summary of the Draft EIR public review process.
- **Recirculated Draft EIR.** A Recirculated Draft EIR was prepared to inform the public of changes to the document resulting from new information provided by SCE regarding the

ambient noise levels adjacent to the existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission line. SCE provided this information subsequent to the CPUC publishing the Final EIR. The Recirculated Draft EIR was released for a 45-day public review period on July 9, 2008 (Aspen, 2008b).

- **Recirculated Final EIR.** On October 17, 2008, the CPUC released the Recirculated Final EIR for the El Casco System Project (Aspen, 2008c). The Recirculated Final EIR included responses to comments received during the Recirculated Draft EIR comment period (July 9, 2008 through August 22, 2008), updates to the original Final EIR resulting from new information presented in the Recirculated Draft EIR, excerpts of any text changes resulting from comments submitted, and a feasibility review of mitigation measures.
- **Permit to Construct.** A Permit to Construct for the El Casco System Project was granted by the CPUC (Decision 08-12-031, SCH #2007071076) on December 18, 2008 (CPUC, 2008).

A.2.2 Supplemental Draft EIR Environmental Review Process

Publication of this Supplemental Draft EIR commences a 45-day public review period that ends on January 13, 2012 (CEQA Guidelines §§15163(c), 15087(e), 15105(a)). The CPUC has chosen to circulate the supplement to the EIR by itself without recirculating the previous Draft or Final EIR, as allowed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15163 (d), and the CPUC requests that the public comment on only those portions of the document that have been revised and included in this Supplemental Draft EIR.

A.2.3 Decision-Making Process

After the close of the public review period on January 13, 2012, the CPUC will prepare a Supplemental Final EIR that contains a response to each public agency, organization, and individual that commented during the public review period. In addition, the Supplemental Final EIR will contain a summary of any text changes to the Final EIR resulting from comments received on the Supplemental Draft EIR. The Supplemental Draft and Final EIRs supplement the Final EIR, which is comprised of the original Draft EIR published in December 2007, the Final EIR (Responses to Comments) published in April 2008, the Recirculated Draft EIR published in July 2008, and the Recirculated Final EIR (Responses to Comments) published in October 2008. A summary of the entire El Casco System Project EIR public review process will also be provided.

Pursuant to Article XII of the Constitution of the State of California, the CPUC oversees the regulation of investor-owned public utilities, including SCE. The CPUC is the lead State agency ensuring compliance of the El Casco System Project with CEQA regulations. The Supplemental Final EIR will be used by the CPUC, in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, to act on SCE's Petition to Modify. Under CEQA requirements, the CPUC will determine the adequacy of the Supplemental Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA.

It should be noted that environmental impacts identified for a project cannot always be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. When this occurs, impacts are considered significant and unavoidable. If a public agency approves a project that has significant unavoidable impacts, the agency shall state in writing the specific reasons for approving the project, based on the Final EIR and any other information in the public record for the project. This is termed a "statement of overriding considerations" and is used to explain the specific reasons why the benefits of a proposed project make its significant unavoidable impacts acceptable. The statement is prepared, if required, after the Final EIR has been completed but before action to approve the project has been taken. The statement of overriding

considerations and the CEQA required Findings of Fact (CEQA Guidelines §§15091 and 15163(e)) would be included in the CPUC's Proposed Decision on the El Casco System Project.

A.3 OVERVIEW OF THE APPROVED PROJECT

The approved Project provides relief to the Vista and Devers Systems through the transfer of load from the Banning, Maraschino, Mentone, Crafton Hills, and Zanja Substations to the newly created El Casco System. In addition, the approved Project allows load transfers between the Devers, Vista, and the new El Casco Systems under both normal and abnormal conditions. Together, these functions serve to ensure that reliable, safe electric service is available to meet customer electrical demand without overloading the existing electrical facilities that serve northern Riverside County. The El Casco System Project includes the following major components:

- Construct a new 220/115/12 kV substation within the Norton Younglove Reserve in the County of Riverside (El Casco Substation), associated 220 kV and 115 kV interconnections, and new 12 kV line getaways.
- Replace approximately 13 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity double circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines and replace support structures within existing SCE rights-of-way (ROWs) in the Cities of Banning and Beaumont and unincorporated areas of Riverside County.
- Replace approximately 1.9 miles of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines and replace support structures within existing SCE ROWs in the City of Beaumont and unincorporated Riverside County.
- Replace approximately 0.5 mile of existing single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines with new, higher capacity single-circuit 115 kV subtransmission lines on existing support structures within existing SCE ROWs in the City of Beaumont and unincorporated Riverside County.
- Rebuild 115 kV switchracks within Banning and Zanja Substations in the Cities of Banning and Yucaipa, respectively.
- Install telecommunications equipment at the proposed El Casco Substation and at SCE's existing Mill Creek Communications site.
- Install fiber optic cables within public streets and on existing SCE structures between the Cities of Redlands and Banning.

A.4 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

The approved 115 kV subtransmission line work, described above in Section A.3, would include the installation of approximately 225 new steel poles, ranging from 65 to 85 feet tall. Approximately 25 percent of these steel poles would be bolted-base tubular steel poles (TSP), and the remaining 75 percent would be direct-buried lightweight steel (LWS) poles. Except for the steel poles installed within the substation site, these structures would be placed within existing 115 kV rights-of-way (ROWs) or along public street ROWs. Any steel poles that are replacing existing wood pole structures in existing ROWs would be primarily installed at the same locations (i.e., within approximately 10 feet of the existing structures).

As part of final engineering, SCE has determined that additional poles will be required along portions of the 115 kV subtransmission line alignment. This determination was made based on a topographical/profile survey, detailed rights check, individual structure strength ratings, conductor sizes, span lengths, number of conductors/cables to be attached, and wind loading. Conductor sag calculations were used to determine the proper final pole heights along the line route. In designing the 115 kV subtransmission line, SCE attempted to determine the optimal combination of LWS poles and TSPs; where possible, LWS poles were the preferred choice, as they are less costly to purchase and

construct (SCE, 2011a). However, in certain areas the terrain mandated the use of TSPs, such as at highway, waterway, and canyon crossings to accommodate longer spans and higher conductor tensions. All of these factors were considered in determining the final design for Segments 2 and 4.

The revised project would introduce approximately double the number of 115 kV structures than originally proposed along Segment 2 (33 vs. 61 structures), which begins just west of South Highland Home Road and continues east to a point just west of South San Geronio Avenue/Highway 243 (approximately 2.85 miles), and along Segment 4 (30 vs. 57 structures), which begins just east of Bolo Court/Westward Avenue and continues east to just west of Highland Springs Avenue (approximately 2.75 miles). As noted above, the original design assumed generally one-for-one replacement of the existing wood pole structures which exist along Segments 2 and 4. Additionally, the structure heights within Segments 2 and 4 have increased substantially from the original design (65 to 85 feet tall) and would instead range from 75 to 120 feet.

A.5 READER'S GUIDE

This Supplemental EIR is organized as follows:

Executive Summary. A summary of the approved Project and proposed changes to the Project; a summary of the change in significant impacts resulting from the proposed changes.

Section A (Introduction). A discussion of the legal authority for completing and noticing a supplemental EIR, an overview of the environmental review process completed on the El Casco System Project, as well as a brief summary of the approved Project.

Section B (Modifications to the Project). A detailed description of the changes to the Project proposed by SCE in their Petition to Modify.

Section C.1 (Visual Resources). A comprehensive analysis and assessment of Visual Resources impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed changes to the approved Project.

Section C.2 (Issue Areas Where Modifications Result in No Substantial Change). Analysis and assessment of impacts to support the conclusion that the proposed changes to the Project would not result in a change in impacts or result in a new impact for these issue areas.

Section D (Other CEQA Considerations). A discussion of additional CEQA considerations including significant unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible changes, growth-inducing effects, and cumulative impacts for Visual Resources.

Section E (References). A list of preparers is provided as well as references to source documents.