

March 13, 2003

Ms. Billie C. Blanchard
California Public Utilities Commission
Energy Division
505 Van Ness Avenue, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Jefferson Martin 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Dear Ms. Blanchard:

On behalf of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District), I would like to submit the following comments on the Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the Jefferson-Martin 230 kV Transmission Line Project (Project) prepared by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E). It is my understanding that as the lead agency, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will use the PEA for the purpose of preparing an Environmental Impact Report for the Project.

The District is a multi-county Special District formed in 1972 that owns and manages approximately 48,000 acres of open space land on the San Francisco Bay peninsula. This includes Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve (Preserve), a 366-acre property with approximately 3.2 miles of existing public trails that will be directly affected by the Project.

In reviewing the PEA, it was difficult to thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts to District land because the document failed to acknowledge the District as a local jurisdiction that would be affected by the Project (see *Table 2-10* and *5-1*). The Preserve is mentioned in certain portions of the PEA and depicted on some of the maps, but the document did not recognize the District as a stakeholder and therefore pertinent information was not included.

For example, *Table 5-5* lists the existing and proposed recreational facilities crossed by or directly adjacent to the Project. Since PG&E failed to contact the District, the list does not identify several federally funded recreation projects that will be constructed on the Preserve over the next two years, including several miles of new trail and a parking lot and staging area for public use. Due to this exclusion, *Chapter 17* of the document should be deemed inaccurate because the aforementioned projects were not considered in the analysis for cumulative impacts. Section *5.2.4 Plans and Policies* identifies the "goals and policies relating to land use, recreation, and agricultural resources for the jurisdictions crossed by the Project." It failed to include the Use and Management Plan for Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve that was adopted in 1983. There are other portions of the PEA that failed

to identify the District as a public jurisdiction, hence making it almost impossible to evaluate. Furthermore, the public who use this Preserve for recreation on a daily basis was also not identified in the PEA (see *Table 8-2*).

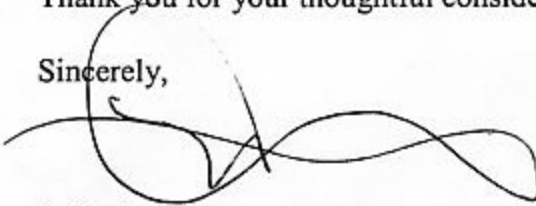
Other than the deficiencies mentioned above, the PEA does not address such topics as specific locations of staging areas and cable pull/tension sites for the proposed Project and their affect on the environment, and the potential loss of natural resources if easements are widened. Also, as an agency that regularly prepares CEQA documentation (including Initial Study checklists), the District challenges the statements made under *4.2 I* and *4.2 IX* that the Project will have either "No Impact or "Less Than Significant (Impact) with Mitigation Incorporation" on the environment.

Finally, the confidential maps provided to the District that illustrate the existing/proposed transmission line and easement (ROW) were highly inaccurate, showing incorrect property boundaries for Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve (and Edgewood County Park). It is our understanding that as part of the Project, PG&E is proposing to widen the existing ROW for the transmission line from 50 feet to 100 feet in width to accommodate the bulk and height of the proposed overhead towers. Under Section 5542.5(a) of the Public Resources Code, these District lands are presumed to have been acquired for the best and most necessary public use. The District continues to believe this to be the case at Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve, especially in relation to the proposed Project.

The District is obviously very concerned with the potential visual and biological resource impacts the Project will have not only on Pulgas Ridge Open Space Preserve, but the entire 14.7-mile overhead segment of the Project. Therefore, it is our desire that PG&E pursue a project alternative that would re-locate the 100 existing overhead towers closer to the built environment and away from protected open space. At a minimum, the PEA and Project maps need to be amended to properly reflect the District's land ownership as well as to acknowledge the existing and proposed public recreational uses on these lands.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



L. Craig Britton
General Manager

LCB:mdv:dms

cc: MROSD Board of Directors