



## Sunrise Powerlink Transmission Project

California SCH #2006091071  
BLM Serial #CACA-47658  
BLM Project #CA-670-2006-31



### PROJECT MEMORANDUM

**Date:** September 2010  
**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** California Public Utilities Commission and Bureau of Land Management  
**Subject:** Sunrise Powerlink Project Modifications Report

On May 14, 2010, San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E) submitted a Project Modification Report<sup>1</sup> (PMR) for the Sunrise Powerlink Project. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have reviewed the PMR. This memorandum presents the agency findings to interested parties, beginning with the introduction that summarizes the approval history of the Sunrise Powerlink Project, SDG&E's proposed modifications, and the legal requirements for evaluating the modifications. The memorandum is divided into three parts and has one attachment:

- Introduction and summary of the CPUC and BLM findings;
- Section 1, which provides a discussion of the general issues and comments on the PMR;
- Section 2, which provides a discussion of issues related to each individual modification subunit; and
- Attachment 1, the BLM Determination of NEPA Adequacy.

### Introduction

**Project Approvals.** The Sunrise Powerlink Project was approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), as Lead Agency under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), in December of 2008 and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as Lead Agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in January of 2009. The CPUC approved a combination of alternative routes called the Final Environmentally Superior Southern Route (FESSR) and the BLM approved the same alternative. Since the approvals from the CPUC and BLM, SDG&E has been implementing the required mitigation measures, conducting required pre-construction surveys, and preparing the final project design. This new information was provided to the CPUC, BLM, and other agencies in the PMR. After considering the PMR, the United States Forest Service issued a Record of Decision in July, 2010 authorizing the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Sunrise Powerlink Project as described in the Final PMR. Construction of the Sunrise Powerlink Project would commence August 2010 with the establishment of some construction yards and existing substation upgrades. Notices to Proceed (NTPs) will be issued by the CPUC for each of these activities.

**Project Modifications Proposed by SDG&E.** After the FESSR was approved by CPUC in December 2008 and BLM in January of 2009, SDG&E began the process of completing final project design and engineering. As is common, some project components were modified as engineering was completed. Modifications result from engineering design requirements, and also from compliance with mitigation measures requiring resource avoidance to minimize or avoid environmental impacts. In addition, some

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<sup>1</sup> The SDG&E Project Modification Report can be found at:  
<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/sunrise/toc-pmr.htm>

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project components are proposed to be relocated to accommodate landowner location preferences where possible in compliance with mitigation requirements (i.e., Mitigation Measure L-2b “Revise project elements to minimize land use conflicts”). As a part of this process, SDG&E has been working with landowners regarding project components and transmission line routes within their properties.

The May 24, 2010 PMR submitted by SDG&E defines the major components of the proposed modifications in PMR Table S-1, Project Components (below), as compared to the components identified in the Final Environmentally Superior Southern Route (FESSR) defined in the agency approvals.

PMR Table S-1. Project Components				
Variable	FESSR	Modified Project	Change Resulting from Modification	
			Number	%
Length (miles)	119	117	(2)	1.6% decrease
Structures (number)	481	443	(38)	7.9% decrease
Wire Stringing Sites (number)	129	78	(51)	39.5% decrease
New Access Roads (miles)	125	51	(74)	59.2% decrease
Tower Staging Access Pads (number)	108	162	58	53.8% increase
Construction Yards (number)	43	19	(24)	55.8% decrease
Suncrest Substation (acres)	128.18	75.66	(52.52)	41.0% decrease
Reconductoring Replacement Poles (69kV)	11	17	6	54.4% increase

Most of the project components shown in Table S-1 would decrease with the modified project. The tower staging access pads would increase due to the increased number of transmission towers that would be built by helicopter, resulting in fewer new access roads and less ground disturbance. The reconductoring replacement poles would also increase due to further engineering of the Coastal Link System Upgrades. These upgrades were approved as part of the FESSR because they would eliminate a new segment of the transmission line that SDG&E had originally proposed, but additional system upgrades are needed to improve overall reliability of the system because the two Sunrise 230kV transmission lines as proposed in both the FESSR and PMR terminate at the Sycamore Canyon Substation.

In addition to the modifications shown in Table S-1, SDG&E has proposed an increased in the number of transmission towers that would be built by helicopters instead of by conventional construction to 230. For safety purposes and at the request of the Department of the Navy and the US Border Patrol, as required by Mitigation Measure T-11b: Consult with and inform U.S. Customs and Border Protection, SDG&E has proposed infrared lighting to be used on some of the project towers, and has proposed over 1,300 marker balls would be required on 134 project spans (see PMR Table 2-2) based on the location of each span (near airports, at road crossings, and at crossings of canyons) as determined by FAA regulations. SDG&E also refined the construction yards and their locations and included provisions for additional microwave telecommunications equipment at seven locations.

**CEQA Requirements Related to Project Modifications.** Additional CEQA review, in the form of a Supplemental EIR, would only be triggered if changes to the Sunrise Powerlink Project created new significant impacts or impacts that are more severe than those disclosed in the Final EIR/EIS used to approve the Final Environmentally Superior Southern Route (FESSR). According to CEQA Guidelines section 15162(a)(3):

*(a)When an EIR has been certified or a negative declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the lead agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record, one or more of the following:*

*(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 or the negative declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:*

*(A) The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or negative declaration;*

*(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 one or more 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.*

**NEPA Requirements Related to Project Modifications.** The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations require a supplement to a draft or final EIS if:

- (i) an agency has made a substantial change in the proposed action that is relevant to environmental concerns,
- (ii) there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts (40 CFR 1502.9(c)1).

If there remains major federal action to occur and if new information indicates a significant impact not already considered in an existing NEPA document then supplementation may be required. If a project change or new information is consistent with or validates the NEPA document, then supplementation is not likely required.

In order to determine whether a supplemental NEPA document is required, the BLM uses a worksheet entitled "Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Adequacy." During preparation of the worksheet, if one or more of the criteria are not met, completion of an appropriate NEPA compliance document (e.g., Environmental Assessment, EIS, Supplemental EIS, or Categorical Exclusion if applicable) is required before proceeding with the proposed action. The NEPA adequacy worksheet requires consideration of the following criteria:

- Is the new proposed action a feature of or essentially similar to an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences can you explain why they are not substantial?
- Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values and circumstances?
- Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

- Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)?
- Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

**Public and Agency Comments on the PMR.** The SDG&E PMR was posted to public websites by the CPUC/BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Comments were accepted by the CPUC and BLM, and shared with the USFS, between May 14 and June 7, 2010. These comments have been carefully reviewed to ensure that concerns raised therein have been addressed by SDG&E's PMR and in this agency review. However, acceptance of comments on the PMR was not part of a CEQA or NEPA process. Comments were accepted so the lead agencies could be fully informed as to public concerns regarding the Sunrise Powerlink final project changes, and whether those changes would trigger additional CEQA and NEPA documentation.

## **Summary of Conclusions Regarding the Proposed Modifications**

### **Detailed Analysis Presented in Sections 1 and 2**

To reach the conclusions presented in this memorandum, the CPUC and BLM performed an in depth review of the PMR and modified project. The conclusions of this review are summarized below by section, and presented in detail in this memorandum as follows:

- **Section 1, General Components and Comments:** This section reviews the revised project components in general, including the components that apply to multiple locations such as the proposed use of infrared lighting, marker balls, the revised construction yards, the telecommunication equipment, and the increased use of helicopter construction. This section evaluates impacts to biological resources, water supply, and includes a revised fire risk analysis and revised analyses of air emissions, cultural resources, and noise. A brief discussion regarding cumulative impacts and notification requirements is also included.
- **Section 2, Review of Proposed Modifications:** This section presents detailed consideration of each modification subunit on an individual basis. This section includes a table defining cultural resources in areas of direct impact. Attached at the end of Section 2 is a list of cultural resources sites in areas of direct impact, which was completed by SDG&E and reviewed by the CPUC and BLM. This table details which cultural resources within the modified project right-of-way would be avoided. Where a cultural resource could not be avoided entirely, SDG&E explains the reasons why the resource could not be entirely avoided.
- **Determination of NEPA Adequacy:** This determination is required by BLM, and was prepared to determine whether a supplemental NEPA document is required.

### **General Components and Comments (Summarized from Section 1)**

Section 1 of this memorandum defines the proposed modifications to project components that apply either to the entire project or to numerous locations. This section also addresses specific technical issues and explains how they were analyzed.

**Revised Project Components.** The CPUC and BLM reviewed the project components required during construction and operation of the modified project including the following:

- **Infrared Lighting.** SDG&E proposes to add infrared lights at specific towers in response to aircraft safety requests from the Department of Defense and Homeland Security (Border Patrol) in compliance with Mitigation Measure T-11b: Consult with and inform U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Because the lights would be located on the transmission towers and would not be visible to humans, the context of potential environmental impacts is limited to indirect impacts to birds and bats that may be attracted to insects clustered around the infrared lights, and their potential to collide with the towers. The potential for bird collision with transmission towers was fully evaluated in the Final EIR/EIS. Therefore, lights would not create a new significant impact or to substantially increase the severity of effect to birds. However, to be conservative, the CPUC and BLM will require full implementation of Mitigation Measure B-10a at conductor spans adjacent to infrared lights, rather than only in high bird use areas. This measure requires SDG&E to install bird flight diverters, fund a study to determine the effectiveness of these devices, and to implement an avian reporting system for documenting bird mortality. With this existing mitigation implemented, this project change would not create a new impact or substantially increase the severity of a previously identified significant impact. The addition of infrared lighting on transmission towers is not expected to result in any new significant impacts to bat species (as a result of collision) because of their flight behaviors, natural history, and echolocation abilities.
- **Marker Balls.** After SDG&E completed final project design and defined specific tower and span heights, the Department of Defense and Homeland Security (Border Patrol) identified the specific location of marker spheres would be required on static lines (at the top of the towers, above the conductors) that would ensure aircraft safety in compliance with Mitigation Measure T-11b: Consult with and inform U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The potential for marker balls was identified in Section B.3.2.4 of the Final EIR/EIS, and their presence was assumed in impact analysis. The PMR states that over 1,300 marker balls would be required on 134 project spans based on the location of each span (near airports, at road crossings, and at crossings of canyons) as determined by FAA regulations. The importance of collision avoidance devices for air safety, such as marker spheres and infrared lights is clear from the history of aircraft collision with transmission lines. The visual impact analysis in the Final EIR/EIS concluded that the FESSR would have significant and unmitigable adverse visual impacts, and the analysis assumed the presence of marker balls in some locations (see Final EIR/EIS Figure E.1.3-10B). While the current SDG&E proposal would result in installation of a larger number of marker spheres than anticipated, the Final EIR/EIS concluded that the FESSR, when installed in an area without substantial industrial development, would result in significant and unmitigable visual impacts due to the presence of the new transmission line in an undisturbed setting (see Section E.1.3, E.2.3, and E.4.3), and the definition of marker sphere locations does not substantially increase the severity of this impact.
- **Construction Yards.** Eleven of the nineteen construction yards identified for the modified project have changed in size and location from those identified in the FESSR. Overall, the temporary disturbance associated with use of construction yard has been reduced by approximately 46 percent. This has been accomplished by elimination of several yards, and by reducing the size of other yards. These changes do not constitute new or more severe environmental impacts. The mitigation measures defined in the Final EIR/EIS apply to the revised yard locations and will ensure that impacts are not significant at each location.
- **Telecommunication Equipment.** SDG&E proposes installation of microwave communications equipment within the lattice structure of six transmission towers along the modified project route in addition to changes to the Tierra del sol Communication Facility, analyzed in Section 2 of the Recirculated Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS, as modified in the Final EIR/EIS. This equipment would

establish a reliable communications system during project operation and would increase worker safety. The equipment would be located inside the lattice structure of the transmission towers so would not increase the ground disturbance of the project. No new significant impacts would be created, and the temporary and minor visual effects would not result in a substantial increase over that evaluated in the Final EIR/EIS. Visual impacts were considered to be significant for the FESSR and the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS remain valid with the addition of the communications equipment.

**Biological Resources.** The CPUC and BLM reviewed the PMR and the PMR map book. The agencies verified SDG&E's calculations of impacts to sensitive vegetation types and special status species habitat or individuals for the FESSR and the May 2010 Modified Project using a database presented in the PMR and the database presented in the Final EIR/EIS. Regardless of which data set is used, the modified project would reduce impacts to most sensitive vegetation communities, most special status plant species, and all special status wildlife species, resulting in a benefit to biological resources. Permanent impacts of the modified project to herbaceous wetlands, freshwater, and streams and Riparian Conservation Areas would increase compared with the FESSR using the EIR/EIS database, but would decrease compared to the FESSR using the PMR database. The mitigation required for the FESSR would also be required for the modified project.

Overall, the modified project would increase impacts to number of individuals for three special status plant species and decrease impacts to the number of individuals for nine special status plant species. Impacts to special status plant species were assessed in the Final EIR/EIS under Impact B-5 for direct or indirect loss of listed or sensitive plants or a direct loss of habitat for listed or sensitive plants without giving a specific number of individual loss. The severity of the impact to special status plant species in the FESSR project area was determined to be significant in the Final EIR/EIS. The mitigation required for the FESSR included conducting rare plant surveys and implementation of appropriate avoidance/minimization/mitigation strategies as well as providing restoration/ compensation for affected vegetation communities. This mitigation would also be required for the modified project and ensures that the increase in impacts to the sensitive plant individuals does not substantially increase the severity of Impact B-5, and that the modified project is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS. Overall, impacts to biological resources would decrease with the modified project; see Tables 3-3, 3-6, and 3-7 in the PMR.

PMR Summary Tables S-1 and 3-7 identify 9 golden eagle nests potentially affected by modified project, whereas the Final EIR/EIS identified 4 nests. This apparent increase is a result of a 2010 survey conducted by SDG&E in accordance with the interim USFWS protocols and their minimum distance of four miles, which resulted in the identification of five more golden eagle nest sites reported in the Final PMR than reported in the Final EIR/EIS. However, no new nest sites were identified within 4,000 feet of project activities that would be potentially affected by project construction/maintenance. The disclosure of nest sites between 4,000 feet and four miles from the project route, as a result of the 2010 golden eagle survey results, is not a new significant impact that would require additional CEQA/NEPA analysis, and is not a substantial increase in the severity of impacts. The number of eagle nests around the FESSR transmission line has not changed since publication of the Final EIR/EIS. Eagle nests are not expected to be disturbed by construction activities occurring more than 4,000 feet away. Therefore, there would be no change in the impacts to golden eagles from the time the Final EIR/EIS was published.

**Water Supply.** SDG&E has defined the sources of water for the project construction. The surface water sources identified are consistent with the types of supplies assumed in the Final EIR/EIS. The Final EIR/EIS in its analysis of the FESSR assumed that no groundwater would be used for construction activities, consistent the information that SDG&E presented for the proposed project. Based on the

review of the PMR and SDG&E's consultant's water study, the use of reclaimed or surface water is available for the project modifications and would validate the conclusions from the Final EIR/EIS. Use of the reclaimed or surface water would not constitute a substantial increased level of an existing environmental impact or new significant impacts. Groundwater will not be used during the construction of the project. The use of recycled water would require transport of this water to construction sites. This has the potential to increase impacts to air quality, traffic, and noise. The impacts associated with transport of reclaimed and surface water were fully described in the Final EIR/EIS. The information provided by SDG&E is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS and does not constitute as an increased level of environmental impact or new significant impacts. Therefore, impacts related to the use of recycled water do not require supplemental analysis under CEQA or NEPA.

**Helicopter Construction.** Helicopter construction has been proposed for approximately 230 structures, which represents an increase in helicopter construction than what was assumed in the EIR/EIS for the FESSR. The Final EIR/EIS evaluated use of helicopters (both large and small), and defined significant and unmitigable impacts related to noise and wildlife. Just as the EIR/EIS concluded that noise impacts from construction, including the use of helicopters, would be significant even with mitigation, noise impacts from the helicopter usage proposed in the PMR would be significant and unavoidable. While an increased use of helicopters would result in an increase in noise, based on the significance threshold used in the Final EIR/EIS (i.e., any increase in day-night environmental noise levels of more than 5 dBA), this would not be substantially more severe than the impact analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS. Because use of helicopters for construction was evaluated in the EIR/EIS and mitigation was included to reduce noise impacts to wildlife, this increase in use is consistent with the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS.

The increase in helicopter construction would also result in an increase in tower staging access pads, but this increase is offset by a larger reduction in access road disturbance. These pads are located adjacent to the transmission towers instead of access roads which would no longer be necessary. Because the tower staging access pads require fewer acres than the access roads, the increased use of helicopters would decrease the level of some of the environmental impacts analyzed in the Final EIR/EIS (particularly as related to ground disturbance). Therefore, impacts related to increased helicopter construction do not require supplemental analysis under CEQA or NEPA.

**Wildfire Risk.** In accordance with the County's suggestion to update the Fire Behavior Trend Model and the homes at risk calculation, the EIR/EIS Team reprocessed both the Fire Behavior Trend Model and the Wildfire Containment Conflict Model, and tallied the number of homes at risk and the number of significant miles of conflict for the project modifications. The number of homes at risk for the project modifications increased from 1,382 homes, as presented in the Final EIR for the FESSR, to 1,409 homes. This 2 percent increase in the number of homes at risk is within the margin of error of the Fire Behavior Trend Model (+/- 2 to 3 percent), and does not result in an actual increase in the absolute number of homes at risk. This increase is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS results.

The Fire Behavior Trend Model used in the EIR/EIS considers a worst-case-scenario of impacts, and the number of homes at risk as modeled for the modified route does not represent an increase in an existing significant impact or a new significant impact of the FESSR, and validates the results from the Final EIR/EIS. In order to err on the side of increased safety for residents in the vicinity of the modified route, the higher number of homes at risk (1,409) will be used to calculate the total annual value of the Defensible Space Grants Fund per Mitigation Measure F-1e. Damage or loss of the 1,409 homes at highest risk in the event of a wildfire resulting from the Sunrise Powerlink project will therefore be partially mitigated by implementation of Mitigation Measure F-1e, the Defensible Space Grants Fund, which will ensure defensible space and fire-safe structural improvements to those homes at highest risk,

although not to less than significant. This results in a Fund value of nearly \$3 million per year for the life of the project, which would ensure grants for defensible space and physical structure improvements to even more homes than what was required for the FESSR.

The number of miles of significant wildfire containment conflict decreased from 6.5 miles under the FESSR to 6 miles under the modified project.<sup>2</sup> This is because the modified project would be two miles shorter than the FESSR and the realignment resulted in correspondingly shorter segments of significant conflict. However, the locations of significant wildfire containment conflict have not changed; see Final PMR Route – Overview Wildfire Containment Conflict Model. Because the locations of significant wildfire containment conflict have not changed from those identified by the model for the FESSR and because SDG&E has agreed to the calculation of fund value based on 6.5 miles of significant conflict, the amount of funds required for Mitigation Measure F-3a would not change. No substantial increase in a significant impact of the FESSR has been identified. The information presented in the County's June 7, 2010 letter regarding fire hazards does not show that the FESSR or the modified project will have any new significant effects not discussed in the EIR/EIS or a substantial increase in the severity of an impact previously examined in the EIR/EIS. In addition, the other fire-related comments on the PMR similarly do not demonstrate any new significant effects or a substantial increase in the severity of an impact. Therefore, impacts related to fire do not require supplemental analysis under CEQA or NEPA.

**Air Emissions and Air Quality.** Most of the project modifications would result in the reduction of construction-related air emissions, because there are fewer structures to build, fewer areas and acres of ground disturbance, and fewer miles of access roads. The increase in transmission towers built using helicopters would increase the air emissions from helicopters and the increase in water haulage would increase the air emissions from the trucks used to haul water. The CPUC and BLM reviewed the construction-phase air emissions estimated for the FESSR in the Final EIR/EIS and the construction-phase emissions estimated for FESSR in the June 2009 Air Quality Mitigation Program for Construction Air Emissions (AQMPC), presented on the CPUC Mitigation and Monitoring website for the Sunrise Powerlink Project. The PMR did not recalculate the air emissions for the modified project but submitted information regarding the construction activities assumed for the modified project compared with the construction activities assumed for the FESSR in the June 2009 AQMPC. After review of all the construction data, although the vehicle miles travelled and use of construction equipment have been revised, the overall estimated emissions created by vehicle miles travelled remains valid and use of construction equipment of the modified project would not create new significant impacts and would not be substantially more severe than those created by the FESSR as estimated in the AQMPC. The emissions assumed for the modified project would be consistent with those assumed for the FESSR as estimated in the AQMPC. Therefore, impacts related to air emissions do not require supplemental analysis under CEQA or NEPA.

The Final EIR/EIS Section D.11.13, Overall Air Quality Impacts of Proposed Project, noted that BLM would need to either complete a full conformity determination for the FESSR or adopt additional mitigation (Mitigation Measure AQ-1h) to reduce project emissions to below the *de minimis* levels. The ultimate level of additional mitigation was to be based on a refined estimate of construction-phase ozone precursor emissions within each nonattainment area, depending on the ultimate engineering, design, and phasing of the project. Construction-phase activities and emissions under the PMR would be limited in accordance with the AQMPC (June 9, 2009) and the fuel use cap and other activity caps in the CEMP

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix D, Mitigation Measures, of the CPUC Decision 08-12-058 granting a certificate of public convenience and necessity for the Sunrise Powerlink Project Transmission Project, identifies the locations of significant conflict along the FESSR, for a total of 6.5 miles.



(January 21, 2010). The resultant emissions are expected to remain less than the federal General Conformity *de minimis* thresholds for the San Diego Air Basin and would no longer reach the threshold that triggered Mitigation Measure AQ-1h. Mitigation Measure AQ-1h, which would be required to achieve emission reductions to levels below the federal thresholds, would no longer be required to reduce impacts and would become unnecessary under the PMR.

**Cultural Resources.** The modified project would reduce impacts to cultural resources when compared with the FESSR. This is because, as required by mitigation presented in the Final EIR/EIS, SDG&E has completed a 100 percent cultural resources survey of the FESSR and Modified Project and refined the placement of towers, roads, and other facilities to avoid direct impacts to cultural resources. At the request of the Forest Service and BLM, SDG&E has continually changed the specific locations of project features to avoid impacts to specific cultural resources. Additionally, as with the FESSR, mitigation would require that cultural resources sites that are near, but not within a construction area will be fenced and monitored during construction by a professional archaeologist and a Native American consultant. All sites within the Forest Service would be avoided by the establishment of an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA; exclusion zone), as required by Mitigation Measure C-1b, Avoid and protect potentially significant resources, and Mitigation Measure C-1e, Monitor construction at known ESAs as required by the Forest Service ROD mitigation measures. By incorporating mitigation identified in the Final EIR/EIS to reduce impacts to cultural resources, the modified project validates the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS. Attachment 3 to this memorandum details the archaeological sites that would be potentially impacted by the modified project, the efforts SDG&E has made to avoid the sites, and the rationale for areas where sites cannot be avoided.

**Construction Haulage Noise.** In the “Sunrise Powerlink Powered Haulage Estimated Acoustical Impact Potential” study, SDG&E’s consultant calculates which portions of the on-road haulage roadway segments have the potential to increase background noise levels to the point of being discernable or creating adverse conditions to sensitive receptor areas. Based on the review of this report, the noise associated with the construction haulage would be consistent with the noise impacts identified in the Final EIR/EIS, would not result in a significant impact not identified in the Final EIR/EIS, and would not result in a substantial increase in severity of the impact.

**Cumulative Impact Analysis.** There were no modifications suggested by SDG&E that would require an update to the cumulative projects list. However, given the time that has passed since completion of the Final EIR/EIS (published in October 2008), and because of NEPA requirements, this update is considered. There were a number of large acreage projects included in the Final EIR/EIS cumulative analysis, and the Final EIR/EIS included the conservative assumption that all projects in the scenario would be built during the life of the project. In addition, many of the projects included in the impact assessment are no longer going to be constructed, or are much delayed. Therefore, new renewable projects proposed in the counties would not change the cumulative scenario conclusions and the conclusions of the Final EIR/EIS regarding cumulative impacts remain valid.

**Public Notification.** A number of comments on the PMR stated that additional notification regarding the modified project was required. There is no CEQA or NEPA requirement calling for the CPUC or BLM to issue notice that they are reviewing the PMR. Notice would only be required if the agencies determined that additional environmental review was required under CEQA and/or NEPA.

## **Review of Proposed Modifications (Summarized from Section 2)**

Section 2 of the memorandum evaluates 44 modification subunits and concludes that they would not result in new significant impacts or a substantial increase in the severity of significant impacts identified

in the Final EIR/EIS. While not all modification subunits would result in a decreased in ground disturbance, overall, the modified project would result in a decrease in permanent and temporary ground disturbance. Permanent ground disturbance would decrease from 555.20 acres with the FESSR to 298.41 acres with the modified project. Temporary ground disturbance would decrease from 1,261.59 acres with the FESSR to 685.12 acres with the modified project. Mitigation measures required for the FESSR would also be required for the modification subunits and would ensure that the minor route alignments would not substantially increase the severity of the impacts identified for the FESSR.

### **Determination of NEPA Adequacy (Summarized from Attachment 1)**

This attachment presents the BLM Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA). The DNA evaluates whether the project modifications were essentially similar to the proposed action analyzed in the existing NEPA documents, whether the range of alternatives analyzed in the NEPA documents was appropriate, whether the existing analysis is valid in light of new information or circumstances, and whether the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the modified action are similar to those analyzed. The DNA concludes that no supplemental NEPA document is required. It also concludes that the public involvement and interagency review for the existing NEPA document was adequate for the modifications.

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

As described briefly above, and in detail in Sections 1 and 2, and Attachment 1, all project-related activities and modifications defined in the PMR have been thoroughly analyzed. The modifications include project changes such as revised segments of the transmission line alignment; changes in placement of towers and poles; size and location of temporary work areas; number and size of temporary construction yards; number and length of new access roads; and construction methods (conventional or helicopter). Overall, the modified project has fewer structures, fewer new access roads, fewer wire stringing areas, and fewer construction yards; a smaller Suncrest Substation; and more structures designated for helicopter construction than the FESSR. The impacts associated with the proposed modifications were fully described in the Final EIR/EIS, which remains valid, and the information provided by SDG&E is consistent with the Final EIR/EIS and would not result in a substantial increase in the severity of a significant environmental impact or a new significant impact.

Mitigation measures defined in the CPUC and BLM Decisions are still applicable, except as stated in Section 1 and 2. After careful review of the project modifications, in accordance with the CEQA and NEPA guidelines described above, the CPUC and BLM have determined that no additional CEQA or NEPA documentation is required. The modifications to the Sunrise Powerlink Project described in the Final PMR are hereby incorporated into the approved project for mitigation monitoring during construction.