SCE West of Devers Upgrade Project Final EIR

California SCH #2014051041

To: **Interested Readers**

From: Billie C. Blanchard, CPUC, EIR Project Manager

Subject: **Notice of Availability, Final Environmental Impact Report for SCE's Proposed West of Devers Upgrade Project**

Date: December 11, 2015

The California Public Utilities Commission, as Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) for consideration of Southern California Edison Company's (SCE) application to build and operate the West of Devers (WOD) Upgrade Project.

A Draft EIR and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) was published on August 7, 2015 by the CPUC and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM); the public comment period ended on September 22, 2015. The BLM has decided that it will require additional time before the Final EIS can be released, so the document released now is the CPUC's Final EIR – a CEQA document only. The Final EIS for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance is expected to be published in 2016. All parties on the project notification lists will be informed when the Final EIS is published.

Comments that were submitted on the Draft EIR/EIS are presented in Volume 4 of this Final EIR, along with responses to all comments. Changes made to the Final EIR as a result of comments on the Draft EIR/EIS are shown using ~~strikeout~~ and underlined text.

Availability of the Final EIR

The Final EIR is being released on December 11, 2015. It is available for review at numerous area libraries (see Table 1) and for review and download on the project website at:

http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/westofdevers/westofdevers.htm

Printed copies of the Executive Summary of the Final EIR with a DVD of the complete document may be requested by e-mail at westofdevers@aspeneg.com or by phone or fax at (888) 456-0254. A limited number of printed copies of the complete four-volume Final EIR document are available to the public upon request at the above email address or phone number.

Description of the Proposed Project

The Proposed Project would be located primarily within the existing West of Devers transmission corridor in incorporated and unincorporated areas of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, including the Morongo Band of Mission Indians reservation and the cities of Banning, Beaumont, Calimesa, Colton, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, and Redlands. The West of Devers corridor traverses residential, commercial, agricultural, recreation, and open space land uses.

The WOD Upgrade Project as proposed by SCE includes the following major components:

- Removal of existing 220 kV transmission lines primarily within the existing WOD corridor in six segments, illustrated on the map at the end of this notice.
- Installation of replacement 220 kV transmission lines in the WOD corridor

- Upgrades of equipment at Devers, El Casco, Etiwanda, San Bernardino, and Vista Substations to accommodate increased power transfer on the new 220 kV lines.
- Removal and relocation of 2 miles of existing 66 kV subtransmission lines and upgrades of equipment at Timoteo and Tennessee 66/12 kV Substations to accommodate the relocated 66 kV lines.
- Removal and relocation of 4 miles of existing 12 kV electric distribution lines.
- Installation of telecommunication lines and equipment for the protection, monitoring, and control of transmission lines and substation equipment.

Project Purpose and Objectives

The CPUC has defined three Basic Project Objectives for the Proposed Project:

1. To upgrade the WOD 220 kV transmission lines between Devers, El Casco, Vista, and San Bernardino substations to increase system deliverability by at least 2,200 MW.
2. To support achievement of State and federal renewable energy goals.
3. To maximize the availability of remaining space in the corridor to the extent practicable, so future use of the corridor for additional transmission line upgrades is not precluded.

These objectives have guided the development of alternatives to the West of Devers Upgrade Project.

Contents of the Final EIR

The Final EIR contains over 3,000 pages in 4 volumes (see Table 2 at the end of this notice for a list of the contents of each volume). It includes the analysis of the environmental effects of the Proposed Project and of the three alternatives to all or part of the Proposed Project. It also includes analysis of the impacts of other projects, called “connected actions,” that are not proposed by SCE but that are likely to be built by others if the West of Devers Upgrade is built. The Final EIR identifies the impacts that could be significant, and presents mitigation measures, which, if adopted by the CPUC or other responsible agencies could avoid, reduce, or minimize these impacts.

Impacts of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would have 5 significant unmitigable impacts in the following four issue areas: visual resources, cultural resources, noise, and air quality. Additionally, there would be a number of significant impacts that can reduced to a level that is less than significant with mitigation, and other impacts that are adverse but would not require mitigation.

Alternatives to the Proposed Project. An intensive alternatives screening process culminated in the identification and preliminary screening of 14 potential alternatives. These alternatives encompass both the 220 kV and 66 kV lines and range from minor structure location adjustments within SCE’s existing right-of-way (ROW) to a reduced build alternative for the 220 kV transmission components. Eleven alternatives were eliminated from analysis after screening, and 3 alternatives were retained for full EIR/EIS analysis. The 3 retained alternatives are:

- **Tower Relocation Alternative:** To reduce potentially significant visual impacts, where the project passes through residential areas, this alternative would move the proposed towers farther from adjacent residences. The alternative would affect 25 pairs of structures in Segment 4, 1 pair of structures in Segment 5, and four individual structures in Segment 6, relocating them approximately 50 feet to the north of their proposed locations.
- **Iowa Street 66 kV Underground Alternative.** A 1,600-foot underground alternative segment was developed by the EIR/EIS team to eliminate significant visual impacts of the proposed new 66 kV San Bernardino–Redlands-Tennessee subtransmission line to residences along Iowa Street in the City of

Redlands. In the alternative, this section of 66 kV subtransmission line would be installed underground in Iowa Street from just north of Orange Avenue to the south side of Barton Road. This underground alternative would replace a similar length of proposed new overhead subtransmission line that is part of the Proposed Project.

- **Phased Build Alternative.** The purpose of this alternative is to reduce construction impacts along the entire approximately 48-mile corridor by retaining as many existing double-circuit tower structures as possible and installing lighter-weight but higher-performance conductors on the retained towers. Existing single-circuit structures would be replaced as proposed. In this alternative, the Iowa Street 66 kV Underground Alternative would not be required, but the new double-circuit towers replacing single-circuit structures would be constructed in the locations defined in the Tower Relocation Alternative. The Final EIR finds that this is the Environmentally Superior Alternative (the same conclusion as presented in the Draft EIR/EIS).

CEQA Process and CPUC General Proceeding

CEQA requires that the CPUC provide written responses to public agency comments at least 10 days prior to certifying the EIR (Public Resource Code 21092.5(a)). This is accomplished by sending the Final EIR to all agencies that commented. The CPUC will determine the adequacy of the Final EIR, and if adequate, will certify the document as compliant with CEQA. The CPUC will issue a decision on the Proposed Project, which will be announced and published concurrent with a scheduled CPUC Meeting. The final decision is expected in the first half of 2016. Within 30 days after the decision is issued by the CPUC, parties can apply for rehearing. For further information on the CPUC's decision-making process, call the CPUC Public Advisor at (866) 849-8390 or (415) 703-2074 or email public.advisor@cpuc.ca.gov.

Table 1. Project Document Repository Sites

City of Riverside Library	3581 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, CA 92501	(951) 826-5201
San Bernardino County Library	777 East Rialto Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92415	(909) 387-5723
Colton Public Library	656 N. Ninth Street, Colton, CA 92324	(909) 370-5083
Grand Terrace Library	22795 Barton Road, Grand Terrace, CA 92313	(909) 783-0147
City of Loma Linda Library	25581 Barton Road, Loma Linda, CA 92354	(909) 796-8621
A.K. Smiley Public Library	125 West Vine Street, Redlands, CA 92373	(909) 798-7565
Mentone County Library	1870 Mentone Boulevard, Mentone, CA 92359	(909) 794-2657
Yucaipa Branch Library	12040 5th Street, Yucaipa, CA 92399	(909) 790-3146
Calimesa City Library	974 Calimesa Boulevard, Calimesa, CA 92320	(909) 795-9807
Beaumont Library District	125 East 8th Street, Beaumont, CA 92223	(951) 845-1357
Banning Public Library	21 W Nicolet Street, Banning, CA 92220	(951) 849-3192
Morongo Band of Mission Indians Environmental Protection Department	12700 Pumarra Road, Banning, CA 92220	(951) 755-5128
U.S Bureau of Land Management Offices		
Palm Springs/So. Coast Field Office	1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262	(760) 833-7100
California Desert District Office	22835 Calle San Juan de los Lagos, Moreno Valley, CA 92553	(951) 697-5200

Table 2. Contents and Organization of the Final EIR

Volume 1	▪ Executive Summary o Impact Summary Tables ▪ Section A, Introduction ▪ Section B, Description of the Proposed Project ▪ Section C, Alternatives ▪ Section D.1, Introduction to Environmental Analysis ▪ Section D.2, Agriculture	▪ Section D.3, Air Quality ▪ Section D.4, Biological Resources – Vegetation ▪ Section D.5, Biological Resources – Wildlife ▪ Section D.6, Climate Change ▪ Section D.7, Cultural Resources ▪ Section D.8, Socioeconomics and Env. Justice ▪ Section D.9, Geology and Soils
Volume 2	▪ Section D.10, Hazards and Hazardous Materials ▪ Section D.11, Land Use and BLM Realty ▪ Section D.12, Mineral Resources ▪ Section D.13, Noise ▪ Section D.14, Paleontological Resources ▪ Section D.15, Recreation ▪ Section D.16, Transportation and Traffic ▪ Section D.17, Utilities and Public Services ▪ Section D.18, Visual Resources	▪ Section D.19, Water Resources and Hydrology ▪ Section D.20, Wildland Fire ▪ Section D.21, Electrical Interference and Safety ▪ Section E, Cumulative Impacts ▪ Section F, Other CEQA & NEPA Requirements ▪ Section G, Comparison of Alternatives ▪ Section H, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting ▪ Section I, Public Participation and Consultation ▪ Section J, Glossary, Acronyms, Abbreviations
Volume 3	**Appendices** ▪ App. 1, Project Description Information ▪ App. 2, Detailed Project Maps ▪ App. 3, Morongo Lease Agreement ▪ App. 4, SCE's EMF Field Management Plan ▪ App. 5, Alternatives Screening Report ▪ App. 6, Air Quality Data ▪ App. 7, Biological Resources	▪ App. 7, Biological Resources ▪ App. 8, Cultural Resources ▪ App. 9, Policy Screening Report ▪ App. 10, Visual Resources ▪ App. 11, EIR information Contacts ▪ App. 12, Preparers and Reviewers ▪ App. 13, Recipients of the EIR/EIS ▪ App. 14, Nesting Bird Management Plan
Volume 4	**Comments on the Draft EIR/EIS** **Responses to Comments**	