

D.1 Introduction to Environmental Analysis

This section explains the organization and purpose of each part of Section D.

D.1.1 Organization of Each Section

Section D of this EIR examines the environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Project and the alternatives to it. Section D includes analyses of the 20 environmental disciplines listed below:

D.2	Agriculture	D.12	Mineral Resources
D.3	Air Quality	D.13	Noise
D.4	Biological Resources: Vegetation	D.14	Paleontological Resources
D.5	Biological Resources: Wildlife	D.15	Recreation
D.6	Climate Change	D.16	Transportation and Traffic
D.7	Cultural Resources	D.17	Utilities and Public Services
D.8	Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	D.18	Visual Resources
D.9	Geology and Soils	D.19	Water Resources and Hydrology
D.10	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	D.20	Wildland Fire
D.11	Land Use and BLM Realty	D.21	Electrical Interference and Safety

Within each environmental discipline, discussions are presented in the following order:

- Environmental Setting
- Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards
- Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Project (including Connected Actions)
- Environmental Impacts of Project Alternatives
- Environmental Impacts of No Project Alternatives (Options 1 and 2)
- Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting
- References

By identifying the impacts associated with each environmental discipline and the offsetting mitigation measures, the regulatory agencies and the general public are offered a discussion and full disclosure of the severity of environmental impacts of this Proposed Project and its alternatives, including the No Project Alternative.

Cumulative impacts for all disciplines are presented in Section E, and other CEQA analysis requirements are addressed in Section F.

D.1.2 Alternatives

As explained in Section C (Alternatives) and in more detail in Appendix 5 (Alternatives Screening Report), the following alternatives are evaluated in each section:

- Tower Relocation Alternative
- Iowa Street 66 kV Underground Alternative
- Phased Build Alternative
- No Project Alternative

The impacts of the alternatives are described in each analysis section in Section D, and the overall impacts of the alternatives are compared in Section G (Comparison of Alternatives) of this EIR.

D.1.3 CEQA Requirements

This is a CEQA compliance document. CEQA strives to facilitate informed governmental decisions regarding projects and operations that may affect the environment. The regulations implementing CEQA are designed to allow flexibility in consolidating and avoiding duplication among multiple layers of governmental review.

Under CEQA, impacts are evaluated using significance thresholds or standards, generally from the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G checklist. For each resource defined in the checklist, a determination is made that there is (1) no impact, (2) a less than significant impact, (3) a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated, or (4) a potentially significant impact. If an impact would exceed a threshold, it is deemed a potentially significant impact.

Significant impacts under CEQA require the public agency that is approving, funding, or carrying out the project to consider mitigation, where feasible, to avoid or reduce the impacts to less than significant levels. For purposes of the analysis in this EIR, the terms *significance* or *significant* are used only to describe impacts under CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Sections 15126.2(a–c), 15358, and 15382 further define and describe significant effects.

For the purpose of this document, and pursuant to CEQA Guidelines (Section 15125(a)), the environmental setting used for the impact analysis reflects conditions at the time of issuance of the Notice of Preparation (March 2014). The EIR evaluates the environmental consequences and potential impacts that the Proposed Project and the alternatives would create. Under CEQA, the impacts identified are compared with predetermined, specific significance criteria, and are classified according to significance categories listed in each environmental discipline.

Impact descriptions in this EIR were written to comply with both NEPA and CEQA requirements for the Draft EIR/EIS, and are not modified in this Final EIR. Impact significance determinations are presented only for CEQA. The section “CEQA Significance Determination” identifies and explains the significance determination for each separate impact. While the criteria for determining significant impacts are unique to each environmental discipline, the classification of the impacts was uniformly applied in accordance with the following definitions:

- Class I:** Significant and cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant
- Class II:** Significant but can be mitigated to a level that is less than significant
- Class III:** Adverse but less than significant
- Class IV:** Beneficial impact

D.1.4 Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

The analysis completed for each environmental discipline follows the CEQA requirements defined above. In each section, there may be Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) developed by SCE and/or mitigation measures recommended in this EIR.

D.1.4.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

The Applicant has incorporated a substantial number of measures and procedures to avoid or reduce impacts into the description of its Proposed Project. In the assessment of the impacts, these Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) have been assumed to be part of the Proposed Project, and therefore are not included as recommended mitigation measures. However, implementation of each APM will be monitored by the CPUC. The APMs that are intended to reduce the potential impacts in a particular environmental discipline (such as air quality, biology, etc.) are listed in the section addressing that environ-

mental discipline. In some instances, APMs are superseded by mitigation measures that provide greater specificity and direction or include actions omitted in the original APM.

D.1.4.2 Mitigation Measures

Significant impacts under CEQA require the public agency that is approving, funding, or carrying out the project to consider mitigation, where feasible, to avoid or reduce the impacts to less than significant levels. For purposes of the analysis in this volume, the terms *significance* or *significant* are used only to describe impacts under CEQA. Mitigation measures are recommended in each section, if required to avoid or minimize impacts that are identified.

Under NEPA, mitigation measures would be considered even for impacts that are not found to be significant; those mitigation measures are retained in this EIR for consistency with the upcoming EIS. The federal Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) *Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's NEPA Regulations* (Forty Questions), Question No. 19a asks about the scope of mitigation measures that must be discussed. The response states:

*The mitigation measures discussed in an EIS must cover the range of impacts of the proposal. The measures must include such things as design alternatives that would decrease pollution emissions, construction impacts, esthetic intrusion, as well as relocation assistance, possible land use controls that could be enacted, and other possible efforts. **Mitigation measures must be considered even for impacts that by themselves would not be considered "significant."** [emphasis added] Once the proposal itself is considered as a whole to have significant effects, all of its specific effects on the environment (whether or not "significant") must be considered, and mitigation measures must be developed where it is feasible to do so. Sections 1502.14(f), 1502.16(h), 1508.14.*

Because CEQ's NEPA guidelines require a demonstration of reduction of impacts to the maximum extent possible, mitigation measures were identified for all classes of impacts (except beneficial impacts).

The mitigation measures recommended by this study have been identified in the impact assessment sections and presented in a Mitigation Monitoring Program table at the end of the analysis for each environmental discipline (also see Section G for discussion of the Mitigation Monitoring Program).

D.1.5 Analysis of Connected Actions

As explained in Section B.7.1, the CPUC and BLM defined in the Draft EIR/EIS several specific projects that have been found to be so closely related to the Proposed Project as to be considered "connected actions" under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or part of the "whole of the action" under CEQA. Projects that are considered "connected actions" under NEPA (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(I)) include actions that cannot proceed unless the proposed action occurs first or simultaneously. Table B-22 describes these projects, and explains why each has been found to be "connected." Within each discipline's analysis in Sections D.2 through D.21, this EIR includes both a description of the environmental setting for the connected actions and analysis of the impacts of these actions. Any mitigation for impacts of a connected project would be imposed on that project by the agency having jurisdiction and would not be the responsibility of SCE under the West of Devers Upgrade Project.

D.1.6 Cumulative Impact Assessment

CEQA requires that cumulative impacts be considered. A "cumulative impact" is the environmental impact resulting from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and

reasonably foreseeable future actions that can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Cumulative effects are considered in Section E of this EIR. The cumulative impacts of the project taken together with the related cumulative projects (listed in Section E) are assessed, and mitigation measures for each impact were identified, if applicable. The focus in the cumulative impact analysis is to identify those project impacts that might not be significant when considered alone, but contribute to a significant impact when viewed in conjunction with future planned or foreseeable projects.

D.1.7 Other CEQA Requirements

Section F of this EIR presents the analysis required by CEQA for the following topics:

- Growth-inducing effects
- Significant and irreversible and irretrievable changes
- Significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the Proposed Project is implemented
- Energy conservation.