

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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November 12, 2020

Alex Gutierrez
Regulatory Affairs
Southern California Edison
8631 Rush St, General Office 4 – 235E (2nd Floor)
Rosemead, CA, 91770

RE: West of Devers Upgrade Project: Minor Project Refinement #42

Dear Mr. Gutierrez,

On November 11, 2020, Southern California Edison (SCE) submitted a request for Minor Project Refinement (MPR) #42 for an additional temporary work area needed to safely stage material and equipment associated with wire stringing and wreck-out activities. The additional work area is located in Segment 3 in Riverside County. The additional work area would support transmission line activities approved under the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Notice to Proceed (NTP) #4, September 5, 2017, for the West of Devers Upgrade Project in the County of Riverside, California.

The CPUC voted on August 18, 2016 to approve SCE's West of Devers Upgrade Project (Decision D.16-08-017) and a Notice of Determination was submitted to the State Clearinghouse (SCH# 2014051041). The CPUC also adopted a Mitigation, Monitoring, Compliance and Reporting Plan (MMCRP) to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures imposed on the West of Devers Upgrade Project during implementation. The MMCRP also acknowledges that temporary changes to the project, such as final project design and engineering or need for addition workspace, are anticipated and common practice for construction efforts of this scale and that an MPR request would be required for these activities. This letter documents the CPUC's thorough evaluation of all activities covered in this MPR, and that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested MPR activities.

MPRs are reviewed for consistency with CEQA requirements and are located within the geographic boundary of the project study area. MPRs do not create new or substantially more severe significant impacts, or conflict with any mitigation measure or applicable law or policy. Also, they do not trigger other permit requirements unless the appropriate agency has approved the change, and clearly and strictly comply with the intent of the mitigation measure or applicable law or policy.

MPR #42 for the new temporary work area to support construction activities (approved under NTP #4) is granted by CPUC based on the factors described below.

SCE MPR Request. Excerpts from the SCE MPR request are presented below (indented):

GS-3-3S03-MPR-42A new temporary 0.16-acre work area located approximately 150-feet west of 3S03 is required to safely stage material and equipment associated with wire stringing and wreck-out activities. A mobile guard structure will be mobilized to the area to protect the existing distribution lines in the event of a wire drop during helicopter activities. The new work area will be accessed from the existing access road to the north, as shown on Figure 1. No equipment or materials will be staged outside of the transmission right-of-way.

The new work area is publicly owned and consists of approximately 0.16-acres of grassland/forbland located in Riverside County.

CPUC Evaluation of MPR Request

In accordance with the MMCRP, the subject MPR request was reviewed by CPUC to confirm that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested MPR activities and that the subject request was within the geographic boundary of the Project study area. Additionally, the CPUC Environmental Monitor (EM) conducted a site visit of the requested work area on November 11, 2020. The following discussion summarizes this analysis for agriculture, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use, noise, paleontological resources, traffic and transportation, visual resources, water resources, and wildland fire. A list of bulleted conditions is presented to define additional information and clarifications regarding mitigation requirements. In some cases, these items exceed the requirements of the Mitigation Measures (MMs) and Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) and are based on specific site conditions and/or are proposed conditions by SCE.

Agriculture: No Important Farmland is located within the proposed MPR work area.

Air Quality: During proposed construction, SCE shall implement the Fugitive Dust Control Plan approved by the CPUC on May 22, 2017, as well as the Exhaust Emissions Control Plan approved by CPUC on June 8, 2017. In addition, in compliance with MM AQ-1b, off-road equipment with engines larger than 50 horsepower shall have engines that meet or exceed U.S. EPA/CARB Tier 3 Emissions Standards. No additional impacts to air quality will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Biological Resources: A desktop analysis of publicly available data and relevant project data was conducted to determine the potential for special-status species to occur in the new work area. The new work area was included in the study area for previous biological surveys (e.g., habitat assessments and focused surveys). In addition, the new work area and access road were covered within active preconstruction FRED Survey ID 000077 and a preconstruction survey of the area conducted on 11/10/2020, in preparation for this MPR (FRED Survey ID 000241).

Desert Tortoise (DETO): The new work areas are not located within the range of desert tortoise; therefore, no impacts to DETO are anticipated.

Special-Status Terrestrial Herpetofauna: No special-status herpetofauna were observed within the vicinity of the new work area during previous preconstruction surveys. No impacts to special status herpetofauna are expected as a result of use of the new work area.

Burrowing Owl (BUOW): – Burrowing owl habitat is widespread in the project area. Burrowing owls have a moderate potential to occur within 500 feet of the new work area; however, no burrows have been observed within the vicinity of the new work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated. If active burrows are identified later within 300 feet of construction activities, potential impacts will be addressed according to the Western Riverside County MSHCP DBESP for the Burrowing Owl.

Nesting Birds: – Suitable substrates for nesting birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code, including transmission structures, trees, shrubs, and the ground surface, are located within the vicinity. With implementation of project mitigation measures, preconstruction clearance sweeps, and nesting bird surveys conducted during nesting bird season (January 1 through August 31), no impacts to nesting birds are anticipated. If active nests are discovered in the future, impacts will be mitigated in accordance with the WOD Nesting Bird Management Plan.

Listed Riparian Birds: Suitable habitat for riparian birds (least Bell's vireo [LBVI]/Southwestern willow flycatcher [SWFL]) occurs east of El Casco Substation. No impacts to this habitat will occur as a result of

construction activities in the new work area, located more than 1,500 feet to the west. With implementation of project mitigation measures, preconstruction clearance sweeps, and nesting bird survey conducted during nesting bird season (January 1 through August 31), no impacts to listed riparian birds are anticipated.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher (CAGN): No suitable habitat for Coastal California Gnatcatcher occurs within the vicinity of the new work area. No impacts to CAGN are expected.

Golden Eagle (GOEA): – Based on aerial habitat assessments and protocol surveys conducted for the project, no suitable nesting habitat for golden eagles is located within 2 miles of the proposed work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Stephen's Kangaroo Rat (SKR): – Areas of suitable habitat for Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR) are mapped within the new work area. A habitat assessment, pedestrian surveys, and trapping surveys were conducted in Segment 3 during 2018. No SKR were captured. Based on a lack of historic data, habitat conditions, and negative results over several years of surveys, SKR are not expected. Additionally, the new work area is located within the WR-MSHCP, where SKR are a covered species.

To minimize temporal habitat loss, a portion of previously approved work area WSS-3-3S02-3S03, which was determined to no longer be necessary for construction, will be removed from the Project data and avoided to offset mapped habitat impacts to GS-3-3S03-MPR-42.

With implementation of project mitigation measures and preconstruction clearance sweeps, no impacts to SKR are anticipated.

Special-Status Bats: Potential roosting sites for bats are located east of El Casco Substation, well outside the vicinity of the new work area. With implementation of project mitigation measures, no impacts to special-status bats are anticipated.

Special-Status Small Mammals: Special-status small mammals such as the pallid San Diego pocket mouse, northwestern San Diego pocket mouse, American badger, desert kit fox, and/or black-tailed jackrabbit can occur in many parts of the project area. Ringtail and Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel are not expected. The new work area is also outside the known range of the Palm Springs pocket mouse. Mapped suitable habitat for the Los Angeles Pocket Mouse (LAPM) is located northeast of El Casco Substation, well outside the vicinity of the new work area. Although no impacts to special status mammals are expected, if any of these species are found, potential impacts will be addressed in accordance with the WOD Small Mammals Avoidance and Minimization Plan.

Special-Status Plants: Smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*; CRPR 1B.1, WR-MSHCP Criteria Area Plant Species) occurs throughout the habitat immediately northeast of the El Casco Substation, well outside the vicinity of the new work area. Special-status plants have not been previously identified within the new work area; therefore, no impacts are anticipated. If special-status plants are later identified during clearance sweeps/monitoring, they will be avoided to the extent feasible. Unavoidable impacts to special-status plants will be addressed in accordance with the Special-status Plant Salvage and Relocation Plan and/or WR-MSHCP DBESP for Narrow Endemic and Criteria Area plants.

Regulated Trees: No tree trimming or tree removal is required for the proposed activities.

Jurisdictional Waters: The new work area does not intersect jurisdictional waters; however, a non-wetland jurisdictional feature is located in the northeast corner of the survey area. This feature does not intersect any work areas or access roads; therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Cultural Resources:

The new work area is located within the WOD APE and was covered within the record search data that was compiled during previous WOD surveys and studies; *West of Devers: Cultural Resources Assessment and Class III Inventory* (LSA, 2013) and *Area of Potential Effects for the Engineering Refinements Survey and Recommendation of Eligibility for Cultural Resources with Southern California Edison Company's West of Devers Project* (ASM, 2015). The record search and survey results for the area were negative for cultural resources.

Geology and Soils: SCE conducted geotechnical studies to evaluate faults, landslides and unstable slopes, and soil characteristics as outlined in MMs G-1a, G-2a, and G-5a. The geotechnical survey reports were reviewed and approved by the CPUC on August 17, 2017. No additional impacts to geology and soils will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials: As required by MM HH-1a, SCE prepared and submitted a Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Plan to the CPUC on September 27, 2017. Hazardous materials used and stored on site for the duration of construction activities will be managed according to the Plan. A Soil Management Plan has been developed consistent with MMs HH-2a and HH-3a to provide guidance for the proper handling, onsite management, and disposal of impacted soil that might be encountered during construction activities, including soil samples to be collected in construction areas where the land has historically or is currently being used for agriculture and would be subject to ground disturbance by the Project. SCE's Soil Management Plan was combined with the Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Plan described above. Also, SCE's contractor submitted information including written procedures for fueling and maintenance of construction equipment and an Emergency Response Plan. No additional impacts from hazards or hazardous materials will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Land Use: As required by MM LU-1a, a Construction Notification Plan was prepared by SCE and approved by CPUC on May 22, 2017. The Plan identified the procedures to ensure that SCE will inform property and business owners of the location and duration of construction. The Plan includes provisions for public noticing including mailers, newspaper advertisements, public venue notices, and includes the establishment of a public liaison and toll-free information hotline. No additional impacts to land use will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Noise: BMPs for construction noise management will be implemented as outlined in MM N-1a to reduce construction noise exposure at noise-sensitive receptors and to avoid possible violations of local rules, standards, and ordinances during construction. Construction noise shall be confined to daytime, weekday hours (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) or an alternative schedule developed by SCE based on its coordination with the local jurisdiction(s). Construction traffic and helicopter flights shall be routed away from residences and schools, where feasible. No additional impacts to noise will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Paleontological Resources: The WOD Paleontological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (PRMMP) requires full-time, qualified paleontological construction monitoring in areas determined to have moderate (PFYC 3) to very high (PFYC 5) sensitivity. Sediments of unknown (PFYC U) sensitivity shall be monitored by a qualified paleontological monitor on a part-time basis and geologic units with very low (PFYC 1) or low (PFYC 2) sensitivity may be spot checked to confirm paleontological sensitivity.

The new work area is located in an area of low (PFYC 2) paleontological sensitivity and no excavation is anticipated. Therefore, no paleontological monitoring will be required.

Traffic and Transportation: Consistent with MM T-1a and MM T-1b, Construction Transportation and Traffic Control Plans have been developed and approved. The Construction Transportation Plan describes timing of commutes, methods of reducing crew-related traffic, and other methods for reducing

construction-generated additional traffic on regional and local roadways. No additional impacts to traffic and transportation will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Visual Resources: The proposed additional work areas described in this MPR are no different than what was described in NTP #4. No additional impacts to visual resources will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Water Resources: As required by MM WR-2a, SCE developed and submitted an Erosion Control Plan to the CPUC and BLM. The Erosion Control Plan was incorporated into the SWPPP, which is kept onsite and readily available on request. SCE submitted the SWPPP to the CPUC on May 25, 2017. Any changes necessitated by this MPR will be incorporated into the SWPPP document. No additional impacts to water resources will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

Wildland Fire: SCE submitted a Fire Management Plan on February 10, 2017 to satisfy the conditions of MM WF-1a and the Plan was approved by the CPUC on July 18, 2017. A revised Fire Management Plan was submitted by SCE on October 29, 2018, which was approved by the CPUC on October 30, 2018. The revised Plan was also approved by BLM and State and local fire agencies. No additional impacts to wildland fire will occur with the implementation of this MPR.

The conditions noted below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:

- SCE shall notify the CPUC and provide Collector data for the proposed work areas covered in this MPR prior to the start of construction activities.
- All applicable Project MMs, APMs, compliance plans, and permit conditions shall be implemented. Some measures have on-going/time-sensitive requirements and shall be implemented prior to and during construction where applicable.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, and this MPR shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities. All permits and plans shall be made available to the CPUC EM upon request.
- All crew members shall be WEAP trained prior to working on the Project. A log shall be maintained on-site with the names of all crew personnel trained. The WEAP training brochure can be provided in Spanish or other languages if appropriate. All participants will receive a hard-hat sticker for ease of compliance verification.
- No movement or staging of construction vehicles or equipment shall be allowed outside of the approved areas. If additional temporary workspace areas or access routes, or changes in technique and mitigation implementation to a lesser level are required, an MPR request shall be submitted for CPUC review.

Sincerely,



John Forsythe
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen