

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 PROPOSED PROJECT

### 1.1.1 Overview

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), a regulated California utility, filed an application with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on January 25, 2012, for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the Santa Cruz 115-kilovolt (kV) Reinforcement Project (proposed project). The application was deemed complete by the CPUC on April 24, 2012. PG&E is proposing to:

- Rebuild approximately 7.1 miles of the existing Green Valley-Camp Evers 115-kilovolt (kV) Power Line (**Northern Alignment**) from a single-circuit line to a double-circuit line by replacing the existing wood power poles with tubular steel poles (TSP) and installing new conductors
- Construct an approximately 1.7-mile long single-circuit 115-kV power line in an existing distribution right-of-way (ROW) (**Cox-Freedom Segment**) from the Northern Alignment to Rob Roy Substation
- Install new components at **Rob Roy Substation** in order to accommodate the new 115 kV circuit and install TSPs to accommodate the interconnection of the existing Green Valley-Rob Roy 115-kV Power Line and Rob Roy-Paul Sweet 115- kV Power Line into the modified Rob Roy Substation.

### 1.1.2 Project Objective

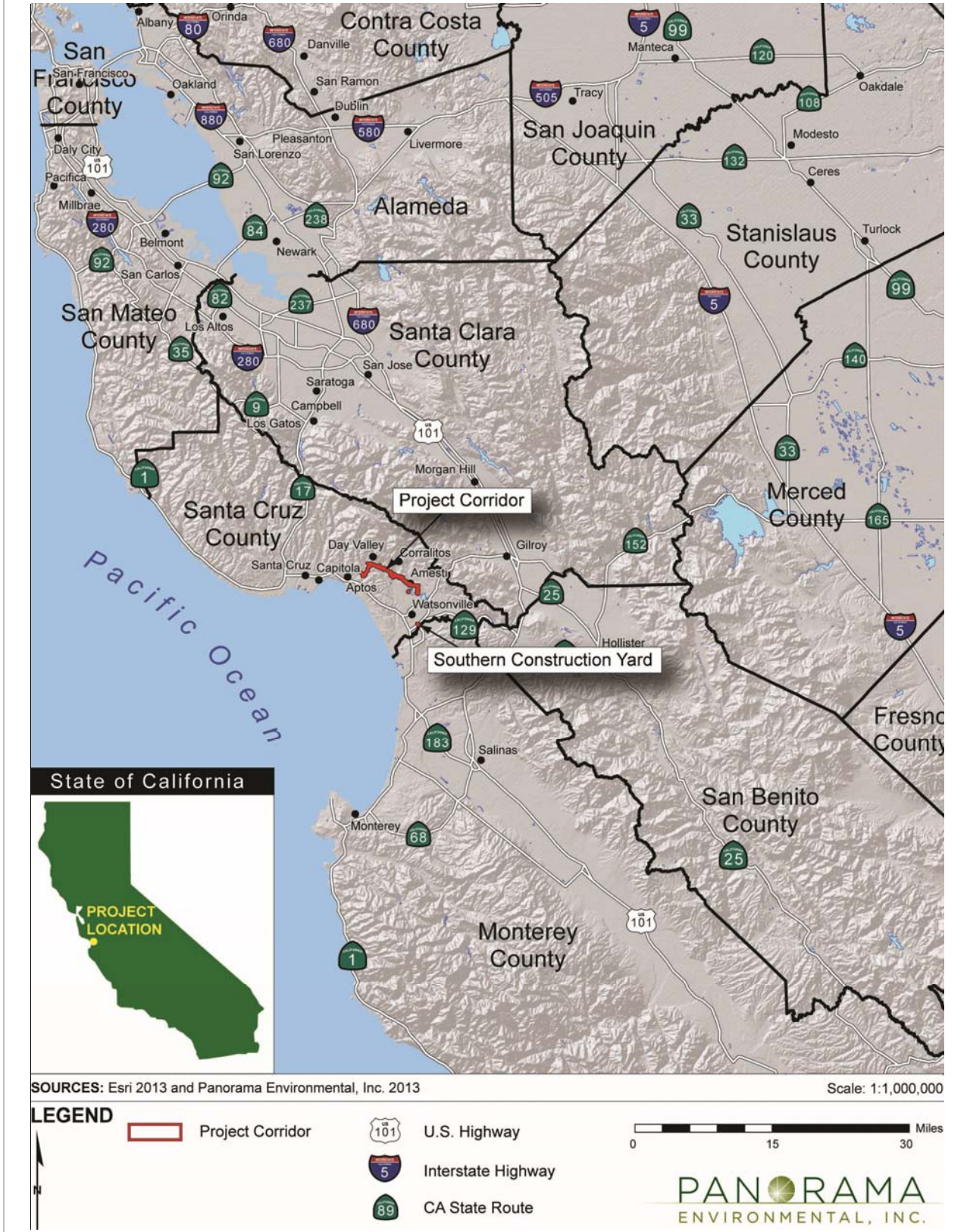
The proposed project would improve the reliability of the transmission system in the Santa Cruz area and thereby prevent potential large-scale service interruptions if there are outages in the existing local electricity supply system.

### 1.1.3 Project Location

The proposed project is located in an unincorporated area of Santa Cruz County, California, generally between the City of Watsonville and the unincorporated community of Aptos. The project corridor is aligned roughly northwest to southeast, generally parallel to and northeast of State Route 1 (SR-1). The existing power line connects the Green Valley Substation (located on Minto Road, about 0.25 miles east of Green Valley Road, north of the City of Watsonville) to the Rob Roy Substation (located on Freedom Boulevard about 0.6 miles north of SR-1 in unincorporated Aptos). The project corridor is shown in Figure 1.1-1.

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Figure 1.1-1: Proposed Project Location/Regional Map



## 1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

### 1.2.1 CEQA Process

This Initial Study (IS) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Res. Code § 21000 *et seq.*), the amended state CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15000 *et seq.*), and CPUC CEQA Rule 2.4 (CEQA Compliance). The purpose of this IS is to determine if the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, and provide the lead agency, the CPUC, with information to use as the basis for deciding whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Report or Negative Declaration.

### 1.2.2 CEQA Lead Agency

The CPUC is the lead agency for review of the proposed project under CEQA because it has the principal responsibility for approving the proposed project, *i.e.*, it must decide whether to approve or deny the PTC.

### 1.2.3 Initial Study

This IS presents an analysis of potential effects of the proposed project on the environment. This IS is based, in part, on information from PG&E's Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) and associated submittals, available online at [http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/panoramaenv/SantaCruz\\_115kVReinforcement/SantaCruz\\_115%20Reinforcement%20Project.html](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/panoramaenv/SantaCruz_115kVReinforcement/SantaCruz_115%20Reinforcement%20Project.html).

The proposed project could have direct and indirect impacts on the environment. The following environmental parameters were addressed in this IS based on the potential effects of the proposed project and the potential growth-inducing and cumulative effects of the proposed project in combination with other projects:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

This IS has been organized into the following sections:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction.** Provides an overview of the proposed project and the CEQA process.
- **Chapter 2: Project Description.** Presents the proposed project's objectives and provides an in-depth description of the proposed project, including construction details and methods.
- **Chapter 3: Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts.** Describes existing conditions, analyzes potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.
- **Chapter 4: References.** Lists the sources of information used to prepare the IS.
- **Chapter 5: Report Preparation.** Lists the preparers of the IS and identifies public agencies consulted during preparation of the IS.
- **Appendix A: Construction Emissions Calculations.** Includes calculations for air pollutant emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Appendix B: Santa Cruz Long-toed Salamander Habitat Assessment.** Assesses the suitability of the area to serve as Santa Cruz long-toed salamander habitat.
- **Appendix C: Relevant Santa Cruz County General Plan Policies.** Lists relevant policies from the Santa Cruz County General Plan.

### 1.4 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

During PG&E's project planning phase, the public and several agencies provided input after being notified of the proposed project, as described in Section 1.5 of the PEA. Notified agencies, municipalities, and organizations included the following:

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Native American Heritage Commission
- Santa Cruz County Planning Department
- Santa Cruz County Public Works Department
- Santa Cruz County Parks Department
- City of Scotts Valley
- City of Capitola
- City of Watsonville
- University of California, Santa Cruz

PG&E held public open houses on October 25, 2011, and October 27, 2011. Approximately thirty residents attended the open houses to discuss the proposed project with PG&E staff.

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Landowner concerns were primarily related to pole locations, notification to the public of the proposed project's design and construction, and construction scheduling.

The CPUC has received additional public concerns during preparation of this IS. Key concerns include visual impacts, impacts to biological resources, impacts to public safety, impacts to traffic safety, and consideration of alternative routes.

The CDFW, the USFWS, and Santa Cruz County Planning were consulted regarding the proposed project's impacts and protection measures for, among other species, the Santa Cruz long-toed salamander (a federally endangered and state fully protected species), bald eagles, other avian species, bats, Monterey spineflower, and heritage trees. Concerns regarding these resources are addressed in this IS.

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