

D. Environmental Analysis

D.1 Introduction to Environmental Analysis

D.1.1 Introduction/Background

Section D of this DEIR examines the environmental consequences associated with the Project. This section is divided into 15 subsections, each dedicated to a single environmental resource. They are as follows:

D.2	Land Use	D.9	Recreation
D.3	Visual Resources	D.10	Air Quality
D.4	Biological Resources	D.11	Noise and Vibration
D.5	Cultural Resources	D.12	Transportation and Traffic
D.6	Geology, Soils, and Paleontology	D.13	Public Services and Utilities
D.7	Hydrology and Water Quality	D.14	Agriculture
D.8	Hazards and Hazardous Materials	D.15	Population and Housing

Each subsection includes the following topics, discussed in the order listed below:

- Environmental Setting
- Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards
- Project Impacts and Mitigation
- Cumulative Impacts

Significance criteria, as set forth in the CEQA Environmental Checklist (Appendix G) and CPUC policy, are identified for each environmental resource area. The significance criteria serve as a benchmark for determining if a project would result in significant adverse environmental impacts when evaluated against the baseline or existing environmental conditions. Issues that were raised during the scoping process are also addressed in the relevant resources subsection throughout the DEIR.

Analysis within each issue area includes consideration of the following components of the Project:

- Valley-Ivyglen 115 kV Subtransmission Line (“proposed subtransmission line”)
- Telecommunications system
- Fogarty Substation
- Improvements at Valley and Ivyglen Substations

D.1.2 Environmental Assessment Methodology

D.1.2.1 Environmental Setting for the Proposed Project

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 (January 2008). The analysis of each issue area begins with an examination of the existing physical setting that may be affected by the Project. Establishing an environmental setting provides a

baseline for assessing potential adverse impacts. The impacts are defined as changes to the environmental setting that are attributable to project construction and operation.

Literature sources reviewed include published technical reports, internet resources, and data from government sources. References are listed in Section I. Fieldwork included cultural and biological resources surveys. Ecology and Environment, Inc. (E & E) conducted a third-party review of all technical information submitted to the County by the Applicant for this DEIR.

D.1.2.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

Regulatory policies and requirements may determine the nature, extent, and legality of activities and can affect numerous factors such as location, allowable area of impact, work practices, schedule, mitigation, and agency consultation. They may also specify permits and benchmarks necessary for authorization of development projects. Existing federal, state, and local agency laws, regulations, plans and standards were reviewed and summarized to identify those applicable to the Project.

D.1.2.3 Project Impact and Mitigation

The DEIR evaluates the environmental consequences and potential impacts that the Project and the alternatives would create. The impacts identified were compared with predetermined, specific significance criteria and were classified according to significance. The DEIR also evaluates Mitigation Measures designed to reduce minimize or avoid significant adverse impacts.

Significance Criteria. The significance criteria, as set forth in the CEQA Environmental Check List as modified by CPUC policy, are identified for each environmental issue area and serve as a benchmark for determining if a project would result in significant adverse environmental impacts when evaluated against the baseline. According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a significant effect on the environment means "...a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project..."

While the criteria for determining significant impacts are unique to each issue area, the classification of the impacts was uniformly applied in accordance with the following definitions:

- Class III – Less than significant impact without mitigation measures
- Class II – Less than significant impact after mitigation measures are implemented
- Class I – Significant impact and no feasible mitigation measures are available

Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs). The Applicant has incorporated into the Project a number of measures and procedures to avoid or reduce adverse impacts. In the assessment of the impacts, these measures have been assumed to be part of the Project and are not included as 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 issue area (such as air quality, biology, etc.) are listed in the section addressing that issue area.

Impacts Analysis. Based on significance criteria, the DEIR examines the direct and indirect effects of the Project on the physical environment. The impact analysis sets a context to the impact by defining the affected geographic area. Additionally, the analysis measures the intensity or severity of the impact according to the Class ranking system outlined above.

If the Project would result in significant impacts, feasible mitigation measures are identified to eliminate or reduce the impacts. Under CEQA, compliance with laws, regulations, ordinances, and standards designed to reduce impacts to less than significant levels are not considered mitigation measures. CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4 (a) (3) states that mitigation measures are not required for effects that are not found to be significant. Therefore, where an impact is less than significant, no mitigation measures have been identified.

D.1.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

As individual effects may result not just from a single project but from the collective changes of two or more separate projects, the DEIR evaluates the Project's cumulative impacts when considered in conjunction with other projects in the area, both current and planned. The focus in the cumulative impact analyses 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 projects.