1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Document

This Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to provide information on the environmental impacts of the South Orange County Reliability Enhancement Project (proposed project), reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, and methods to mitigate or avoid significant or adverse environmental impacts. The responses to comments contained in this document provide clarification of the content of the Draft EIR (February 2015) and Recirculated Draft EIR (August 2015), including the project description, the assessment of impacts associated with the proposed project, and mitigation measures that will address those impacts. This Final EIR will be used by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, to inform the commissioners' decisions on San Diego Gas & Electric Company's (SDG&E's, or the applicant's) application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for the South Orange County Reliability Enhancement Project (proposed project). The CPUC will determine the adequacy of this Final EIR and, if it is found to be adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA.

1.2 Background

SDG&E filed an application (No. A.12-05-020), including a Proponent's Environmental Assessment, with the CPUC on May 18, 2012, for a CPCN to construct the proposed project. The proposed project would serve customers within the applicant's South Orange County Service Area and would include:

- A rebuilt 230/138/12-kilovolt (kV) substation (proposed San Juan Capistrano Substation) at the location of the existing 138/12-kV Capistrano Substation site in San Juan Capistrano, California;
- The construction of a new double-circuit 230-kV transmission line (approximately 7.8 miles long) from the proposed San Juan Capistrano Substation to the applicant's 230/138/69-kV Talega Substation within an existing transmission line corridor;
- The relocation of several transmission line segments (approximately 1.8 miles total) adjacent to Talega and Capistrano Substations to accommodate the proposed expansion of Capistrano Substation and new 230-kV line; and
- The relocation of several 12-kV distribution line segments (approximately 6 miles) into underground conduit and overhead on existing and new structures located between Capistrano Substation and Prima Deshecha Landfill.

The CPUC deemed the application complete on January 7, 2013. The CPUC released a Draft EIR for the proposed project on February 19, 2015, for public review and comment. The Draft EIR addressed:

- Background and objectives of the proposed project;
- Description of proposed project
- Process of evaluating alternatives;
- Analysis and assessment of impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed project;

- Relative advantages and disadvantages of the proposed project and alternatives (including the No Project Alternative), and identification of the CEQA Environmentally Superior Alternative;
- Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects within the cumulative study area that may be constructed or commence operation during the timeframe of activity associated with the proposed project; and
- Other CEQA considerations.

The CPUC received comments on the Draft EIR during the 45-day period starting February 23, 2015, and ending April 10, 2015.

In response to public comments on the Draft EIR, a new alternative was identified. A Recirculated Draft EIR was prepared to evaluate this new alternative—Alternative J - SCE 230-kV Loop-in to Trabuco Substation—and additional significant impacts on biological resources, cultural resources, and land use and planning from construction and operation of the proposed project that were not previously disclosed in the Draft EIR. On August 10, 2015, the CPUC released a Recirculated Draft EIR for the proposed project. Consistent with Section 15088.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, the Recirculated Draft EIR only included chapters of the Draft EIR that were revised with new information. The Recirculated Draft EIR included the following chapters:

- 3.0, "Description of Alternatives"
- 4.04, "Biological Resources"
- 4.05, "Cultural Resources"
- 4.10, "Land Use and Planning"
- 5.0, "Comparison of Alternatives"

1.3 Organization of the Final EIR

This Final EIR contains four chapters and one exhibit, as described below.

- **Chapter 1, "Introduction" –** Introduces the Final EIR, summarizing the project description and background and final significant finding.
- **Chapter 2, "Public Review Process" –** Summarizes the public review process for the Draft and Recirculated Draft EIRs.
- **Chapter 3, "Comments and Response" –** Lists agencies, organizations, and members of the public that commented on the Draft EIR and Recirculated Draft EIR, comments received during the Draft EIR and Recirculated Draft EIR public review periods, and responses to these comments.
- **Chapter 4, "Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance Program" –** Presents a Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance Program. All mitigation measures are shown in their final form.
- **Chapter 5, "References" –** Lists the references cited in the Final EIR portion of the document
- **Exhibit 1, "Draft EIR" –** Presents changes made to the Draft EIR text, tables, and figures in response to comments and responses. This exhibit incorporates chapters of the Draft EIR that

were revised and recirculated in the Recirculated Draft EIR. Strikethrough and underlining that was shown in the Recirculated Draft EIR has been removed. Appendices A, B, and E through O of the Draft EIR have been included in this Final EIR in electronic format only (see enclosed CD). Additionally, the following appendices have been added to the EIR:

- Appendix P, "Draft EIR and Recirculated Draft EIR Public Participation Summary Report"
- Appendix Q, "Revised Traffic Memo and Applicant's Draft Traffic Control Plan"
- Appendix R, "Electric Engineering Memo"
- Appendix S, "National Register of Historic Places Correspondence and Applicant's Preservation Alternative"

The contents of this Final EIR meet the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15132, which states that the Final EIR must contain the following:

a. The draft EIR or a revision of the draft (see Exhibit 1);
b. Comments and recommendations received on the draft EIR either verbatim or in summary (see Chapter 3, "Comments and Responses");
c. A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the draft EIR (see Chapter 2, "Public Review Process");
d. The response of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process (see Chapter 3, "Comments and Responses"); and
e. Any other information added by the Lead Agency (see Exhibit 1).

1.4 Objectives of the Proposed Project

The purpose and objectives of the proposed project are further discussed in Chapter 1, "Introduction" of Exhibit 1. The basic objectives of the proposed project are to:

1. Reduce the risk of instances that could result in the loss of power to customers served by the South Orange County 138-kV System through the 10-year planning horizon;
2. Replace inadequate equipment at Capistrano Substation; and
3. Redistribute power flow of the applicant's South Orange County 138-kV System such that operational flexibility is increased.

1.5 Significant Impacts of the Proposed Project

Based on the revised analysis in Chapter 4 "Environmental Analysis" presented in Exhibit 1, the proposed project would have significant impacts on the following resources:

- **Air Quality** – Construction of the proposed project would result in exceedance of South Coast Air Quality Management District regional significance thresholds and local significance thresholds and would result in a cumulatively significant impact on ambient air quality during construction activities (see Chapter 4.3 "Air Quality" in Exhibit 1).

- **Cultural Resources** – Construction of the proposed project would partially demolish a property that is potentially eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (Chapter 4.5 "Cultural Resources" in Exhibit 1).

The proposed project would also have significant impact on the following resources; however, implementation of mitigation measures would reduce these impacts to less than significant.

- Aesthetics
- Biological Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Transportation and Traffic

1.6 Environmentally Superior Alternative

The No Project Alternative (Alternative A) would be environmentally superior for all environmental resources. However, when the Environmentally Superior Alternative is the No Project Alternative, CEQA requires the identification of an Environmentally Superior Alternative among the other alternatives (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6). Therefore, based on the analysis presented in Chapter 5, "Comparison of Alternatives" in Exhibit 1, Alternative J - SCE 230-kV Loop-in to Trabuco Substation was found to be the Environmentally Superior Alternative compared to the proposed project and to the other alternatives.