2.17 Mandatory Findings of Significance

Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):		*Potentially Significant Impact*	*Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
17. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE					
a)	Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b)	Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c)	Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

Mandatory Findings of Significance Discussion

a) Potential to degrade the quality of the environment: *Less than significant with mitigation*.

The Proposed Project would result in less than significant or no impacts to *Agriculture Resources; Air Quality; Geology, Soils, and Seismicity; Hydrology and Water Quality; Land Use, Plans, and Policies; Mineral Resources; Population and Housing; Recreation; Transportation; and Utilities and Services*, and so would not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment related to those resources. As discussed in the *Aesthetics, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Public Services* sections of this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Proposed Project would result in potentially significant temporary construction and/or operational impacts that would have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment. However, adoption and implementation of mitigation measures described in this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration would reduce these individual impacts to less than significant levels.

As described in Section 2.4, *Biological Resources*, the Proposed Project would have the potential to: result in the take or harassment of the northern red-legged frog, which is listed as a California species of concern; result in the direct loss of bird nests, death of young, or loss of reproductive potential at active nests of special status bird species; detrimentally affect special status species utilizing the proposed site, through the

temporary and permanent removal of existing vegetation; and result in the inadvertent electrocution of raptors and other special status bird species. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.4-1 through 2.4-4 identified in Section 2.4 would reduce these impacts to less than significant levels.

Section 2.5, *Cultural Resources*, concludes that the Proposed Project would have the potential to change the significance of currently unknown cultural resources, adversely affect unidentified paleontologic resources, and could result in damage to previously unidentified human remains. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.5-1 through 2.5-3 would reduce such impacts to less than significant levels. Additionally, there would be no direct impacts to known cultural resources during construction of the Proposed Project. There are no known areas of cultural significance located within the Proposed Project study area.

b) Impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable: *Less than significant with mitigation*.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130 requires a discussion of the cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is "cumulatively considerable," meaning that the project's incremental effects are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects. The cumulative impacts discussion does not need to provide as much detail as is provided in the analysis of project-specific impacts and should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15130(b) identifies the following three elements that are necessary for an adequate cumulative analysis:

- A list of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including those projects outside the control of the Lead Agency; or a summary of projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions. This information is provided in Table 2.17-1.

- A summary of expected environmental effects to be produced by those projects. The summary shall include specific reference to additional information stating where that information is available.

- A reasonable analysis of the cumulative impacts of the relevant projects, and an examination of reasonable options for mitigating or avoiding any significant cumulative effects of a proposed project.

TABLE 2.17-1
CUMULATIVE PROJECTS WITHIN THE VICINITY OF THE PROPOSED MORRISON CREEK SUBSTATION PROJECT

APN or Project Name	Description	Address / Location	Agency / Organization	Details / Status	Distance from Proposed Project
Beckstead Meadows – Major Subdivision	Subdivision that will include 78 single-family residential parcels and other parcels.	North side of U.S. Highway 101 at Beckstead Avenue.	Del Norte County	Planning Commission approved the project in May 2005. Developer is currently working to get approval from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). A construction schedule is not available.	Approximately one half mile to the northwest of the Proposed Project site.
Mendes – Minor Subdivision	Minor subdivision of two parcels to four parcels.	West side of U.S. Highway 101 at Wilson Lane.	Del Norte County	Planning Commission approved the project in 2007. Applicant is working with Caltrans to obtain encroachments. Project should be complete by Fall of 2008.	Approximately one mile south-southeast of the Proposed Project site.
Smith River Left-Turn Channelization Safety Project	Construction of left-turn lanes and shoulder widening along 2.3 miles of U.S. Highway 101.	U.S. Highway 101 north of Smith River, between Indian Road and approximately one half mile north of Ocean View Drive.	California Department of Transportation	Project is currently under construction. Construction is estimated to be complete by November 2008.	The closest portion of the project is approximately four miles to the northwest of the Proposed Project site.

SOURCES: Caltrans, 2007; Del Norte County, 2007; and OPR, 2007.

Del Norte County and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) were contacted for information on projects within their jurisdiction. Two subdivision projects and a highway improvement project that could combine with the Proposed Project to result in a cumulative impact are shown in Table 2.17-1. These projects are in the general geographic area of the Proposed Project. The projects listed in Table 2.17-1 are considered reasonably likely to be constructed and/or operated during a similar timeframe as the Proposed Project. The projects are examined in light of their potential to contribute to short-term, construction-related effects as well as long-term operational effects in conjunction with the Proposed Project. It is anticipated that construction of the Proposed Project would last approximately three months. Projects within the vicinity of the Proposed Project study area were evaluated in this analysis of cumulative impacts. No past projects were identified that would not already be included in the baseline conditions considered in the evaluation of the Proposed Project.

Short-Term Construction-Related Effects

In conjunction with the Proposed Project, several short-term construction-related cumulative impacts may occur. These potential impacts include cumulative impacts to air quality, cultural resources, hydrology and water quality, noise, and traffic.

Air Quality

The Proposed Project study area is in attainment or unclassified status for all of the NAAQS and CAAQS, with the exception of the CAAQS for PM_{10}. As described in Section 2.3, *Air Quality*, long-term operations of the Proposed Project would result in negligible emissions, which would not be cumulatively considerable. Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project could have a temporary impact on local air quality through short-term increases in criteria pollutant exhaust emissions (e.g., NO_x, ROG, CO, SO_2, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$) and fugitive dust, which could have a cumulative effect when combined with the other projects described in Table 2.17-1. However, the Proposed Project's temporary air quality construction impacts would be less than significant because the Proposed Project's contribution to the cumulative impact would not be considerable. Temporary emissions of CO_2 , which is a greenhouse gas emission, would also be generated during construction activities; however, given the short-term nature of construction activities, these emissions would not be cumulatively considerable. As a result, the Proposed Project would not have a significant cumulative air quality impact.

Cultural Resources

Section 2.5, *Cultural Resources,* concludes that the Proposed Project would have the potential to impact previously unknown archeological and paleontological resources and damage previously unidentified human remains. This impact could be cumulatively considerable when combined with impacts of the cumulative projects identified in Table 2.17-1. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.5-1 through 2.5-3 would reduce such impacts to less than significant levels. Additionally, there would be no direct

impacts to known cultural resources during construction of the Proposed Project. There are no known areas of cultural significance located within the Proposed Project study area. Therefore, construction of the Proposed Project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to cultural or historical resources.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project, as described in Section 2.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, would have a less than significant impact to water quality because the Proposed Project would be required to implement specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control soil erosion and entrainment of sediment in stormwater runoff associated with disturbance of soil at work areas. Implementation of these water quality protection measures as part of the Proposed Project would ensure that the Proposed Project's contribution to water quality degradation would not be cumulatively considerable when combined with impacts of the cumulative projects identified in Table 2.17-1. Similarly, the Proposed Project would have a less than significant impact to groundwater quality and no impact regarding flooding, and these issues would also not be cumulatively considerable in combination with the other cumulative projects. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have a significant cumulative hydrology or water quality impact.

Noise

Equipment used during construction activities would temporarily increase short-term noise levels in the Proposed Project study area. However, it is unlikely that the Proposed Project, in conjunction with the other projects listed in Table 2.17-1, would have the potential to contribute to a cumulative noise impact because construction of the cumulative projects would not likely occur close enough to the Proposed Project such that the construction noise would overlap. Therefore, since construction noise associated with the various projects would not likely overlap geographically; no cumulative noise impact would occur. In addition, implementation of Mitigation Measure 2.11-1 identified in Section 2.11, *Noise*, would ensure that the Proposed Project's construction-related noise impacts would be less than cumulatively considerable (i.e., because the Proposed Project would mitigate its contribution to the cumulative impact). As a result, the Proposed Project would not have a significant cumulative noise impact.

Transportation/Traffic

Proposed Project construction activities, as described in Section 2.15, *Transportation and Traffic*, could have a temporary construction-related impact on local traffic flow in the Proposed Project study area. In conjunction with other construction projects identified in Table 2.17-1, especially the Smith River Left-Turn Channelization Safety Project, potential cumulative impacts could occur. However, the cumulative projects would occur from one-half to four miles away from the Proposed Project, so the Proposed Project's

contribution to transportation and traffic-related cumulative impacts would not be considerable and cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

Long-Term Operational Effects

As documented in the foregoing sections of this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, the operation of the Proposed Project would not result in the potential for any individually significant impacts with the exception of aesthetics and biological resources, which are discussed below.

For *Aesthetics*, the operations of the Proposed Project would impact scenic resources along U.S. Highway 101, an eligible State scenic highway and a County designated scenic corridor, and the proposed substation could cause glare reflected from the new substation equipment. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.1-1 and 2.1-2 would reduce these impacts to less than significant levels. The cumulative projects listed in Table 2.17-1 are one-half to four miles distant from the Proposed Project site and so would not result in cumulative changes to the study area. Therefore, the impact of the Proposed Project to aesthetic resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

For *Biological Resources*, the operational impact of the Proposed Project would be limited to the potential for the new tap line and substation to result in the inadvertent electrocution and collision of raptors and other special status bird species. The cumulative projects listed in Table 2.17-1 would be unlikely to result in any increased risk of electrocution and collisions because they would not include construction of electric transmission facilities, so the impact of the Proposed Project would not be cumulatively considerable.

c) Environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly: *Less than significant with mitigation*.

Project impacts include the potential for an accidental release of hazardous materials stored at the staging area and used during the construction of the Proposed Project that could enter nearby waterways, adjacent lands, or public roadways. In addition, construction activities could ignite dry vegetation and start a fire. With implementation of Mitigation Measures 2.7-1a through 2.7-1e, 2.7-2, and 2.7-3 provided in Section 2.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, the Proposed Project would not result in environmental effects that could cause adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Temporary and long-term impacts to human beings through degradation of local air quality and noise could occur during project construction and operations. However, Proposed Project impacts would result in less than significant adverse effects on human beings. Therefore, impacts would not be cumulatively considerable and cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

References – Mandatory Findings of Significance

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2007. Personal communication with Carl Brown, Caltrans District 1 Construction Manager, October 26, 2007.

Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR). 2007. *Query the CEQAnet Database* website (http://www.ceqanet.ca.gov/QueryForm.asp?) on October 29, 2007.

Del Norte County. 2007. Personal communication with Heidi Kunstal, Planner, Del Norte County Planning Department, October 22, 2007.