

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has prepared this Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) to provide the public, responsible agencies, and trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of construction and operation of NextEra Energy Transmission West's (NEET West's) proposed Suncrest Dynamic Reactive Power Support Project (Proposed Project). The Proposed Project would involve construction of a dynamic reactive device and an approximately one-mile-long transmission line interconnecting with the existing Suncrest Substation in San Diego County, near the community of Alpine. The Proposed Project is described in detail in Chapter 2, *Project Description*.

This document was prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, as amended (CEQA), and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations 15000 et seq.). This chapter describes the requirements of CEQA, the CEQA process, the organization of the DEIR, and how to submit comments on the DEIR.

### 1.1 Overview of CEQA Requirements

CEQA's basic purposes are to:

1. Inform governmental decision-makers and the public about the potential, significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
2. Identify the ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced.
3. Prevent significant, avoidable damage to the environment by requiring implementation of feasible mitigation measures or project alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant effects that a project would have on the environment.
4. Disclose to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved the project in the manner the agency chose if significant environmental effects are involved.

With certain strictly limited exceptions, CEQA requires all state and local government agencies to consider the environmental consequences of projects over which they have discretionary authority before approving or carrying out projects. CEQA establishes both procedural and substantive requirements that agencies must satisfy to meet CEQA's objectives. For example, the agency with principal responsibility for approving or carrying out a project (the lead agency) must first assess whether a proposed project would result in significant environmental impacts. If there is substantial evidence that the project would result in significant environmental impacts, CEQA requires that the agency prepare an environmental impact report (EIR), analyzing both the proposed project and a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives.

1 As described in the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code Regulations, tit. 14, § 15121, subd.  
2 (a)), an EIR is an informational document that assesses potential environmental effects of a  
3 proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures and alternatives to the project that  
4 could reduce or avoid potentially significant environmental impacts. Other key CEQA  
5 requirements include developing a plan for implementing and monitoring the success of the  
6 identified mitigation measures and carrying out specific public notice and distribution steps  
7 to facilitate public involvement in the environmental review process. As an informational  
8 document used in the planning and decision-making process, an EIR's purpose is not to  
9 recommend either approval or denial of a project. Note that an EIR does not expand or  
10 otherwise provide independent authority of the lead agency to impose mitigation measures  
11 or avoid project-related significant environmental impacts beyond the authority already  
12 within the lead agency's jurisdiction.

## 13 **1.2 Intent and Scope of this Document**

14 CPUC is responsible for permitting of NEET West's Proposed Project. Approval or denial of  
15 NEET West's Application 15-08-027 for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity  
16 would constitute a discretionary action by CPUC and therefore is subject to environmental  
17 review under CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines § 15378). The intent of this document is to  
18 comply with CEQA and to provide decision-makers and the public with information on the  
19 potential significant environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. This DEIR evaluates  
20 potential impacts to the physical environment that could occur from construction and  
21 operation of the Proposed Project, pursuant to Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines.  
22 CPUC will use the analyses presented in this DEIR, the public response to it and the whole of  
23 the administrative record, to evaluate the Proposed Project's environmental impacts and to  
24 further modify, approve, or deny approval of the Proposed Project.

## 25 **1.3 CEQA Process**

26 The following discussion explains the steps in the CEQA process undertaken or planned to be  
27 undertaken for the Proposed Project. The State CEQA Guidelines prescribe a number of key  
28 steps in the environmental review and public involvement process, which are described  
29 below.

### 30 **1.3.1 Notice of Preparation**

31 A Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR for the Proposed Project was prepared pursuant to  
32 the State CEQA Guidelines (State CEQA Guidelines § 15082) and circulated to the Office of  
33 Planning and Research's State CEQA Clearinghouse on January 5, 2016. Circulation of the NOP  
34 initiated the scoping period for the Proposed Project, during which time agencies and  
35 interested members of the public could submit comments on the scope and content of  
36 environmental issues to be evaluated in the DEIR. The scoping period continued for 34 days  
37 and concluded on February 8, 2016.

38 The NOP presented general background information on the Proposed Project, the scoping  
39 process, the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR, and the anticipated uses of the  
40 EIR. The NOP was posted online, and more than 250 hard copies of the NOP were distributed  
41 by mail to a broad range of stakeholders including state, federal, and local regulatory agencies

1 and jurisdictions, Native American tribes, and property owners in the vicinity of the Proposed  
2 Project. The NOP is included in this DEIR in Appendix A, *Notice of Preparation*.

### 3 **1.3.2 Scoping Meetings and Comments**

4 During the scoping period, a scoping meeting was held at a location near the Proposed Project  
5 to provide the public, and responsible and trustee agencies, an opportunity to ask questions  
6 and submit comments on the scope of the EIR and the Proposed Project. Information on the  
7 location, date, and time of the scoping meeting was contained in the NOP, which was  
8 distributed to property owners near the Proposed Project. Additionally, CPUC published  
9 notices in the local newspaper, the Alpine Sun, and in the San Diego Union-Tribune  
10 advertising the scoping meeting in advance of the meeting. The scoping meeting also was  
11 advertised on the CPUC's project website at the following URL: [http://cpuc.ca.gov/  
12 environment/info/horizonh2o/suncrest/index.html](http://cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/horizonh2o/suncrest/index.html).

13 The scoping meeting was held as follows:

- 14       ▪ January 21, 2016, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., at the Alpine Community Center, 1830 Alpine  
15 Blvd., Alpine, CA 91901.

16 Besides CPUC and contractor staff, approximately 9 individuals attended the scoping  
17 meeting, including two members of the applicant (i.e., NEET West) team. The meeting format  
18 consisted of a presentation by CPUC and consultant staff followed by opportunities for  
19 attendees to ask questions and submit comments. Posters with basic information on the  
20 project were on display and CPUC and consultant staff were available before and after the  
21 meeting to answer questions and take comments. Written comment cards were provided to  
22 all meeting attendees, as well as information on how to access project documents and  
23 participate in the public review process going forward. Notes from the meeting documenting  
24 the concerns and comments expressed by attendees are included in Appendix B, *Comments  
25 Received on the Notice of Preparation*. Copies of the PowerPoint presentation, posters, and  
26 written comment card are provided in Appendix C, *Scoping Report*.

27 CPUC accepted written comments at the meetings, as well as during the 30-day scoping  
28 period. During the scoping period, 10 comment letters were received. These comment letters  
29 have been included in this DEIR as Appendix B, *Comments Received on the Notice of  
30 Preparation*. This DEIR considers the input from the comments submitted on the Proposed  
31 Project during the scoping period.

### 32 **1.3.3 Draft Environmental Impact Report**

33 CPUC has prepared this DEIR, as informed by public and agency input received during the  
34 scoping period, to disclose potentially significant environmental impacts associated with the  
35 Proposed Project. Where any such impacts are significant, feasible mitigation measures and  
36 potentially feasible alternatives that substantially lessen or avoid such effects are identified  
37 and discussed. Publication of this DEIR initiates a 45-day public review period as mandated  
38 by CEQA. The public review period provides the public an opportunity to provide input to the  
39 lead agency on the DEIR.

### 1 **1.3.4 Public Review and Meetings**

2 During the public review period for this DEIR, CPUC will hold one public meeting in Alpine.  
3 The meeting will begin with a brief overview of the Proposed Project and the analysis and  
4 conclusions set forth in the DEIR. This introductory presentation will then be followed by the  
5 opportunity for interested members of the public to provide oral and written comments to  
6 CPUC regarding the Proposed Project and the DEIR. Commenters may provide oral or written  
7 comments, or both.

8 The date, time, and exact location of the public meeting will be published in local newspapers  
9 prior to the events and are included in the Notice of Availability of this DEIR.

### 10 **1.3.5 Final EIR**

11 Written and oral comments received in response to the DEIR will be addressed in a Response  
12 to Comments document which, together with the DEIR and any related changes to the  
13 substantive discussion in the DEIR, will constitute the Final EIR. The Final EIR, in turn, will  
14 inform CPUC's exercise of its discretion as a lead agency under CEQA in deciding whether or  
15 how to approve NEET West's Proposed Project.

## 16 **1.4 Organization of this DEIR**

17 This DEIR contains the following components:

### 18 **Volume I – Main Body**

19 *Executive Summary.* This chapter provides a summary of the Proposed Project, a  
20 description of the issues of concern and project alternatives, and a summary of  
21 environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

22 Chapter 1, *Introduction.* This chapter describes the purpose and organization of the DEIR  
23 and its preparation, review, and certification process.

24 Chapter 2, *Project Description.* This chapter summarizes the Proposed Project, including  
25 a description of the Proposed Project purpose and objectives, a brief description of the  
26 Proposed Project area, proposed actions that would be taken under the Proposed Project,  
27 and related permits and approvals associated with the activity.

28 Chapter 3, *Introduction to the Environmental Impacts.* This chapter is an introduction to  
29 the impact analysis conducted in this DEIR. This chapter also identifies resource topic  
30 areas determined not to be affected by the Proposed Project.

31 Chapters 4-19. These chapters describe the environmental resources and potential  
32 environmental impacts of the Proposed Project. Each of these chapters describes the  
33 existing setting and background information for the resource topic area under  
34 consideration to aid the reader in understanding the conditions that could be affected by  
35 the Proposed Project. In addition, each of these chapters includes a discussion of the  
36 criteria used in determining the significance levels of the Proposed Project's  
37 environmental impacts. Each of these chapters also provides mitigation measures to  
38 reduce, where possible, the adverse effects of potentially significant impacts.

1 Chapter 20, *Alternatives*. This chapter describes the process by which alternatives to the  
2 Proposed Project were developed and screened, evaluates their likely environmental  
3 impacts, and identifies the environmentally superior alternative.

4 Chapter 21, *Other Statutory Considerations*. This chapter addresses the Proposed Project's  
5 potential to contribute to cumulative impacts. Chapter 21 also outlines the Proposed  
6 Project's potential to induce growth and identifies significant, irreversible environmental  
7 changes resulting from the Project.

8 Chapter 22, *Report Preparation*, lists the individuals involved in preparing this DEIR.

9 Chapter 23, *References*, provides a bibliography of printed references, websites, and  
10 personal communications used in preparing this DEIR.

## 11 **Volume II – Appendices**

12 Appendix A is the NOP issued by CPUC.

13 Appendix B includes comments received on the NOP.

14 Appendix C is the scoping report prepared for the Proposed Project, including the  
15 materials used during the scoping meetings and the comments received on the NOP.

16 Appendix D is the electric and magnetic fields management plan.

17 Appendix E contains the air quality and greenhouse gas emission calculations.

18 Appendix F is biological resources supporting documentation

19 Appendix G presents the technical report for the cultural resources analysis, including  
20 Native American consultation, and telephone and e-mail communications, conducted  
21 during document preparation.

22 Appendix H is the geotechnical investigation report.

23 Appendix I presents the Phase 1 environmental site assessment for the project site.

24 Appendix J presents noise data and related photographs.

25 Appendix K is a fire protection plan.

26 Appendix L provides a mitigation monitoring and report plan.

## 27 **1.5 Submittal of Comments**

28 CPUC is circulating this DEIR for a 48-day public review and comment period that will end on  
29 Friday, January 10, 2017. As discussed above, CPUC will host one public meeting during this  
30 period where oral and written comments will be received. The purpose of public circulation  
31 and the public meetings is to provide agencies and interested individuals with opportunities  
32 to comment on or express concerns regarding the contents of this DEIR. Specific dates, times

1 and locations for this meeting will be provided in the Notice of Availability, on CPUC's project  
2 website (see uniform resource locator above), and via other methods.

3 Written comments concerning this DEIR can be submitted at the public meetings described  
4 above or at any time during the DEIR public review period. All comments must be received  
5 by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, January 10, 2017, directed to the name and address listed below:

6 Robert Peterson  
7 c/o Tom Engels, Horizon Water and Environment  
8 180 Grand Avenue, Suite 1405  
9 Oakland, CA 94612

10 Email: [suncrestproject@horizonh2o.com](mailto:suncrestproject@horizonh2o.com)

11 Submittal of written comments via e-mail is preferred. Written comments received in  
12 response to this DEIR during the public review period will be addressed in a Response to  
13 Comments section of the Final EIR.

14 All documents mentioned herein or related to this Project can be reviewed online at the  
15 following website: <http://cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/horizonh2o/suncrest/index.html>.