

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



June 06, 2012

Mr. Mark Cassady
TRC, Inc.
Senior Biologist
405 Clyde Avenue
Mountain View, CA 94043

Subject: Atascadero - San Luis Obispo 70kV Power Line Reconductoring Project Variance Request #10 for use of alternate overland access routes and additional workspace

Dear Mr. Cassady:

I have reviewed Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) submission of Variance Request #10, which was submitted on May 30, 2012 for the Atascadero - San Luis Obispo 70kV Power Line Reconductoring Project (Project).

The CPUC has determined that adding the proposed alternate routes, as well as additional work space adjacent to low water crossing points S2a and S2b (crossing point names used from CDFG Stream Bed Alteration Agreement – shown in attached figure), would not have new significant impacts or greater environmental impacts than those analyzed in the approved Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Project, pursuant to the description, analysis, and conditions presented in this letter.

Proposed Actions

PG&E proposes to use alternate overland access routes located in the southern portion of the Eagle Ranch property in Atascadero, which would eliminate the need to install a temporary culvert and low water crossing point (S1 east of Pole 62/15), as well as a temporary bridge (S2c west of Pole 63/9). The proposed changes would result in the addition of 4 overland access road segments, offsetting the need to use the same distance of the pasture road, and two low water crossing points.

The proposed overland access road changes include the addition of a segment from Atascadero Road through a new proposed gate to an existing dirt road just south, as well as three other overland routes which would be added to access poles 63/9, 63/9A, and 63/10 from the side of Southbound Highway 101 (shown in attached Variance Request #10).

In addition to alternate access roads, PG&E proposes adding extra workspace around low water crossing points S2a and S2b (shown in attached Variance Request #10) to safely maneuver equipment during bridge placement and vehicle crossing. The additional workspace is also located on the Eagle Ranch property and would be used seasonally while bridges are in place.

CPUC Analysis of Environmental Impacts

Biological Resources. The proposed access road locations and extra work space are located in areas with the potential for California red-legged frog (CRLF) previously identified in the

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IS/MND. With implementation of all applicable measures (Applicant Proposed Measures [APM] BO-9, BO-17, BO-18, and BO-19, and Mitigation Measures [MM] BO-4, BO-14, and BO-39), the proposed work would not increase impacts to CRLF greater than those analyzed in the IS/MND and are expected to reduce impacts by offsetting the need for use of a low water crossing point and temporary bridge.

Raptors and nesting birds. Raptors and general nesting birds have the potential to be located near the proposed access roads. Impacts to raptors and nesting birds would not be greater than those analyzed in the IS/MND granted all applicable APMs and MMs are implemented. All nests identified during pre-work avian surveys must be monitored in accordance with requirements listed in MMs BO-1 and BO-3.

A botanical survey was completed by Terra Verde on April 23 and May 14, 2012 (report attached to Variance Request). No special-status plant species were observed along any of the proposed access routes or additional work areas.

Cultural Resources. Applied Earthworks (Æ) conducted an archaeological and historical resources survey November and December of 2008 for portions of the Eagle Ranch Property and proposed work areas. No cultural resources were identified at the proposed work areas during these pedestrian surveys. No resources were identified in the 0.25 mile database search around the project area for known cultural resources (conducted on September 5, 2008 as part of the IS/MND cultural analysis). Additionally, maps prepared by Albion Environmental, Inc. for The Eagle Ranch Specific Plan Project do not identify any cultural resources at any of the proposed work areas (August 2011). Although not all areas of the new overland route has been subject to intensive ground surveys, given the nature of the work (non-ground disturbing) and the lack of other resources in the area, the likelihood of impacting cultural resources is minimal. No additional new or greater impacts to cultural resources, including any resulting from discovery of any previously unknown resources during construction, are anticipated provided all APMs and MMs are implemented.

Air Quality. Air impacts would be similar to those assessed in the IS/MND and would not have new or greater impacts. The proposed new overland routes would not result in ground disturbance. No significant dust emissions will occur during the proposed activities.

Noise and Traffic. Noise and traffic impacts would be similar to those assessed in the IS/MND and would not have new or greater impacts. All relevant mitigation from the IS/MND must be implemented.

Hydrology. Hydrology impacts would be the same as or less than those assessed in the approved IS/MND. Erosion and sedimentation controls will be installed as needed under the requirements of the Storm Water Prevention and Pollution Plan and the Erosion Control and Sedimentation Transportation Plan, as well as measures to contain spills and to prevent sedimentation or runoff would be implemented as required in the IS/MND.

Hazards. Hazards associated with the proposed activities would be similar to those assessed in the IS/MND and would not have new or greater impacts. All relevant plans and mitigation measure requirements must be followed.

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Approval

Use of the proposed overland access routes, as well as additional work space at low water crossing points S2a and S2b will not have significantly greater or new significant impacts beyond those identified in the IS/MND prepared for the Project. Provided PG&E coordinates with the appropriate parties as necessary and implements all mitigation measures pertinent to the project and activities as identified in the Final IS/MND and this letter, Variance Request #10 is approved.

Sincerely,

MJ Orsaba

Lisa Orsaba

CPUC Project Manager

Cc: Aaron Lui, Panorama Environmental, Inc.
Tania Treis, Panorama Environmental, Inc.
Judi Mosley, PG&E attorney

Attachment A: LAV Consulting Overview Map with added Streambed Alteration Agreement location names

Attachment B: Variance #10 request