
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



May 21, 2013

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

Subject: Atascadero-San Luis Obispo 70-kV Power Line Reconductoring Project Variance Request #14

Dear Mr. Cassady:

I have reviewed Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E's) Variance Request #14, which was submitted on May 8, 2013, for the Atascadero-San Luis Obispo 70-kilovolt (kV) Power Line Reconductoring Project (project). The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has determined that PG&E's proposed actions would not create new significant impacts or greater environmental impacts than those analyzed in the approved Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the project, as well as the 2011 Work Plan Memorandum.¹ A description of PG&E's proposed actions and an analysis of the environmental impacts of the actions is presented below.

Proposed Actions

PG&E proposes to relocate a pull-and-tension site (PTS) from Pole 63/1 to an alternate location approximately 500 feet northwest between Poles 62/14 and 62/15. The PTS at Pole 63/1 would no longer be needed. The proposed PTS relocation has been requested to address a design change based on negotiations with Eagle Ranch landowners regarding realignment of the power line segment in the southern portion of Eagle Ranch, which is located north of Highway 101 and south of Atascadero. PG&E anticipates submitting a Notice to Construct to CPUC at a later date for authorization to realign the power line segment within Eagle Ranch. Pole 63/1 would be relocated as part of the realignment and Pole 62/14 would remain at the same location evaluated in the IS/MND; therefore, moving the PTS to a location between Poles 62/14 and 62/15 would support current reconductoring activity evaluated in the IS/MND.

¹ On May 27, 2011, CPUC issued a 2011 Work Plan Memorandum summarizing several minor project modifications, which included a description of pull-and-tension sites for the project.

Analysis of Environmental Impacts

The proposed actions were reviewed to determine whether they would result in new significant environmental effects or would substantially increase the severity of a previously identified environmental effect. Variance Request #14 is consistent with the analysis presented in the IS/MND and additional California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review is not required. An analysis of these findings is presented below.

Aesthetics

No Additional Impact. The new PTS would replace a previously evaluated PTS located approximately 500 feet away. Use of the workspace would remain temporary and consistent with the IS/MND; therefore, relocation of the PTS would not create new or greater aesthetic impacts than those analyzed in the IS/MND.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

No Additional Impact. Both the proposed and previously approved PTS are located on grazing land identified by the California Department of Conservation's Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Relocation of the PTS would not require additional temporary workspace and would replace a previously approved PTS; therefore, relocation of the PTS would not create new or greater impacts to agricultural resources than those analyzed in the IS/MND. The proposed relocation would not impact forestry resources.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would not require the use of new or additional equipment. Air quality and greenhouse gas emissions would be consistent with the analysis presented in the IS/MND with implementation of applicable applicant proposed measures (APMs) and mitigation measures (MMs).

Biological Resources

No Additional Impact. The proposed PTS is located within the project study area, which was previously surveyed and evaluated for special-status plants and animals. No special biological resources or sensitive habitat is located at the proposed PTS. Temporary use of the site would occur as described in the IS/MND. With implementation of applicable APMs and MMs use of the relocated site would not result in new or greater impacts to biological resources.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

No Additional Impact. The proposed PTS is located within the project study area, which was previously surveyed for cultural and paleontological resources. No cultural resources were identified in the area. Both the proposed and previously approved PTS are located within an area rated with a high paleontological sensitivity, as is approximately 39 percent of the project alignment. Relocation of the site would not create new or greater impacts to cultural and paleontological resources. Implementation of applicable APMs and MMs would ensure impacts to any unidentified cultural resources would remain less than significant.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would not increase or create new significant impacts to geology, soils, or seismicity. Erosion control best management practices (BMPs) would be installed in work areas, as needed, to minimize erosion and sedimentation, as described in the project Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would not create new or greater hazards, or require use of additional hazardous materials other than those evaluated in the IS/MND. Implementation of applicable APMs and MMs would ensure potential impacts from hazards and hazardous materials would remain the same as those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Hydrology and Water Quality

No Additional Impact. No hydrologic resources are located at the proposed PTS. The amount of temporary disturbance would be the same as evaluated in the IS/MND. Implementation of applicable APMs and MMs would ensure impacts from relocation of the PTS remain consistent those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Land Use and Planning

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on land use and planning, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Mineral Resources

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on mineral resources, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Noise

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would not create new or additional noise impacts greater than those evaluated in the IS/MND. Implementation of APM NS-1 through APM NS-8 would ensure noise impacts resulting from the proposed work would be reduced to less than significant.

Population and Housing

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on population and housing, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Public Services

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on public services, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Recreation

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on recreation, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Mr. Mark Cassady

May 21, 2013

Page 4

Transportation and Traffic

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would not require use of additional vehicles or vehicle trips; therefore, relocation of the PTS would not create new or greater impacts to transportation and traffic than those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Utilities and Service Systems

No Additional Impact. Relocation of the PTS would have no impact on utilities and service systems, and project impacts would be consistent with those evaluated in the IS/MND.

Conclusion

CPUC staff finds the changes proposed in PG&E's Variance Request #14 are not substantial; would not result in new or greater impacts to the environment; and do not present new substantial information that would change the findings presented in the IS/MND. The variance is consistent with the IS/MND and no additional CEQA analysis or decisions are required.

Please contact me or Tania Treis at Panorama Environmental, Inc., if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jason Coontz

Jason Coontz

CPUC Project Manager

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

Attached:

Attachment A: PG&E Variance Request #14