

## PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



May 18, 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 (here renumbered to Variance #9) to replace three guy poles supporting poles 60/16 and 60/18

Dear Mr. Cassady:

I have reviewed Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) submission of Variance Request #10, which was submitted on April 27, 2012 for the Atascadero - San Luis Obispo 70kV Power Line Reconductoring Project (Project). PG&E's submitted Variance #10 has been renumbered Variance #9 after a previous submission for Variance #9 was considered unnecessary by the CPUC.

The CPUC has determined that adding the proposed three guy poles identified in this variance, as well as associated work activities and access routes, 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 replacing and moving three guy poles, including cables, that support poles 60/16 (2 supporting guy poles) and 60/18 (see attached variance request figures). The existing wood guy poles will be replaced with new light duty steel poles in a fashion similar to other pole replacement identified in the IS/MND. The new poles would be 1.5 feet taller than the existing poles. PG&E crews will auger holes for new guy poles and remove old poles once guy support cables have been secured. New overland access is required to the guy pole west of 60/18 and to poles 60/17 and 60/18. One oak tree will be removed on private property and another oak tree adjacent to Santa Rosa Road requires removal of a hazardous limb.

### **CPUC Analysis of Environmental Impacts**

**Biological Resources.** The proposed work would not significantly increase biological impacts greater than those analyzed in the IS/MND. The guy pole locations and work areas were surveyed for biological resources on April 5, 2012. No rare plants were identified. PG&E has identified two oak trees that will be impacted by the proposed work.

PG&E will coordinate removal of a cracked and hazardous limb on a large live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) tree with a diameter breast height (dbh) of 43 inches, which is situated directly adjacent to Guy A located off of Santa Rosa Road. In addition, PG&E anticipates that auguring an approximately 3-ft diameter bore hole for the guy pole could impact the roots of the tree.

Significant impacts to the tree are not anticipated and a PG&E's arborist will be present during the boring to inspect any damage to the tree roots. PG&E has consulted with the City of Atascadero and reported that the City will remove the hazardous limb. PG&E will also remove a smaller live oak tree (11 inch dbh) located adjacent to Guy B east of Pole 60/16 on private property (Tree Work Authorization Form attached to variance request). Trimming of trees and impacts to oaks was addressed in the IS/MND. All relevant mitigation (e.g., clearance for nesting birds) must be implemented.

*Raptors and nesting birds.* Several active bird nests are located around the guy pole locations, including an active red-tailed hawk nest located in the 43 inch dbh oak tree. PG&E has stated that no work at the location will take place until the nestlings have fully fledged. Requests to reduce "no work" buffer distances (250/500 feet depending on species) must comply with requirements described in BO-1, and be communicated and approved by the CPUC. Ongoing nest surveys required under the measure and Avian Protection Plan will be conducted to identify any new nests that may become active before work begins at the proposed locations. With implementation of the current measures prescribed in the IS/MND, no new or significantly greater impacts would occur.

**Cultural Resources.** Applied Earthworks (Æ) conducted an archaeological and historical resources survey April 25, 2012 for the proposed guy pole work areas. No cultural resources were found near the proposed work areas identified in this variance. 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 mitigation measures and APMs are implemented.

**Air Quality.** Air impacts would be similar to those assessed in the IS/MND and would not have new or greater impacts. 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 assessed in the approved IS/MND. Work at the proposed connection points would not change any surface flow patterns. 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.

**Aesthetics.** The new poles would be 1.5 feet taller than the existing poles; however, the overall appearance will be similar to the existing poles and no new or significantly greater impacts are anticipated.

Mr. Cassady  
May 18, 2012  
Page 3

## **Approval**

The replacement of the proposed guy poles, as well as the associated work activities and access routes 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 #9 (submitted as Variance #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: Original Variance #10 request (now Variance #9)