

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), a regulated California utility, filed an application (A.15-12-005) for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the proposed Fulton-Fitch Mountain Reconductoring Project (proposed project) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on December 3, 2015. The application was accompanied by a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA). The CPUC deemed the application complete on April 29, 2016.

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the CPUC, as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), to inform the Commission in their decision on whether to approve the PTC. This IS/MND will also inform the local, State, and federal agencies that must consider whether to issue a permit or approval for the proposed project.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

1.2.1 CEQA Process and Lead Agency

This IS/MND has been prepared pursuant to:

- CEQA (Public Resources Code [PRC] § 21000 et seq.);
- Amended Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (CEQA Guidelines) (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] § 15000 et seq.); and
- Rule 2.4 of the CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure on CEQA compliance.

One of the purposes of CEQA is to ensure informed governmental decisions by identifying ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage through feasible mitigation or project alternatives, and to provide public disclosure (CEQA Guidelines Section 15002 [a][1]-[4]). The CPUC is the Lead Agency for review of the proposed project under CEQA because it has the principal responsibility for determining whether to approve or deny the proposed project (i.e., it must decide whether to approve or deny the PTC). Under CEQA, an IS/MND is prepared if there is no substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment. As the Lead Agency, the CPUC determined that an IS/MND was the appropriate level of environmental review for the proposed project because all potentially significant environmental impacts can be avoided or mitigated to less-than-significant levels.

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The CPUC has prepared this IS/MND to examine the direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and feasible mitigation that would reduce or avoid the proposed project's potentially significant effects, prior to making a discretionary decision on the PTC application. This IS/MND does not make a recommendation regarding the approval or denial of the project.

The purpose of the IS/MND is to:

- Inform both the CPUC's decision makers and the public about the environmental effects of the proposed project
- Give the public an opportunity to comment on potentially significant environmental issues
- Describe the existing environmental conditions near the proposed project
- Identify and analyze each potentially significant effect on the environment resulting from the proposed project
- Identify feasible measures to mitigate each potentially significant effect

1.2.2 Environmental Analysis

This IS/MND analyzes the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and identifies mitigation measures that could minimize or prevent those potential environmental impacts. The following environmental resources were considered in evaluating the potential effects of the proposed project, in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines Checklist Appendix G:

3.1 Aesthetics	3.10 Land Use and Planning
3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources	3.11 Noise
3.3 Air Quality	3.12 Paleontological Resources
3.4 Biological Resources	3.13 Population and Housing
3.5 Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources	3.14 Recreation
3.6 Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources	3.15 Transportation and Traffic
3.7 Greenhouse Gas Emissions	3.16 Utilities and Public Services
3.8 Hazards and Hazardous Materials	3.17 Mandatory Findings of Significance
3.9 Hydrology and Water Quality	

1.1 AGENCY AND PUBLIC USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

1.1.1 California Public Utilities Commission Process

Pursuant to Article XII of the Constitution of the State of California, the CPUC is charged with the regulation of investor-owned public utilities, including PG&E. This IS/MND includes descriptions and analyses of the environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project. The IS/MND will be considered by the CPUC, in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, prior to acting on PG&E's application for a PTC to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed project. Should the CPUC decide to adopt

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the IS/MND, it must find that (1) the document reflects the Lead Agency's independent judgment and analysis, and (2) there is no substantial evidence that the project would have a significant effect on the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15074). The CPUC must also adopt a plan for mitigation monitoring and/or reporting when adopting an MND (see Section 4: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program).

1.1.2 Federal Agencies

Federal agencies with potential review and/or permitting authority include the United States (US) Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

1.1.3 State Trustee and Responsible Agencies

Several other State agencies may rely on the information in this IS/MND to inform their decisions over issuance of specific permits related to project construction, operation, and maintenance. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (NCRWQCB) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are State Responsible Agencies because they would issue discretionary permits for the proposed project.

1.1.4 Comment on the Draft IS/MND

This Draft IS/MND is being circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested individuals who wish to review and comment on the report. Written comments may be submitted to the CPUC during the 30-day public review period. Written comments on the Draft IS/MND will be accepted via regular mail, fax, and e-mail. All comments received will be addressed in the Final IS/MND. Written comments should be submitted by U.S. mail, fax, or email to:

California Public Utilities Commission
Attn: Fulton-Fitch Mountain Reconductoring Project

c/o Panorama Environmental, Inc.
One Embarcadero Center, Suite 740
San Francisco, CA 94111

Fax: (650) 373-1211

fulton2fitch@panoramaenv.com

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1.2 READER'S GUIDE TO THIS INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

This IS/MND has been organized into the following sections:

- **Acronyms and Abbreviations.** This section follows the Table of Contents.
- **Section 1: Introduction.** Outlines the CEQA process and agency use of this IS/MND.
- **Section 2: Project Description.** Provides an in-depth description of the proposed project, including construction details and methods.
- **Section 3: Environmental Analysis.** Provides a discussion of existing conditions, an analysis of potential environmental impacts of the proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant effects.
- **Section 4: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.** Provides a discussion of the CPUC's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) requirements for the project if approved by the CPUC. This section includes mitigation measures that PG&E must implement as part of the project, actions required to implement these measures, monitoring requirements, and timing of implementation for each measure.
- **Section 5: Report Preparation.** Identifies the preparers of the IS/MND and the public agencies consulted during preparation of the IS/MND.
- **Appendix A: Project Detail Maps.** Provides detailed locations of all proposed project components on an aerial map base, including all unpaved access routes and staging yards.
- **Appendix B: Aesthetics Supporting Information.** Provides the numerical assessment of key observation points (KOPs) and detailed methodology of assessing visual impacts.
- **Appendix C: Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Supporting Information.** Provides the calculation spreadsheets and summary tables for emissions modeling.
- **Appendix D: Biological Resources Supporting Information.** Includes special-status species tables and figures.
- **Appendix E: Cultural Resources Supporting Information.** Provides records of communication with Native American tribes and maps of cultural resource survey boundaries.
- **Appendix F: Hydrology and Water Quality Supporting Information.** Provides summary tables and maps of surface waters and drainages in the project area.
- **Appendix G: Noise Supporting Information.** Provides noise measurement data and the Noise Study Report.