

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E), a regulated California utility, filed an application (Application A. 13-09-014) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on September 25, 2013 for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the proposed Salt Creek Substation Project (proposed project). The application was deemed complete by the CPUC on May 19, 2014. SDG&E is proposing to:

- Construct and operate a new 120-megavolt-ampere (MVA), 69/12-kilovolt (kV) Salt Creek Substation (proposed substation) on 11.64 acres of undeveloped land, which would include installation of underground 12-kV distribution circuits;
- Construct and operate a 5-mile-long, 69-kV power line (Transmission Line [TL] 6965) on new steel poles from the existing Miguel Substation to the proposed substation;
- Loop-in the existing 69-kV power line (TL 6910) to the proposed substation; and
- Install a new 69-kV circuit position at Miguel Substation to connect to TL 6965.

1.1.1 Project Location

The project is located in southwest San Diego County (County) within the City of Chula Vista (City), California, and a portion of the project is in unincorporated San Diego County. The proposed project location is shown on Figure 1.1-1.

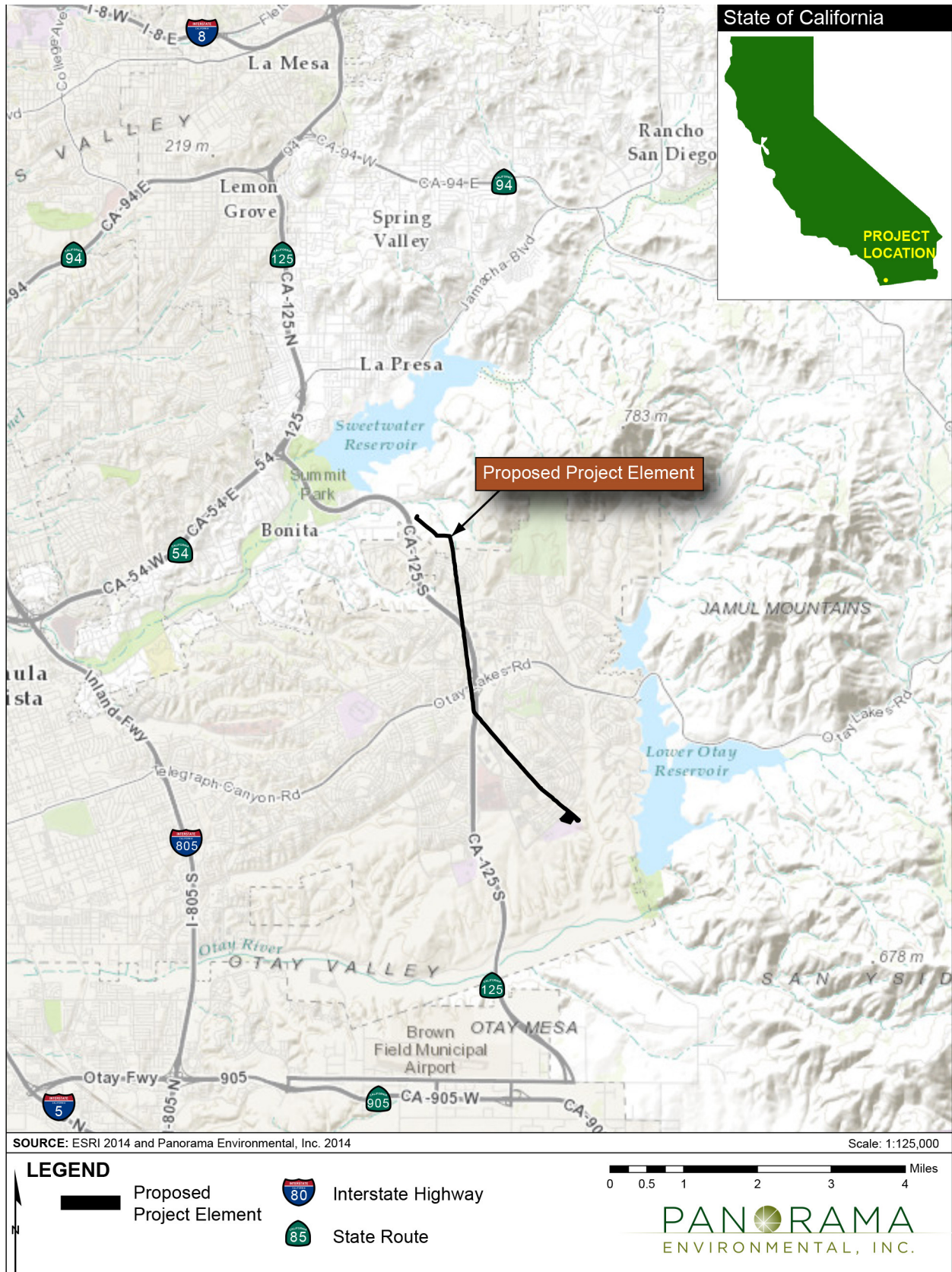
The proposed substation site is located south of Hunte Parkway and east of Eastlake Parkway, in Chula Vista. The TL 6910 loop-in would be located adjacent to and northeast of the proposed substation. TL 6965 would extend from Miguel Substation to the proposed substation and would be constructed within an existing 120-foot-wide SDG&E transmission corridor. This transmission corridor currently includes TL 6910 on wood and steel poles, two 230-kV transmission lines on steel lattice towers, and buried 36-inch-diameter and 4-inch-diameter high-pressure gas pipelines. Two underground water pipelines are located adjacent to the transmission corridor along a portion of the alignment. The transmission corridor crosses State Route (SR) 125 at two locations.

Project staging and equipment laydown are proposed at four locations:

1. An existing yard at Miguel Substation
2. Within the transmission corridor at Eastlake Parkway
3. Northeast of the intersection of Hunte Parkway and Eastlake Parkway
4. Within the proposed substation site

1 INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.1-1 Proposed Project Location/Regional Map



1 INTRODUCTION

Alternative staging areas have also been identified at the Olympic Training Center (OTC), should additional locations be required.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

1.2.1 California Environmental Quality Act Process and Lead Agency

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared pursuant to:

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code [PRC] Section 21000 et seq.);
- Amended Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines) (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] Section 15000 et seq.); and
- CPUC CEQA Rule 2.4 on CEQA compliance.

The purpose of CEQA is to ensure informed governmental decisions, identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage through feasible mitigation or project alternatives, and 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 PTC. Under CEQA, an EIR is required if substantial evidence supports a fair argument that a project may have a significant impact, even if other substantial evidence indicates that the impact will not be significant. As the lead agency, the CPUC decided that an EIR is the appropriate level of environmental review for the proposed project.

The CPUC has prepared this Draft EIR for the purpose of examining the potential direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and alternatives prior to making a discretionary decision on the PTC application. This Draft EIR does not make a recommendation regarding the approval or denial of the project. The CPUC cannot approve a project that will have significant impacts, or limit the choice of alternatives or mitigation measures, before the CEQA review is complete.

The objectives of the EIR are to:

- Inform the CPUC and the public about the environmental setting in the project area and the impacts of the proposed project and its alternatives
- Identify each significant effect on the environment that would result from the proposed project
- Identify measures to mitigate each significant effect

The CPUC will determine the adequacy of the EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA. If the CPUC approves a project with significant unavoidable environmental impacts, it must state why in a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which would be included in the CPUC's decision on the application.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.2.2 Environmental Analysis

The CPUC prepared an Initial Study (IS) to determine whether to prepare an EIR for the proposed project. Through the IS, the CPUC determined that the project could have a potentially significant effect on Aesthetics, Air Quality, Noise, and Recreation and therefore determined that an EIR is the appropriate environmental document under CEQA.

The CPUC also determined that no impacts to Mineral Resources or Population and Housing would result from the proposed project; therefore, those topics are not analyzed in the EIR. The proposed project would not result in any potential impacts to mineral resources because there are no known or potential resources within the project area (CDC 2013). The project would not cause any effects related to population and housing because the limited number of workers required for construction and operation would be drawn from the existing workforce in the area and would not result in a population increase. The level of service to be provided by the proposed project would accommodate the projected growth identified in the City of Chula Vista General Plan (City of Chula Vista 2005).

This Draft EIR analyzes the potential significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed project, and identifies mitigation measures that could minimize or prevent those potential environmental impacts. This Draft EIR also identifies alternatives to the proposed project that could reduce or avoid significant impacts of the project. The following topics are addressed in this EIR in the evaluation of the potential effects of the proposed project:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural and Paleontological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Energy Conservation

1.3 AGENCY USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Section 15124(d) of the CEQA Guidelines requires that an EIR contain a statement briefly describing the intended uses of the EIR. The CEQA Guidelines indicate that the EIR should identify the ways in which the lead agency and any responsible agencies would use this document in their approval or permitting processes. The following discussion summarizes the roles of the participating agencies and the intended uses of the EIR.

1.3.1 California Public Utilities Commission Process

Pursuant to Article XII of the Constitution of the State of California, the CPUC is charged with regulating investor-owned public utilities, including SDG&E. The CPUC is the lead agency for CEQA compliance for evaluation of the proposed SDG&E project, and has directed the preparation of this Draft EIR.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Draft EIR will be used by the CPUC to describe potential environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the proposed project and explore a range of alternatives to potentially reduce significant adverse impacts. This Draft EIR will be used by the CPUC, in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, to act on SDG&E's application for a PTC for construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed project. The CPUC will determine the adequacy of the Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA. If the CPUC approves a project with significant unavoidable environmental impacts, it must state why in a Statement of Overriding Considerations, which would be included in the CPUC's decision on the application.

1.3.2 State Trustee and Responsible Agencies

Several other state agencies will rely on information in this Draft EIR to inform them in their decision whether to issue specific permits for project construction, operation, and maintenance activities. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is a state Trustee Agency. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB) are state Responsible Agencies because they would issue discretionary permits for the project.

No local discretionary (e.g., use) permits are required, because the CPUC has preemptive jurisdiction over the construction, maintenance, and operation of SDG&E facilities in California. SDG&E would have to obtain all ministerial building and encroachment permits from local jurisdictions, and the CPUC's General Order (GO) 131-D requires SDG&E to comply with local building, design, and safety standards to the greatest degree feasible to minimize project conflicts with local conditions. The CPUC's authority does not preempt special districts, such as Air Quality Management Districts (AQMDs), other state agencies, or the federal government. SDG&E would obtain permits, approvals, and licenses, and would participate in reviews and consultations as needed with federal, state, and local agencies.

1.3.3 Federal Agencies

Federal agencies with potential review and/or permitting authority include the United States (U.S.) Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

1.3.4 Required Permits

Table 2.9-1 in Section 2: Project Description identifies the permits and approvals SDG&E may need to obtain for the proposed project. Some permits or approvals would not be required if impacts can be avoided in the final design.

1.4 PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

1.4.1 Scoping

The scoping process refers to an early and open process undertaken by a lead agency to determine the range of actions, alternatives, significant impacts, and mitigation measures to be

1 INTRODUCTION

addressed in the EIR. During the scoping process, the public is invited to submit comments on the scope of the analysis for the environmental document to be prepared under CEQA. The scoping process is intended to identify public concerns and issues that may be associated with the project. The project’s Scoping Report is available on the CPUC website (www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Salt_Creek/index.html) and is included in Appendix A.

Table 1.4-1 lists the agencies, municipalities, organizations, and tribes that were notified during the project planning phase and scoping process.

Draft Initial Study and Public Meeting

Scoping was conducted in November 2013 for preparation of the project’s IS. Formal scoping is not required for preparing an IS/Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) under CEQA; however, scoping was conducted to obtain public comments early in the process and provide guidance on the scope of public concerns to be addressed in the environmental document.

Table 1.4-1 Agencies, Municipalities, Organizations, and Tribes Notified during the Scoping Process

Agencies, Municipalities, Organizations, and Tribes	
Agencies, Municipalities, and Organizations	
USFWS	USACE
California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC)	SDRWQCB
CDFW	Caltrans
San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)	County of San Diego
San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD)	City of Chula Vista
Otay Water District	Chula Vista Elementary School District
Sweetwater Union High School District	
Tribes	
Barona Group of the Capitan Grade	Campo Band of Mission Indians
Ewiiapaayp Tribal Office	Inaja Band of Mission Indians
Inter-Tribal Cultural Resources Protection	Ipai Nation of Santa Isabel
Jamul Indian Village	Kumeyaay Cultural Historic Committee
Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee	Kumeyaay Diegueno Land Conservancy
Kwaaymii Laguna Band of Mission Indians	La Posta Band of Mission Indians
Mesa Grande Band of Mission Indians	Manzanita Band of Kumeyaay Nation
San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians	Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation
Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Indians	

1 INTRODUCTION

The CPUC mailed over 3,500 notices to agencies, tribes, and, the public, and met with federal, state, and local agencies during initial scoping. Members of the public residing within 500 feet of the project were notified by mail. Other methods of notification have included the CPUC website (www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Salt_Creek/index.html) and a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/pages/Salt-Creek-Substation/702093049815351). During the 30-day scoping comment period, three comment letters were received from Caltrans and members of the public. A public meeting was also held in the City of Chula Vista at Monteville Community Center on November 21, 2013. Table 1.4-2 summarizes the key concerns presented by the public during initial scoping for the project.

Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

The CPUC made a decision to prepare an EIR after review of the IS in July 2014. The CPUC prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR, in accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines. The NOP was mailed to federal, state, and local agencies, municipalities, organizations, tribes, and members of the public residing within 500 feet of the proposed project. The NOP was released on August 15, 2014, for a 30-day comment period that ended September 15, 2014. During the comment period, nine comment letters were received.

The key comment topics, within the purview of CEQA, in the written and oral comments are presented in Table 1.4-2. The public also presented comments that are not addressed under CEQA, such as effects on home or property values and health effects from electric and magnetic fields (EMF).

1.4.2 How to Comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Report

This Draft EIR is being circulated to local, state, and federal agencies and to interested individuals who may wish to review and comment on the report. Written comments may be submitted to the CPUC during the 45-day public review period. Written and verbal comments on this Draft EIR will be accepted via regular mail, fax, and e-mail and at a noticed public meeting. All comments received will be addressed in the Final EIR for the proposed project. Written comments may be submitted to any of the following:

Mail: Ms. Connie Chen
CPUC Project Manager
c/o Panorama Environmental, Inc.
1 Embarcadero Center, Suite 740
San Francisco, CA 94111

FAX: (650) 373-1211

Email: saltcreeksub@panoramaenv.com

Written or oral comments may be delivered at a public meeting at Monteville Recreation Center, 840 Duncan Ranch Road, Chula Vista on June 4, 2015 at 6:30 PM.

1 INTRODUCTION

Table 1.4-2 Summary of Scoping Comments

Environmental Issue/ CEQA Area	Potential Issue or Impacts
Project Purpose and Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certainty and need for the project • Support for the project
Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of alternative transmission line alignments and configurations • Alternate substation locations
Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location and appearance of the new power line poles • Impacts on Otay Valley Regional Park views
Biological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive biological resources in Otay Regional Park • Potential impacts to biological resources in Otay Ranch Preserve, including edge effects resulting from additional lighting, noise (during construction and on-going), drainage, release of toxic substances, and invasive species
Cultural and Paleontological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations by the NAHC to protect archeological resources
Hydrology and Water Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on water quality • Measures to comply with stormwater regulations
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise generated by the new power line
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed project on Otay Valley Regional Park trails
Transportation and Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtaining Caltrans encroachment permit for work within Caltrans ROW
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of residents close to the proposed project location • Pollution

This Draft EIR identifies the significant or potentially significant environmental impacts of the proposed project on the existing environment, indicates how those impacts would be mitigated or avoided, and identifies and evaluates alternatives to the proposed project. This document is intended to provide the CPUC with the information required to exercise its jurisdictional responsibilities with respect to the proposed project, which would be considered at a separate noticed public meeting of the CPUC.

1.5 READER'S GUIDE TO THIS DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

The Draft EIR has been organized into the following sections:

- **Executive Summary:** Provides a summary description of the proposed project, the alternatives, their respective environmental impacts, and the environmentally superior alternative. This section also provides a summary table of the impacts and mitigation measures of the proposed project and alternatives.
- **Section 1, Introduction:** Provides an overview of the background and project objectives, briefly describes the proposed project, and outlines the CEQA process and agency use of this Draft EIR.

1 INTRODUCTION

- **Section 2, Project Description:** Presents SDG&E's objectives for the proposed project and provides an in-depth description of the proposed project, including construction details and methods.
- **Section 3, Alternatives:** Provides a description of the alternatives analyzed in Section 4.
- **Section 4, Evaluation of Environmental Impacts:** Provides an analysis and assessment of impacts and mitigation measures for the proposed project and alternatives, including the No Project Alternative. This section contains a discussion of the environmental setting, regulatory environment, and impacts for each environmental issue area (e.g., Air Quality, Biological Resources). Mitigation measures are identified for significant impacts.
- **Section 5, Cumulative Impacts:** Provides a discussion of the cumulative impacts of the proposed project in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects in the vicinity.
- **Section 6, Comparison of Alternatives:** Provides a discussion of the relative advantages and disadvantages of the proposed project and the alternatives evaluated, and identifies the CEQA environmentally superior alternative.
- **Section 7, CEQA Statutory Section:** Provides a discussion of growth-inducing impacts, significant environmental effects that cannot be avoided, irreversible environmental changes, and energy conservation.
- **Section 8, Report Preparation:** Identifies the preparers of the EIR and the public agencies consulted during preparation of the EIR.
- **Section 9, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan:** Provides a discussion of the CPUC's mitigation monitoring and reporting plan requirements for the project if it is approved by the CPUC. This section includes applicant proposed measures (APMs) and mitigation measures (MMs) that SDG&E must implement as part of the project, actions required to implement these measures, monitoring requirements, and timing of implementation for each measure.
- **Appendix A, Scoping Report:** Presents the outreach efforts and comments on the scope of the CEQA document.
- **Appendix B, Conceptual Landscape Plan and Grading Plan:** Provides details on the plant species proposed to be planted at the proposed substation site.
- **Appendix C, Magnetic Field Management Plan:** Provides evaluation of magnetic fields along the proposed project alignment and possible magnetic field management measures.
- **Appendix D, Biological Resources Support Information:** Includes special-status species tables and figures and the Burrowing Owl Mitigation and Monitoring Plan.
- **Appendix E, Alternatives Screening Report:** Provides a description of the alternatives screening and evaluation process, including the rationale for eliminating alternatives from further analysis. This section also provides a description of alternatives retained and eliminated from further analysis in this EIR.

1 INTRODUCTION

- **Appendix F, Aesthetic Resources Support Information:** Provides technical evaluation of impacts to aesthetic resources.
- **Appendix G, Cultural Resources Support Information:** Provides figures depicting the cultural resources survey area and records of communication with Native Americans.
- **Appendix H, Geologic Resources Supplement:** Provides the geotechnical reports for the project area and SDG&E's Best Management Practices Plan.