

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E, the Applicant), 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.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing regulations (the “CEQA Guidelines”) require a lead agency to prepare and certify a Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) before it may approve a project for which a Draft Environmental Impact Report has been prepared. This document and the May 2015 Salt Creek Substation Project Draft EIR (SCH No. 2014081032) together constitute the Final EIR for the Salt Creek Substation Project (proposed project) proposed by the Applicant, SDG&E.

On May 15, 2015, the CPUC (the CEQA lead agency) released the Draft EIR on the proposed project for public review and comment. The Draft EIR was available for public review at public libraries located in the vicinity of the project, and online on the CPUC’s website. The Draft EIR describes the proposed project and its environmental setting; analyzes potential direct, indirect and cumulative environmental impacts related to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed project; identifies impacts that could be significant; recommends mitigation measures, which, if adopted, could avoid or minimize such impacts; and identifies impacts that are expected to remain significant and unavoidable, even with the implementation of recommended mitigation measures. The Draft EIR also evaluates alternatives to the proposed project, including a No Project Alternative, as required by CEQA.

This Final EIR will be used by the CPUC, in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC’s formal record, to make a decision on the Applicant’s Salt Creek Substation Project

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application for a Permit to Construct. Under CEQA, the CPUC will determine the adequacy of this Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA.

1.3 ORGANIZATION OF THE FINAL EIR

The Final EIR consists of the following elements consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15132:

- a. The Draft EIR or a revision of the draft;
- b. Comments received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary;
- c. A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies that commented on the Draft EIR;
- d. The responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and
- e. Any other information added by the lead agency.

The Final EIR for the proposed project contains responses to each comment received during the public comment period (May 15, 2015 through June 29, 2015). Responses to comments are presented in Chapter 3.

The Final EIR is organized as follows:

- **Volume 1, Draft EIR as revised in Response to Comments.** Includes the entire Draft EIR with revisions noted in strike-through and underline.
- **Volume 2, Chapter 1: Introduction.** Provides an overview of the purpose as well as the organization of the Final EIR, and provides a brief description of the proposed project.
- **Volume 2, Chapter 2: Public Review Process.** Describes the public review process, the organization of the comment letters and lists the commenters (agencies, organizations, individuals, and the applicant).
- **Volume 2, Chapter 3: Comments and Responses.** Contains copies of all the comment letters received on the Draft EIR as well as a copy of the transcript for the public meeting held on June 4, 2015, after publication of the Draft EIR. Individual comments are identified within the comment letter or transcript using an alphanumeric code. Following each comment letter are individual responses directed specifically to each comment.
- **Volume 2, Appendix A.** Provides the Notice of Availability, legal advertisement, Draft EIR public meeting sign-in sheet, and Draft EIR meeting presentation.
- **Volume 2, Appendix B.** Provides supplementary information on the Environmentally Superior Alternative.
- **Volume 2, Appendix C.** Provides USFWS and CDFW review of SDG&E NCCP take authorization.

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1.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The Environmentally Superior Alternative is Alternative 2: 69/12-kV Substation and Generation at Border and Larkspur Electric Generating Facilities. Alternative 2 would avoid construction of a 5-mile-long power line and does not increase any significant impacts of the proposed project or create any new significant impacts. Alternative 2 reduces the significant and unavoidable noise impacts of the proposed project by avoiding construction in proximity to residences and avoiding use of helicopters during construction. Alternative 2 also reduces impacts of the proposed project that are less than significant with mitigation in the following resource areas by avoiding construction of a 5-mile long power line:

- **Aesthetics** – avoids glare from new TSPs and conductors along the transmission corridor
- **Biological Resources** – avoids impacts to special-status species and habitats from construction and operation of the power line
- **Cultural Resources** – avoids impacts on significant cultural resources in the transmission corridor
- **Geology and Soils** – reduces impacts from top soil loss and erosion
- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials** – avoids constructing power line foundations within 5 feet of high-pressure gas pipelines.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality** – reduces impacts to water quality from discharge of shallow groundwater
- **Recreation** – reduces impacts from trail detours during construction
- **Transportation and Traffic** – avoids crossing SR-125 and temporary road or lane closures during power line installation
- **Utilities** – avoids potential service disruptions from construction within the utility corridor

1.4.1 CPUC Process after Final Environmental Impact Report

CEQA requires that the CPUC provide written responses to public agency comments at least 10 days prior to certifying the EIR (Public Resource Code [PRC] 21092.5(a)). This is accomplished by sending the Final EIR to all agencies that commented on the Draft EIR.

The CPUC will determine the adequacy of the Final EIR, and if adequate, will certify the document as compliant with CEQA. The CPUC will issue a Proposed Decision on the Salt Creek Substation Project, which will be announced and published concurrent with a scheduled CPUC Commission Meeting. Each Commissioner may draft an Alternate Decision presenting differing conclusions or opinions. All five Commissioners will then vote on the Proposed Decision and any Alternate Decision at a meeting of the full Commission. If the proposed project or an alternative is approved, the CPUC will adopt a mitigation monitoring and reporting program to require monitoring of adopted mitigation measures and definition of mitigation monitoring procedures.

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