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1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

On April 7, 2014, San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E, Applicant) submitted Application 14-04-011 seeking a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC, Lead Agency) for its proposed Sycamore—Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (Proposed Project). The CPUC deemed the application complete on July 24, 2014. SDG&E seeks to construct, operate, and maintain a new 16.7 mile long 230-kV transmission line between the existing Sycamore Canyon Substation and the existing Peñasquitos Substation within the City of San Diego and the City of Poway in San Diego County, California. The major components of the Proposed Project include:

- Four electric transmission segments (A through D)
 - **Transmission Line Segment A.** Construct an approximately 8.31-mile long 230-kV overhead transmission line on new tubular steel poles (TSPs) from Sycamore Canyon Substation to Carmel Valley Road
 - **Transmission Line Segment B.** Construct an approximately 2.84-mile long 230-kV underground transmission line within Carmel Valley Road
 - **Transmission Line Segment C.** Install approximately 2.19 miles of 230-kV conductor on existing steel lattice structures and one new TSP between Carmel Valley Road and Peñasquitos Junction
 - **Transmission Line Segment D.** Install approximately 3.34 miles of 230-kV conductor on existing double-circuit steel lattice towers and a TSP between Peñasquitos Junction and Peñasquitos Substation
- **Substation Modifications.** Modifications at Sycamore Canyon, Peñasquitos, Chicarita, San Luis Rey, and Mission Substations to accommodate the new 230-kV transmission line
- **Encina Hub Modifications.** Reconfigure existing transmission lines at Encina Hub to create an open position for the new 230-kV transmission line
- **Mission—San Luis Rey 230-kV Phase Transposition.** Reverse the positions of existing 230-kV line phase components between Mission Substation and Peñasquitos Junction to accommodate the bundling of existing power lines in Segment C

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

On September 17, 2015, the CPUC released the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on the Proposed Project for public review and comment. The Draft EIR was available for public review

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at public libraries located in the vicinity of the Project, and online on the CPUC's website. The Draft EIR includes the following:

- Description of the Proposed Project and the existing environmental conditions in the Proposed Project's vicinity
- Identification and analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts related to the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project
- Feasible mitigation measures to avoid, minimize, or compensate for the Proposed Project's significant environmental impacts
- Identification of environmental impacts that would remain significant and unavoidable, even with the implementation of all feasible mitigation measures
- Potentially feasible alternatives to the Proposed Project that would meet most of its basic objectives while avoiding or reducing its significant environmental effects, including a No Project Alternative, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA and its implementing regulations (the "CEQA Guidelines") require a lead agency to prepare and certify a Final EIR before it may approve a project for which a Draft EIR has been prepared. This document and the September 2015 Sycamore—Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project Draft EIR (State Clearinghouse No. 2014081031) as modified in response to comments (see Volume 2) together constitute the Final EIR for the Sycamore—Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project proposed by SDG&E. The Final EIR has been prepared pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) § 21000 *et seq.* and in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15000 *et seq.*, California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14.

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 SDG&E's Sycamore—Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project application for a CPCN. Under CEQA, the CPUC will determine the adequacy of this Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA. The CPCN approval process includes selecting project alternatives, adopting mitigation measures, and reviewing project costs.

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 and recommendations 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.

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The Final EIR for the Proposed Project contains responses to comments that were raised during the 45-day public comment period (September 17, 2015 through November 2, 2015). Responses were prepared for each comment received during the public comment period and are presented in Section 3: Comments and Responses of this Final EIR. The focus of the responses to comments is on the disposition of significant environmental issues as raised in the comments, as required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15088(c).

This Final EIR is organized as follows:

- **Volume 1: Comments and Responses to Comments.**
 - **Section 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.
 - **Section 2, Public Review Process.** Describes the public review process, the organization of the comment letters and lists the commenters (agencies, organizations, individuals, and SDG&E).
 - **Section 3, Comments and Responses.** Contains copies of all the comment letters received on the Draft EIR. General responses to recurrent comments are provided first, and responses to individual comments are provided thereafter. 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.
 - **Attachment 1, Draft EIR Public Review Materials.** Contains the Notice of Availability, newspaper advertisements, flier advertising the public information workshop, Draft EIR public informational workshop sign-in sheet, and Draft EIR informational workshop presentation and posters.
 - **Attachment 2, Agency Correspondences.** Contains records of agency correspondence in preparation of the Final EIR
 - **Attachment 3, EMF Data for Project Alternatives.** Contains modeled EMF levels for Alternatives 3, 4, and 5.
 - **Attachment 4, Park Village Road Measurements.** Contains methodology and field notes from distance measurements along Park Village Road.
 - **Attachment 5, Summary and Detailed Tables of Vegetation Community Impacts.** Contains a comparison of the data used in the Draft EIR and the refinements provided by SDG&E.
- **Volumes 2 and 3: Modified Draft EIR.** Contain the Draft EIR, as modified in response to comments.

1.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE

The Environmentally Superior Alternative is Alternative 5: Pomerado Road to Miramar Area North Combination Underground/Overhead. Alternative 5 would avoid construction within all segments of the Proposed Project as it would follow a different alignment that would minimize

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significant and unavoidable impacts on aesthetics, noise, recreation, and traffic. Significant and unavoidable impacts on visual quality would be limited to one cable pole, and Alternative 5 would avoid all other significant and unavoidable aesthetic impacts of the Proposed Project. Alternative 5 would substantially reduce significant and unavoidable noise impacts by reducing the potential for corona noise generation along Proposed Project transmission line Segments A, C, and D. The alternative would avoid significant and unavoidable impacts on recreational value by eliminating new structures in open space recreational areas, including Black Mountain Open Space Park and Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Alternative 5 would eliminate impacts on parking capacity by avoiding construction within Black Mountain Ranch Community Park. Alternative 5 would also further reduce impacts that are less than significant with mitigation in the following resource areas by eliminating 11.5 miles of new overhead transmission line:

- **Biological Resources.** Avoids impacts on special-status plants and reduces impacts on special-status wildlife and habitats by reducing construction within open spaces and vernal pools
- **Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources.** Reduces potential for erosion and landslides by installing fewer structures and constructing the majority of the alignment within existing roadways
- **Hydrology and Water Quality.** Reduces the amount of impervious surface area created from pole installation, reduces the amount of water necessary during construction and operation, and reduces the potential for sedimentation in Los Peñasquitos Creek and its tributaries
- **Fire and Fuels Management.** Reduces risk of igniting a wildfire by substantially decreasing the amount of overhead transmission line constructed in areas with flammable vegetation

As identified in the Draft EIR, Alternative 5 would result in greater temporary significant and unavoidable air quality impacts than the Proposed Project, from NO_x emissions generated during construction. However, Alternative 5 remains the environmentally superior alternative because it would eliminate the majority of significant and unavoidable impacts from the Proposed Project and substantially reduce impacts that are less than significant after mitigation.