

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

ENERGY, OCEAN RESOURCES AND FEDERAL CONSISTENCY DIVISION  
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February 17, 2017

## Coastal Development Permit De Minimis Waiver Coastal Act Section 30624.7

Based on the project plans and information provided in your permit application for the development described below, the Executive Director of the Coastal Commission hereby waives the requirement for a Coastal Development Permit pursuant to Section 13238.1, Title 14, California Code of Regulations. If, at a later date, this information is found to be incorrect or the plans revised, this decision will become invalid; and, any development occurring must cease until a coastal development permit is obtained or any discrepancy is resolved in writing.

**Waiver:** 9-16-1148-W

**Applicant:** San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E)

**Location:** Los Peñasquitos Canyon, City of San Diego

**Proposed Development:** Installation of (a) new 230 kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line and communication cables on existing steel poles, (b) one deepwell anode near an existing buried pipeline, and (c) aerial marker balls on existing overhead shield wires, within an existing SDG&E right-of-way.

**Project Background & Description:** SDG&E proposes to construct and operate a new, 14.27-mile long 230-kV electrical transmission line between its existing Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos substations, within the City of San Diego and the extreme northern portion of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. The project is being proposed in order to meet the need for electrical distribution system upgrades identified in the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) 2012-13 Transmission Plan. Most of the project would occur outside of the coastal zone; however, an approximately two-mile long segment of the project (Segment C) crosses the coastal zone in the vicinity of Los Peñasquitos Canyon. Along this Segment, SDG&E proposes to conduct the following work:

- Install a new 230-kV overhead transmission line on eleven existing tubular steel poles (four within the coastal zone) located within existing SDG&E right-of-way;
- Install a new all-dielectric self-supporting (ADSS) communication cable, in an underbuild position, on the existing steel poles;
- Install aerial marker balls on the existing shield wire as required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA);
- Install one deepwell anode adjacent to an existing metal pipeline running alongside Sorrento Valley Parkway within Los Peñasquitos Canyon, in order to mitigate for potential corrosion of the pipeline from the nearby alternating current transmission line. The anode would require the installation of a small (13' x 13' x 35' tall) aboveground steady state decoupler (SSD) structure on the road shoulder to connect the pipeline to the installed deepwell anode.

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Within the coastal zone, SDG&E would carry out the proposed transmission line and cable installation work from five work areas at the bases of existing transmission poles, and from one cable stringing site. Aerial manlifts (e.g., bucket trucks) and/or helicopters would be used to install the new transmission and communications cables to the poles, pulling the cables from the stringing site. The stringing site and the two southernmost work sites occur within an existing parking lot; the other three work sites within the coastal zone occur along and within existing dirt access roads and maintenance pads within the SDG&E right-of-way. The various work sites would be accessed along the existing dirt roads and paved streets (for the southern sites). SDG&E also proposes to construct four temporary guard structures to prevent accidentally-dropped conductor cable from coming into contact with pedestrians, vehicles or existing utility lines. The guard structures would be placed within paved areas, bare ground, road shoulder or areas of ornamental vegetation, and would avoid native vegetation and habitats. Anticipated equipment for conductor and fiber optic cable stringing include bucket trucks, line trucks, portable generators and air compressors, pulling rig, wire tensioner, tool van, wire truck, and water truck.

The deepwell anode would be installed on bare ground along the shoulder of Sorrento Valley Parkway. A well-drilling truck would be used to install a borehole to a depth of approximately 150 feet below ground surface. The borehole would be flushed with water to clean out debris, a grounding cable and grounding rod would be installed in the borehole, and the hole would be backfilled and capped with bentonite clay. The deepwell would then be connected to the SSD structure via a copper cable installed in a five-foot deep, 1-foot wide, ten-foot long trench. The work area for deepwell installation would include bare ground on the road shoulder, an existing sidewalk, and would extend into the eastbound lane of the existing two-lane road. Anticipated construction equipment for deepwell installation would include a backhoe, mini excavator, well drilling truck, and water truck. All drill cuttings and backflow water generated during drilling and cleaning would be pumped to the surface, captured, and stored in a tank. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize soil disturbance and runoff.

Project construction within the coastal zone is expected to last approximately six weeks, including site preparation and cleanup, though the various project activities may not occur consecutively. Deepwell anode installation would last approximately one week. Work would be performed during daylight hours, typically six days per week (excluding Sundays and holidays).

The project sites in the coastal zone occur in both the Local Coastal Program jurisdiction of the City of San Diego and the retained jurisdiction of the Commission. The City has requested that the Commission review the project as a consolidated permit pursuant to Section 30601.3 of the Coastal Act.

**Rationale:** For the following reasons, the proposed development will not adversely impact coastal resources, public access, or public recreation opportunities, and is consistent with past Commission actions in the area and Chapter Three policies of the Coastal Act.

- **Sensitive Habitats & Species:** The proposed work would occur in paved or developed areas, within ornamental vegetation, on the road shoulder of Sorrento Valley Parkway, or on bare ground within existing dirt access roads and maintenance pads, with no direct encroachment on the wetlands, sensitive habitat areas, and native vegetation or sensitive habitat areas, including

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Diegan coastal sage scrub, mulefat scrub, bulrush marsh and riparian woodlands, which occur in the vicinity of the project work sites and access routes. No new permanent structures would be placed within these habitats or existing natural buffers. Existing seasonal pools in road ruts and depressions within the access roads and work pads do not support endangered San Diego or Riverside fairy shrimp. A qualified biological observer would be present at all work sites adjacent to habitat areas to monitor for and prevent direct adverse impacts to sensitive wildlife species with the potential to occur in areas adjacent to project sites.

Indirect impacts to sensitive wildlife, in particular to nesting birds, could result from noise generated during project activities and borehole drilling during deepwell anode installation in particular. Noise generated during borehole drilling would be limited in duration (intermittently for less than one week) and localized to a single location, but could nonetheless result in noise levels of up to 85 dBA at 50 feet. At the deepwell drilling site, which is located near Los Peñasquitos Creek and several habitats (i.e., riparian woodlands, coastal sage scrub) with potential to support federally-listed coastal California gnatcatcher, southwester willow flycatcher, and Bell's least vireo, and other sensitive avian species, and at any other coastal zone work sites adjacent to potential nesting habitat, SDG&E would implement a number of protective measures. Specifically, where there is potential nesting habitat for sensitive species, activities with potential to generate noise in excess of an hourly average threshold of 60 dB, or 3 dB above the existing background noise for a site, whichever is higher, would be avoided during the March 1 to September 15 breeding/nesting season to the maximum extent feasible. If avoidance of the breeding season is not possible, SDG& E would implement additional mitigation measures to avoid significant impacts, including the following:

- pre-project nesting bird surveys to identify active nests;
- establishment of appropriate no-disturbance buffers around active nests to ensure noise levels do not exceed the above thresholds;
- if needed, use of noise attenuation devices;
- monitoring of nest sites for signs of disturbance;
- if signs of disturbance are observed, suspension of project activities until after the breeding season or effective noise attenuation strategies have been implemented.

With the proposed avoidance and mitigation measures in place, the project would avoid significant disruption of sensitive habitats and wildlife species.

- **Water Quality:** The project will employ construction BMPs and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to minimize erosion, sediment mobilization, runoff and impacts to water quality. Drill cuttings and groundwater extracted during borehole drilling for the deepwell anode would be collected and reused or disposed of in accordance with federal and state regulations; no discharge to surface waters, natural drainages or storm drains would occur. All vehicles and equipment used during the project would be stored and refueled offsite in order to minimize the possibility of spills in natural areas. SDG&E will also implement a Hazardous Substances Control and Emergency Response Plan to minimize the potential for and effectively respond to contaminant spills.
- **Visual Resources:** Project vehicles and equipment, including the drill rig used for deepwell anode installation, would be in place only temporarily, and would thus avoid significant impacts to scenic resources.

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- **Public Access & Recreation:** Project activities will be limited to dirt access roads and maintenance pads within the SDG&E right-of-way, avoiding designated hiking trails within Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. However, several of the access roads may be used informally by the public to connect to the official trail network. To avoid impacts to public access along these routes, SDG&E would designate project personnel to maintain safety buffers and allow safe passage through active work sites, and provide detours and alternate routes as needed. Overhead transmission line stringing operations and deepwell anode installation may require short-term traffic restrictions (e.g., closure of one lane) along Sorrento Valley Road, but vehicle access to the Preserve and other recreation areas would be maintained, and any disruptions of public access would be minor and temporary.

This waiver will not become effective until reported to the Commission at its meeting and the site of the proposed development has been appropriately noticed, pursuant to 13054(b) of the California Code of Regulations. The Notice of Pending Permit shall remain posted at the site until the waiver has been validated and no less than seven days prior to the Commission hearing. If four (4) Commissioners object to this waiver of permit requirements, a coastal development permit will be required.

Sincerely,

John Ainsworth  
Executive Director



Joseph Street  
Environmental Scientist

cc: File