

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E; the Applicant), a regulated California utility, filed an application (Application A. 16-04-022) for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the Tie-Line (TL) 695 and TL 6971 Reconductor Project (proposed project) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The application was filed on April 22, 2016, and was accompanied by a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA). The CPUC deemed the application complete on September 9, 2016.

This Draft 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.)
- CPUC CEQA Rule 2.4 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 mitigated.

The CPUC has prepared this IS/MND to examine the direct and indirect environmental impacts associated with the proposed project and feasible mitigation measures that would reduce or

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural, Tribal Cultural, and Paleontological Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

## 1.3 AGENCY USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

### 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 the regulation of investor-owned public utilities, including SDG&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 SDG&E's application for a PTC to construct, operate, and maintain the proposed project. Should the CPUC decide to adopt the IS/MND, it must find that (1) the document reflects the lead agency's independent

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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 program for mitigation monitoring and reporting (see Section 4: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan) when adopting the IS/MND.

### 1.3.2 Federal Agencies

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

### 1.3.3 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 San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) are State Responsible Agencies because they would issue discretionary permits for the proposed project. The California Coastal Commission (CCC) is a trustee agency for the portion of the proposed project that would be located within the coastal zone, and California Department of Parks and Recreation is a trustee agency for the portion of the project within the State of California lease area within Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton (MCB CPEN).

### 1.3.4 Required Permits and Approvals

No local discretionary (e.g., use) permits are required because the CPUC has preemptive discretionary jurisdiction over the construction, operation, and maintenance of SDG&E facilities in California. SDG&E must obtain all ministerial building and encroachment permits from local jurisdictions. 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, or other State agencies or the federal government. SDG&E would participate in consultations with and obtain permits, approvals, and licenses from federal, State, and local agencies as shown in Table 1.3-1.

**Table 1.3-1 Potentially Required Permits and Approvals**

Permit/Authorization	Agency	When is the permit/authorization required?
<b>Federal</b>		
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Compliance	MCB CPEN	Issuance of a new or modified easement on MCB CPEN
Training Area Request	MCB CPEN	Access to training areas for construction equipment and personnel
New Easement and Easement Modification	DoN	Construction of facilities on MCB CPEN outside of existing easements

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Permit/Authorization	Agency	When is the permit/authorization required?
Federal Endangered Species Act, Biological Opinion	USFWS	Impacts on federally listed species during installation of new facilities
Clean Water Act Section 404 <sup>a</sup>	USACE	Discharge of dredged or fill materials to waters of the US
Airspace Obstruction Analysis	FAA	Construction of overhead facilities that may require aerial markers or lighting
Airspace Scheduling	MCB CPEN	Helicopter activities within MCB CPEN restricted airspace, R-2503
Access Road Grading/Maintenance Authorization	MCB CPEN	Prior to SDG&E annual access road grading/maintenance activities
State		
PTC and CEQA compliance	CPUC	Overall project approval and CEQA review
National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Construction General Permit (CAS2012-0006-DWQ)	State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)	Stormwater discharges associated with construction activities that disturb more than 1 acre of land
Order R9-2008-0002 General Waste Discharge Requirements for Discharges from Groundwater Extraction and Similar Discharges to Surface Waters within the San Diego Region Except for San Diego Bay	SDRWQCB	Construction discharges from construction dewatering
Section 401 Water Quality Certification <sup>a</sup>	SDRWQCB	Discharge of dredged or fill materials to waters of the US
Coastal Development Permit	CCC	Construction of privately held facilities in the coastal zone
California Endangered Species Act Consistency Determination	CDFW	Incidental take of state-listed species during installation of new facilities where USFWS has issued a Biological Opinion for take of the species
Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement	CDFW	Discharge of material to a lake or streambed
Note:		
<sup>a</sup> The preliminary project design avoids impacts on waters of the state and waters of the US. The need for these permits will be determined during final project design.		

### 1.3.5 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 and at the noticed public

## 1 INTRODUCTION

informational meeting. All comments received will be addressed in the Final IS/MND. Written comments may be submitted to any of the following:

Mail: Mr. John E. Forsythe, AICP  
CPUC Project Manager  
c/o Panorama Environmental, Inc.  
1 Embarcadero Center, Suite 740  
San Francisco, CA 94111

FAX: (650) 373-1211

Email: TL695and6971@panoramaenv.com

An informational public meeting on the Draft IS/MND will be held at the Holiday Inn, San Clemente Downtown Del Mar Room located at 111 South Avenida de la Estrella, San Clemente, CA 92672 on May 15, 2017 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm.

### 1.4 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 Plan.** Provides a discussion of the CPUC's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) requirements for the project if approved by the CPUC. This section includes mitigation measures 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.
- **Section 5: Report Preparation.** Identifies the preparers of the IS/MND and the public agencies consulted during preparation of the IS/MND.
- **Appendix A: Detailed Proposed Project Route Maps.** Provides detailed locations of all proposed project components on an aerial map base, including all unpaved access routes and staging yards.
- **Appendix B: Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Modeling.** Provides the calculation spreadsheets and summary tables for emissions modeling.
- **Appendix C: Biological Resources Supporting Information.** Includes special-status species tables and figures.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

- **Appendix D: Cultural Resources Supporting Information.** Provides records of communication with Native American tribes and maps of cultural resource survey boundaries.
- **Appendix E: Construction Fire Prevention Plan.** Defines the fire risk and proposed fire prevention measures for the project.