

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



May 24, 2013

Ms. Cristina Holstine
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Land Planner, Technical and Land Services
245 Market Street, Room 1054A
San Francisco, CA 94105-1702

Subject: Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station – Review of Minor Project Modifications #8 and #9

Dear Ms. Holstine:

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has reviewed Pacific Gas & Electric Company's (PG&E's) request for Minor Project Modification (MPM) #8, submitted by email on April 24, 2013, and MPM #9, submitted on May 15, 2013, for the approved Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station Project (project) (Attachments A and B). The CPUC has reviewed these requests and determined that PG&E's proposed actions would be consistent with the approved Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) and would not result in new significant impacts, or significantly greater impacts, than those addressed in the Final IS/MND for the project. A description of proposed actions and an analysis of potential impacts are included below.

MPM #8

Proposed Action

PG&E requests to substitute equal methods for wheel washers to prevent dirt from being tracked onto San Juan Grade Road. Applicant Proposed Measure (APM) Air Quality-1, item 8, states: "Install wheel washers at the entrance to construction sites for all exiting trucks." Other methods can be equally effective in controlling dust and are preferable because they do not require use of water. PG&E requests the option to use other methods to prevent trackout (e.g., rumble strips, shovels, brooms, and street sweepers) as a substitution for wheel washers.

Analysis

Use of wheel washers is a mitigation measure included in Table 8-2 of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (MBUAPCD) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. Wheel washers are used to reduce air quality impacts associated with particulate matter 10 micrometers or less (PM₁₀). Alternative methods of track-out control such as rumble strips, shovels, brooms, and street sweeps consist of a technological substitution, and are equivalent to the use of wheel washers for this purpose. Use of these alternative methods would satisfy the requirements of MBUAPCD (MBUAPCD 2013) (Attachment A).¹ No new or additional environmental impacts would occur from implementation of this MPM. The desired outcome resulting from implementation of APM Air Quality-1 (i.e., reduction of PM₁₀) would be the same

¹ MCUAPCD. 2013. Email from Alan Romero, MCUAPCD, to Janet Liver, TRC Companies, Cristina Holstine, PG&E, and Amy Clymo, MCUAPCD. May 13, 2013.

as that identified in the Final IS/MND. MPM #8 would reduce potential hydrology impacts because water would not be required to implement the alternative methods and the possibility of runoff from the wheel washer into the adjacent jurisdictional wetlands and creek would be eliminated. Impacts to all other environmental resources would be the same as those identified in the Final IS/MND. No new impacts would occur as a result of this substitution.

Conclusion

CPUC staff finds the changes proposed in PG&E's request for MPM #8 are not substantial; would not result in new, or significantly greater, impacts to the environment; and do not present new substantial information that would change the findings presented in the Final IS/MND. The MPM is consistent with the Final IS/MND and no additional CEQA analysis or decisions are required.

MPM #9

Proposed Action

PG&E requests to cut grass on PG&E property during the construction phase of the project. The area requested to be cut is an approximately 1.5-acre grassy area ("island") that is within the exclusion fence surrounding the switching station and access road work areas (see map in Attachment A). The 1.5-acre area was not identified as an area of temporary disturbance in the IS/MND. PG&E requests the ability to cut vegetation from this additional area. PG&E has proposed to cut the grass either with a brush hog (mower) and/or by laborers using hand-held weed whackers. The monitoring biologist would survey the area for nesting birds and special-status species immediately prior to cutting the grass by walking transects through the area.

Panorama Environmental, Inc. contacted CDFW regarding the proposed vegetation removal. CDFW indicated that the vegetation removal would be consistent with the Incidental Take Permit and Streambed Alteration Agreement as long as the vegetation is removed using hand-held weed whackers, the activity does not result in additional ground disturbance and avoids disturbance of the drainage adjacent to the proposed access road.² CDFW does not agree with PG&E's statement that the area of vegetation removal is not suitable California Tiger Salamander (CTS) habitat; however, CDFW finds that the use of hand tools to remove vegetation would not result in additional impacts to CTS (refer to Attachment B). The use of a brush hog, which was proposed by PG&E is therefore not an acceptable means of vegetation removal for this area.

The grassy area is currently enclosed within orange construction fencing to prevent inadvertent use of the area by construction crews (e.g., parking or staging). This fence would remain in place and no vehicle access would be permitted once the grass is cut. The goal of cutting the grass is to minimize the potential for nesting birds to use this area, which is surrounded by project work areas.

² Bahm, Sarah. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Personal Communication with Aaron Lui, Panorama Environmental, May 24, 2013.

Analysis

The MPM was reviewed to determine whether it would result in a new significant environmental effect or would substantially increase the severity of a previously identified significant environmental effect. It is assumed that only hand tools would be used for vegetation removal to be consistent with CDFW's request. The MPM is consistent with the analysis presented in the Final IS/MND and additional CEQA review is not required.

Aesthetics

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would not change the location or dimensions of the switching station facility. The grass would be maintained at a shorter height throughout the duration of construction, which would have a negligible impact on the aesthetics of the area immediately surrounding the project site. Cutting the grass within the island would not result in new or more severe aesthetic impacts from those analyzed in the Final IS/MND.

Agriculture and Forestry Resources

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would not result in new or increased impacts to agriculture or forestry resources. The project is located on agricultural lands subject to a Williamson Act contract which is used as grazing land. Cutting the grass would not result in additional impacts to agricultural lands or forestry resources beyond those considered in the Final IS/MND, as the entire switching station area was addressed.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

Less than significant impact. Cutting the grass within the island would require use of hand-held weed whackers, which require gasoline fuel for operation. Use of these tools would result in an increase in construction emissions. The only emissions threshold established for project construction is for PM₁₀. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of cutting the grass; therefore, use of weed whackers would not result in an increase in PM₁₀ emissions. Cutting the grass would not result in a new significant impact to air quality or greenhouse gases.

Biological Resources

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would not change impacts to biological resources from those assessed in the Final IS/MND. The monitoring biologist would survey the area for nesting birds and special-status species immediately prior to cutting the grass by walking transects through the area. If any nesting birds or special-status species are found, applicable mitigation measures (MMs), as described in the Final IS/MND, would be implemented to avoid impacting nesting activity. Cutting the grass would not result in a new significant impact to biological resources.

Cultural Resources

No additional impact. The location of the grassy area is within the project study area that was surveyed and reviewed for cultural resources³ as part of preparation and analysis of the Final

³ TRC, March 2010. Cultural Resources Investigation for the Crazy Horse Switching Station Project, Monterey County, California.

IS/MND. No resources were identified and no ground disturbance would occur within this area. Cutting the grass would not result in new or increased impacts to cultural resources.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would not result in additional soil disturbance and would not change impacts to geology, soils, and seismicity from those assessed in the Final IS/MND.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would not create new or greater hazards, or require use of additional hazardous materials other than those analyzed in the Final IS/MND. Implementation of applicable APMs and MMs would ensure potential impacts from hazards and hazardous materials remain the same as those analyzed in the Final IS/MND.

Hydrology and Water Quality

No additional impact. A portion of the proposed grass removal area is located within a CDFW jurisdiction drainage. Cutting grass using hand held equipment has been authorized by CDFW (Attachment B) and would create additional impacts to the drainage. The grass would be cut without causing ground disturbance and the area would not be used as a project work space. Cutting the grass using hand held equipment would not create new or greater impacts than those analyzed in the Final IS/MND. PG&E shall further clarify avoidance and non-disturbance methods for cutting grass in the drainage with CDFW, as needed.

Land Use and Planning

No additional impact. The approximately 1.5 acres of grass to be cut is within the 25-acre parcel of land purchased by PG&E for the project. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on land use and planning.

Mineral Resources

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on mineral resources.

Noise

Less than significant impact. The grass removal area is within the study area evaluated for the Final IS/MND. Cutting the grass within the island would require use of hand-held weed whackers. Noise generated by these tools would be temporary, short-term, and insignificant in the context of other earth-disturbing activities (e.g., grading) currently occurring at the project site. Noise generated by use of the grass-trimming equipment would not result in greater noise levels than those analyzed in the Final IS/MND. Applicable APMs, as described in the Final IS/MND, would be implemented to ensure potential impacts from noise remain the same as those analyzed in the Final IS/MND.

Population and Housing

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on population and housing.

Ms. Cristina Holstine

March 24, 2013

Page 5

Public Services

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on public services.

Recreation

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on recreation.

Transportation and Traffic

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on transportation and traffic.

Utilities and Service Systems

No additional impact. Cutting the grass within the island would have no impact on utilities and service systems.

Conclusion

CPUC staff finds the changes proposed in PG&E's request for MPM #9 are not substantial; would not result in new, or significantly greater, impacts to the environment; and do not present new substantial information that would change the findings presented in the Final IS/MND. The MPM is consistent with the Final IS/MND and no additional CEQA analysis or decisions are required.

Please contact me or Susanne Heim at Panorama Environmental, Inc., if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Andrew Barnsdale
CPUC Project Manager

- cc: Susanne Heim, Panorama Environmental, Inc.
- Aaron Lui, Panorama Environmental, Inc.
- Janet Liver, TRC
- Judi Mosley, PG&E Attorney

Attachments:

- Attachment A Email from Alan Romero, MBUAPCD dated May 13, 2013
- Attachment B Email from Sarah Bahm, CDFW dated May 24, 2013

Attachment A

Aaron Lui

From: Alan Romero <ARomero@mbuapcd.org>
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2013 5:07 PM
To: Liver, Janet
Cc: Cristina Holstine; Amy Clymo
Subject: RE: PG&E Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station Project: Wheel Washers

Ms. Liver,

I spoke with Mr. Aaron Lui last Thursday and on my request he forwarded photos of the project site showing the track out/fugitive dust control methodology currently being used. The Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District (District) asserts that the existing methodology is an acceptable alternative to a wheel washing station in controlling fugitive dust per the District CEQA Air Quality Guidelines. In addition, should a nuisance complaint be filed with the District, a compliance inspector will be sent immediately to the site to ensure that fugitive dust is not causing a public nuisance per District Rule 402.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if the District may be of further assistance.

Thanks and Regards,

*Alan Romero
Air Quality Planner III
Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District
831.647.9411 x 241*

From: Liver, Janet [<mailto:jliver@trcsolutions.com>]
Sent: Friday, May 10, 2013 12:25 PM
To: Alan Romero
Cc: Cristina Holstine
Subject: PG&E Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station Project: Wheel Washers

Mr. Romero,

I am supporting Cristina Holstine on the PG&E Crazy Horse Canyon Switching Station Project in the role of Compliance Supervisor. She told me she called you yesterday morning (before heading on vacation) regarding a request PG&E has submitted to the CPUC to allow the use of alternatives to wheel washers on this project. I expect she informed you that as alternatives to wheel washers for controlling particulate emissions at the entry/exit of the construction site on San Juan Grade Road, PG&E proposes implementation of the following to achieve the same result:

- Use of additional rumble strips and gravel at entry/exit
- Removal of soil from wheels by hand (shovel) prior to trucks exiting the site
- Use of push brooms and shovels following the exit of a vehicle should dirt be tracked onto the road
- Daily monitoring and maintenance of the entry/exit and use of street sweepers on the road in the vicinity of the entry/exit location

I gather you informed her that the use of alternative methods to achieve the same result is acceptable and that you would be sending written confirmation to this effect. It is my understanding that Cristina would have provided you with my email address as well as hers, but I wanted to reach out to you in the event she had not, so that I can continue to address this matter in her absence. (If you have yet to send her confirmation, a reply to this email acknowledging the use of the above-mentioned alternative measures as an alternative to wheel washers on this project is sufficient documentation, and the email will be forwarded to the CPUC project manager.)

If you require any supporting documentation in support of PG&E's request, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

Janet

Janet Liver
Senior Project Manager



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Ms. Cristina Holstine
March 24, 2013
Page 7

Attachment B

Susanne Heim

From: Bahm, Sarah@Wildlife
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2013 1:29 PM
To: Aaron Lui
Cc: Susanne Heim; Andrew Barnsdale; Ferranti, Annee@Wildlife
Subject: RE: Crazy Horse: Minor Project Modification Request #9 - Cutting Grass

Aaron,

CDFW concurs that PG&E removing grass in the "island" area would not require amending the ITP and LSAA for the project, as long as they use hand tools (weed whackers) to remove the grass, have no ground disturbing activities within this area (no equipment other than hand tools), and avoid disturbing the drainage within this area. We do not concur with PG&E's statement that this area is not suitable habitat to support CTS, however, if they use only hand tools, there should not be any additional impacts to CTS.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thanks,

Sarah

Sarah Bahm
Environmental Scientist
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Region 4
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559-243-4014 x306
Sarah.Bahm@wildlife.ca.gov
www.wildlife.ca.gov

From: Aaron Lui [<mailto:aaron.lui@panoramaenv.com>]
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2013 1:17 PM
To: Bahm, Sarah@Wildlife
Cc: Susanne Heim; Andrew Barnsdale
Subject: RE: Crazy Horse: Minor Project Modification Request #9 - Cutting Grass

Hi Sarah,

Thank you for your call this afternoon. In the interest of getting back to PG&E quickly so they can move forward with the grass cutting, can you confirm what we discussed on the phone? In summary, you stated that CDFW is okay with PG&E removing grass in the "island" area (as shown in the attached Minor Project Modification #9) without amending the ITP and LSAA for the project, as long as they use hand tools to remove the grass, avoid ground disturbance, and avoid disturbance of the drainage adjacent to the permanent access road (to be constructed).

Please let me know if you need anything else or have any other questions.

Thank you,
Aaron

From: Aaron Lui [mailto:aaron.lui@panoramaenv.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 21, 2013 11:08 AM
To: 'Sarah.Bahm@wildlife.ca.gov'
Cc: Susanne Heim (susanne.heim@panoramaenv.com); Andrew Barnsdale
Subject: FW: Crazy Horse: Minor Project Modification Request #9 - Cutting Grass

Hi Sarah,

In regards to our conversation this morning, please find the attached variance request we received from PG&E. We plan to address their statement that they don't intend to add the area to the ITP acreage by requiring documentation from CDFW (email or letter) approving the action, unless you don't think it will be an issue. Please let me know if you think approvals or amendments may be required for the project SAA and ITP, so we can plan accordingly.

Thank you,
Aaron

Aaron Lui, Environmental Scientist | GIS Specialist
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From: Liver, Janet [mailto:jliver@trcsolutions.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2013 8:03 AM
To: Barnsdale, Andrew; Susanne Heim
Cc: aaron.lui@panoramaenv.com; rita.wilke@panoramaenv.com; Cooney, Kathleen; Cristina Holstine
Subject: Crazy Horse: Minor Project Modification Request #9 - Cutting Grass

Andrew/Susanne,

On behalf of Cristina, please find attached the minor project modification request to cut the grass on the approximately 1.5-acre parcel of PG&E property between the permanent access road and the switching station. The request has been identified as request #9 in anticipation of the wheel washer variance being issued as minor modification #8.

Janet

Janet Liver
Senior Project Manager



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