

Decision No. 88057 NOV 1 1977

ORIGINAL

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the matter of the application of SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY for a certificate that the present and future public convenience and necessity require or will require construction and operation by applicant of a single circuit 220-kv transmission line between Edison's existing Pardee-Pastoria No. 3 220-kv transmission line and the California Department of Water Resources' proposed Pyramid Power Plant.

Application No. 57443
(Filed July 11, 1977)

O P I N I O N

Southern California Edison Company (SCE), a California corporation, seeks an order of the Commission granting it a certificate that present and future public convenience and necessity will require the construction and operation of a single circuit 220-kv transmission line from SCE's existing Pardee-Pastoria No. 3, 220-kv transmission line to the proposed Pyramid Hydroelectric Power Plant of the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) near Gorman, Los Angeles County.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR) Process

A Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR) was filed with this application as a separate exhibit in compliance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Resource Agency's Guidelines for the implementation of CEQA, and Rule 17.1 of this Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure (Rules). The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) prepared this Final EIR which is entitled "West Branch Completion Project".

Public Hearings

This report has been reviewed by the public and various state and public agencies in accordance with the State Environmental Guidelines. Public hearing on the environmental issues was held on March 31, 1976 in Newhall, California by DWR. The Final EIR was issued and certified by DWR on January 13, 1977. The notice of determination is attached hereto as Appendix A. No exceptions to the Final EIR were filed with DWR.

Staff Review

The Commission staff evaluated and reviewed the Final EIR and has determined that it is adequate for the Commission's purposes (Rule 17.1(1)(3,4)). On the basis of DWR's Final EIR, the presiding officer has determined that the proposed 220-kv transmission line project, which is a portion of the whole "West Branch Completion Project", will have no significant effects on the environment (see Section 15088 of State Guideline). The Commission may therefore act on this application after considering the information contained in DWR's Final EIR.

Project Description

The proposed project is a 3-mile single circuit 220-kv transmission line in Los Angeles County. The route of the proposed line starts at the Pyramid Power Plant switchyard and runs 0.4 mile east crossing Canada de Los Alamos, old Highway 99, and Interstate Highway 5 to the first angle point (B) on the ridge of Apple Canyon. From there, the route travels northeasterly 0.5 mile to a second angle point (D) on the eastern side of Apple Canyon. From the second angle point to the connection with the Pardee-Pastoria No. 3 line, the preferred route traverses 2.1 miles of rugged mountainous terrain with steep slopes and sparse vegetation. The route also crosses under the two existing SCE Midway-Vincent 500-kv transmission lines just before reaching the tap point.

The proposed transmission line, with its attendant 150 feet wide right-of-way, would use grey galvanized lattice steel square based towers. These towers would average 90 feet in height and would average about 1,700 feet apart. Six to eight miles of main and stub access roads would be constructed by blading the land surfaces to produce an unpaved dirt road 12 feet wide. These access roads would follow the natural contour of the land and would be located to provide maximum access for U.S. Forest Service (U.S.F.S.) fire fighting operations.

Need for the Project

The proposed 220-kv transmission line is needed for operation by December 1, 1981 to meet DWR's pumping loads along the California aqueduct. The completion of this project will lower the net energy requirements for water delivery by the California State Water Project to Southern California. In addition, new access roads will improve U.S. Forest Service fire fighting capability.

Alternatives to the Project

The preferred route has the least overall environmental impact and minimum cost among all the alternates considered. This route is the shortest and will result in minimum transmission loss and minimum disturbance to land, vegetation, and wildlife. The difference in elevation between the proposed power plant and the east side of Interstate Highway 5 creates a difficult transmission line crossing for which few alternates were available. The decision to select the preferred route crossing was made in light of the long, highly visible crossings of Alternates 1 and 2.

The alternative of undergrounding is not economically feasible on steep slopes and rugged terrain. Its capital cost is over 15 times the cost of overhead construction. Placing a transmission line underground also requires digging a trench and would have a substantially higher initial environmental impact on land and wildlife.

Helicopter construction method was not selected because some rudimentary access road would be necessary to maintain and repair the line. Limited access would reduce the reliability of the line in an emergency. Cost of helicopter construction would be 30% higher than the conventional method.

The no project alternate will result in loss of the hydroelectric power generation by Pyramid Power Plant.

Environmental Matters

A comprehensive record on environmental matters was developed in DWR's Final EIR on the "West Branch Completion Project". The proposed 220-kv transmission line project, which is a portion of the "West Branch Completion Project", was determined to have no significant impact on the environment. The Commission staff has reviewed DWR's Final EIR and determined that it satisfies the State EIR Guidelines and the Commission's Rule 17.1. Field investigation by staff on the project site was conducted on September 1, 1977. Adverse impacts associated with the project are mostly short-term and insignificant.

The principal adverse impacts of the proposed project are on the flora and fauna of the area through partial disruption of their habitat and removal of 16.5 acres of relatively open space and short chaparral shrubs for tower sites, access road, and line right-of-way. No residential, commercial, industrial or agricultural developments will be disrupted by the project.

The major disturbance to vegetation, wildlife, and traffic will be dust and noise during construction, but the duration will be brief and temporary.

SCE will control construction dust and noise with mitigation measures. These abatement measures will be incorporated into contract specifications. SCE will reseed disturbed areas with native plant species beneficial to wildlife.

Other mitigation measures will include proper design of the access road to provide erosion control, proper transmission line design to minimize electrical effects, scheduling of construction to avoid possible disturbance to deer during the fawning season and to migratory wildlife, use of existing roads whenever possible, restriction of right-of-way clearing to the minimum necessary, and use of grey galvanized steel lattice towers to reduce visual impact. Should previously unknown archaeological resources or historically sensitive areas be discovered during construction, work would be stopped until the proper course of action could be determined by a professional archaeologist.

Findings

The Commission has carefully considered the evidence on environmental matters, especially the contents of DWR's Final EIR and makes the following findings pursuant to Rule 17.1(j)(3,4) of its Rules of Practice and Procedure.

1. Land Resources - Minor alterations of physiographic features will result from the project. The disturbances associated with construction will be of short duration while those associated with operation will affect only a negligible total land area.

2. Biological Resources (vegetation and wildlife) - The major disturbance to vegetation and wildlife will be during construction. The construction contemplated in this project will cause no significant permanent adverse impacts on the biological resources of the area. Other possible adverse impacts will be adequately mitigated by the applicant.

3. Air, Water and Noise - The proposed transmission line is expected to have no adverse impact on the water and insignificant impact on the air and negligible impact on noise of the area.

Audible noise and radio and television interference would increase directly beneath the transmission line. However, these effects would not be significant outside the right-of-way. Very brief radio interference might be experienced by motorists as they pass under the transmission line.

4. Cultural Resources - No significant impact to archaeological, paleontological or historical resources has been identified as a result of the project. A field survey of the archaeological resources along the proposed right-of-way was conducted by Northridge Archaeological Research Center (NARC), California State University, Northridge. The survey showed no signs of substantial remains of archaeological materials. In the event any archaeological materials are discovered during excavation for the transmission line, NARC would be notified so that their value may be rapidly and adequately assessed.

5. Aesthetics - The project will have only a slight visual impact on the landscape of the area. The conductors will contrast with the sky at Interstate Highway 5 crossing. One tower may be visible to motorists in both directions because the topography permits long views. Grey galvanized lattice steel towers were selected to blend into the surrounding area. The revegetation of construction areas as proposed by SCE will further conceal the project while providing beneficial foodstock for wildlife. Excavation and grading will be limited to only that absolutely needed for tower sites and access road construction.

Conclusions

1. The project will deliver hydroelectric power to DWR's California State Water Project Pumping Plants serving a major portion of southern California; its benefits should thus outweigh the minor irreversible environmental impacts; its planned construction and operation is an economic, efficient, and appropriate means of meeting DWR's pumping loads along the California aqueduct.

2. The consequences of not implementing the proposed transmission line would result in the loss of the full hydroelectric energy production capability of the Pyramid Power Plant, and thus the renewable energy source would not be fully utilized.

3. In conformance with General Order No. 131-A, the construction and operation of the 220-kv Pyramid transmission line:

- A. Is reasonably required to meet demands for present and/or future reliable and economic electric service; and
- B. Will not produce an unreasonable burden on natural resources, aesthetics of the area in which the proposed facilities are to be located, public health and safety, air and water quality in the vicinity, or parks, recreational and scenic areas, or historic sites and buildings or archaeological sites.

4. Present and future public convenience and necessity require the construction and operation of this transmission project.

Applicant is placed on notice that operative rights, as such, do not constitute a class of property which may be capitalized or used as an element of value in rate fixing for any amount of money in excess of that originally paid to the state as the consideration for the grant of such rights. Aside from their purely permissive aspect, such rights extend to the holder a full or partial monopoly of a class of business. This monopoly feature may be modified or canceled at any time by the state, which is not in any respect limited as to the number of rights which may be given.

The action taken herein is not to be considered as indicative of amounts to be included in future proceedings for the purpose of determining just and reasonable rates.

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The Notice of Determination for the project is attached as Appendix A to this decision, and the Commission staff's evaluation of DWR's Final EIR has been completed in compliance with CEQA and the Guidelines. The Commission has reviewed and considered the information contained in DWR's Final EIR. Public hearing is not necessary.

Based on the foregoing, the Commission concludes that 220-kv Pardee-Pastoria No. 3 to Pyramid Power Plant transmission line should be authorized in the manner set forth in the following order.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that a certificate of public convenience and necessity is granted to Southern California Edison Company to construct and operate the 220-kv transmission line in Los Angeles County, California, as proposed by Southern California Edison Company in this proceeding.

The effective date of this order shall be twenty days after the date hereof.

Dated at San Francisco, California, this 1st day of NOVEMBER, 1977.

Roland Bateman
President
William Quinn
James L. Sturgen
Richard D. Howell
David L. DeBord
Commissioners

A 57443

Memorandum

To : Environmental Impact Branch
California Public Utilities Commission
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Date : July 20, 1977

File No.:

Attention: Louise Huen

Subject: West Branch
Completion Project,
State Water Project

From : Department of Water Resources

In response to a telephone request by Ms. Huen today, here is a copy of our notice of determination to the Secretary of Resources for the West Branch Project. The Department's public hearing on the West Branch Project was held on March 31, 1976, in William S. Hart High School, 24825 Newhall Avenue, Newhall, California.



Robert B. Jansen
Division Engineer
Division of Design and Construction
8-485-6100

ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT BRANCH

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Enclosure

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

CERTIFICATION OF FINAL EIR AND NOTICE OF DETERMINATION

To: Secretary for Resources
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Department of Water Resources
P. O. Box 388
Sacramento, CA 95802

Subject: Certification of Final EIR and Filing of Notice of Determination

Project Title: West Branch Completion Project, State Water Project

State Clearinghouse Number: SCH #76030186

Contact Person: Stephen E. Smith, Chief
Division of Design and Construction
Telephone: (916) 445-6100

Project Location: At upper end of Pyramid Lake in northwest corner of Los Angeles County

Project Description: CONSTRUCTION OF PYRAMID HYDROELECTRIC POWERPLANT AND OTHER NECESSARY RELATED FACILITIES -- INCLUDING A 5.6-MILE PEACE VALLEY PIPELINE, A 3-MILE 220 KV TRANSMISSION LINE, AND AN INCREASE IN THE HEIGHT OF QUAIL LAKE EMBANKMENT.

This is to certify that the Department has prepared an Environmental Impact Report for this project pursuant to provisions of CEQA and the State EIR Guidelines and has reviewed and considered the information contained in the final EIR prior to approval of the project.

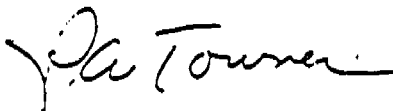
This is to advise that:

1. The Department has decided to carry out the project.
2. The project includes the following mitigation measures:

Disturbed areas will be revegetated to restore wildlife habitat; construction activities will be scheduled to minimize inconvenience to visitors to Pyramid Lake and a temporary water supply will be provided to recreation areas while water is not available from Pyramid Lake; and any archeological or paleontological resources located will be adequately sampled and appropriate measures taken.

3. The Department finds that the approved project will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Approved as to legal
form and sufficiency:



Chief Counsel
Department of Water Resources

(sgd) Robert W. James

Robert W. James
Deputy Director
Department of Water Resources

JAN 13 1977

Date