

Decision 00-01-050 January 20, 2000

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of Southern California Edison
Company for a Permit to Construct Electric
Facilities With Voltage Between 50kV and 200kV:
Valley-Auld Power Line Project.

Application 98-10-015
(Filed October 8, 1998)

**OPINION ADOPTING MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
AND GRANTING A PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT**

Pursuant to General Order (G.O.) 131-D, Southern California Edison Company (SCE) filed this application for a Permit To Construct (PTC) for the Valley-Auld Power Line Project (Valley-Auld Project). This project would be constructed in an unincorporated area in southwestern Riverside County and will provide additional system capacity for expected increased demand for electricity in southwestern Riverside County service area, enhance system voltage profiles, and improve reliability for the area.

Approval of the PTC for this project, under G.O. 131-D, requires compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In compliance with CEQA, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared and issued for public review and comment.

In this order, we adopt this MND and approve the PTC for the Valley-Auld project subject to implementation of the mitigation measures specified in the Mitigation and Implementation Monitoring Plan (MIMP).

In Resolution ALJ 176-3002, dated October 22, 1998, the Commission preliminarily categorized this proceeding as ratesetting, and preliminarily determined that hearings were necessary. No protests have been received.

Given this status, public hearing is not necessary, and it is necessary to alter the preliminary determination made in Resolution ALJ 176-3002.

Background

On October 8, 1998, SCE filed this application for a PTC for the Valley-Auld Project. The Energy Division's environmental review staff (Staff) deemed the application complete on December 23, 1998.

In compliance with CEQA and Rule 17.1 (f), the proposed MND for the proposed Valley-Auld Project was issued for public comment and review from August 2 through September 1, 1999. Notices of availability of the proposed MND were published in newspapers in the jurisdictions that would potentially be affected by this project. These notices were published in the following newspapers and dates: 1) the Sun City News, August 13 and 20, 1999; 2) the Hemet News, August 5, 1999; 3) the Press Enterprise, August 5, 1999; and 4) the Perris Progress, August 11 and 18, 1999.

Five comment-letters were received on the proposed MND. These comments have been reviewed by Staff and have been taken into account in the Final MND. Staff has also prepared written responses to these comments, which are attached to the Final MND.

In a letter dated September 1, 1999, the State Clearinghouse, Governor's Office of Planning and Research, confirmed that the CPUC has complied with the CEQA reviewing requirements for Draft environmental documents.

Project Description

The proposed project is located in an unincorporated area in southwestern Riverside County, near the cities of Perris, Hemet, and Murrieta (Attachment, Figure 1). The Valley-Auld Project consists of constructing: 1) 0.9 miles of a 115kV power line from SCE's Auld to the Moraga substations, 2) approximately

10.6 miles of a 115kV power line from SCE's Valley and Pauba substations, and 3) removing the Pauba tap on the Auld-Moraga-Pauba power line (Attachment, Figure 2). The Valley-Auld Project would be constructed in two phases.

Phase 1 of the project consists of constructing the 0.9 mile, 115kV power line on 30 wood and three tubular steel poles. This new line will extend from the Auld Substation south along the west-side of Liberty Road until it connects with the existing Auld-Moraga-Pauba 115 kV line (Attachment, Figure 3). The new 115 kV power line will be constructed by overbuilding an existing 12 kV line and 33 kV line.

Phase 2 consists of constructing three segments A1, B, and C1 (Attachment, Figure 4), totaling 10.6 miles of new 115 kV line using 243 wood poles and 13 steel tubular poles from the Valley Substation to the existing Pauba 115 kV line.

Segment A1 is a 1.1-mile segment beginning at the Valley Substation to the east-side of Briggs Road. One third of this route contains no existing facilities and the remaining two thirds of the route contains existing poles carrying an idle 33 kV line and an active 12 kV line. The poles carrying these two lines will be removed and the two existing lines will be placed on new poles with the new 115 kV line. A total of 20 wood poles and 2 steel tubular poles would be placed to complete this segment.

Segment B involves constructing a single-circuit 115 kV line from the eastern endpoint of Segment A1 to the corner of Matthews Road and McLaughlin Road, for a total distance of 0.9 mile. Fifteen wood poles and one steel tubular pole would be placed to complete this segment.

Segment C1 is 8.6-mile long, from the end of Segment B south to the tap point for the existing Pauba 115 kV line. At the intersection of Matthews Road, the line proceeds down the east side of Briggs Road until it reaches Newport Road. At this point, the line crosses over and is aligned on the west side of

Briggs Road. The existing single circuit 115 kV line along Segment C1 would be switched to a double-circuit kV line. All existing power lines would be placed on new poles with the new 115 kV line and all existing poles would be removed. A total of 208 wood poles and 10 steel tubular poles are required to complete this segment.

Mitigated Negative Declaration

In its application, SCE included its Proponents Environmental Assessment (PEA)¹. In compliance with CEQA, Staff prepared an Initial Study² for the proposed Valley-Auld Project that identified potentially significant environmental impacts in the areas of Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, Geology and Soils, and Noise³. However, each of the identified impacts can be mitigated to avoid the impact or reduce it to a level that is less than significant through implementation of the mitigation measures contained in the MND, which SCE has agreed to comply with and incorporate as part of their project.

SCE in its application included certain mitigation measures to be adopted as part of their proposed Project. Staff reviewed and modified these measures to

¹ Rule 17.1 of the Commission's Rules requires the proponent of any project to submit with its application for such project an environmental assessment referred to as PEA. The PEA is used by the Commission to focus on any impacts of the project which may be of concern and to prepare the Commission's Initial Study to determine whether the project would need a Negative Declaration or an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

² An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis that is prepared by the Lead Agency to assess the potential environmental impacts of a project and determine whether an EIR or a Negative Declaration must be prepared.

³ The check list in the Initial Study was incorrectly checked off. The Final MND has been corrected.

ensure that these measures effectively mitigate the identified environmental impacts. These mitigation measures and monitoring requirements are set forth in the MIMP attached to the Final MND. Implementation of this MIMP is a condition of approval of this PTC.

CEQA allows for the issuance of a Negative Declaration when it is found that a proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment. Where there are potentially significant impacts, but all such impacts can be reduced to a level of insignificance by the execution of appropriate mitigation measures, then a decision-making agency may issue an MND, accompanied by a Mitigation Monitoring Program. In either event, the agency need not prepare an Environmental Impact Report, as described in CEQA. Here the staff has appropriately concluded that, as long as SCE complies with the mitigation measures in the MND, the project will not have a significant impact on the environment. Thus, the MND is appropriate and should be adopted.

Electric and Magnetic Field Reduction Measures

Pursuant to Section X.A. of G.O. 131-D, in an application for a PTC, the utility must describe the measures it has taken or proposes to take to reduce the potential exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) generated by the proposed facilities. These measures must be in compliance with prior commission orders. In Decision (D.) 93-11-013, the Commission concluded that when constructing new projects, a utility should implement at a minimum, all no-cost steps it can to reduce any resulting changes to EMF exposure.

SCE has proposed various low-cost and no-cost measures in its Valley-Auld Project to comply with the CPUC's D.93-11-013. SCE prepared EMF Field Management Plans for the Auld-Moraga 115 kV transmission line (Phase 1) and the Valley-Pauba 115 kV transmission line (Phase 2).

Permit to Construct

The proposed project, as revised by the mitigation measures contained in the Final MND, will not have a significant impact on the environment, thus, we will grant the PTC.

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 311(g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

Findings of Fact

1. In compliance with CEQA, Staff prepared an Initial Study for the proposed Valley-Auld Project that identified potentially significant impacts to the environment in the areas of Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Hydrology and Water Quality, and Noise.
2. Each of the identified impacts can be mitigated to avoid the impact or reduce it to a level that is less than significant through implementation of the mitigation measures in the MND.
3. SCE has agreed to comply with and incorporate these mitigation measures as part of their project
4. The MND reflects the independent judgment of this Commission.
5. The content of the MND complies with the requirements of CEQA.

Conclusions of Law

1. The MND has been processed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.
2. The MND has been completed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.
3. The PTC should be granted.
4. The application was uncontested and hearings are not required.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) related to the application in this proceeding is adopted pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.

2. The Mitigation and Implementation Monitoring Plan (MIMP) prepared by the Energy Division for this project is approved and shall be implemented by SCE as a condition of Commission approval of the Permit To Construct.

3. The MND and MIMP are on file with this application and are part of the record in this proceeding.

4. The Permit to Construct for the proposed project in this application is approved and granted.

5. The preliminary determination in Resolution ALJ 176-3002, October 22, 1998, that hearings are necessary in this proceeding is changed to provide that no hearings are required.

6. Application 98-10-015 is closed.

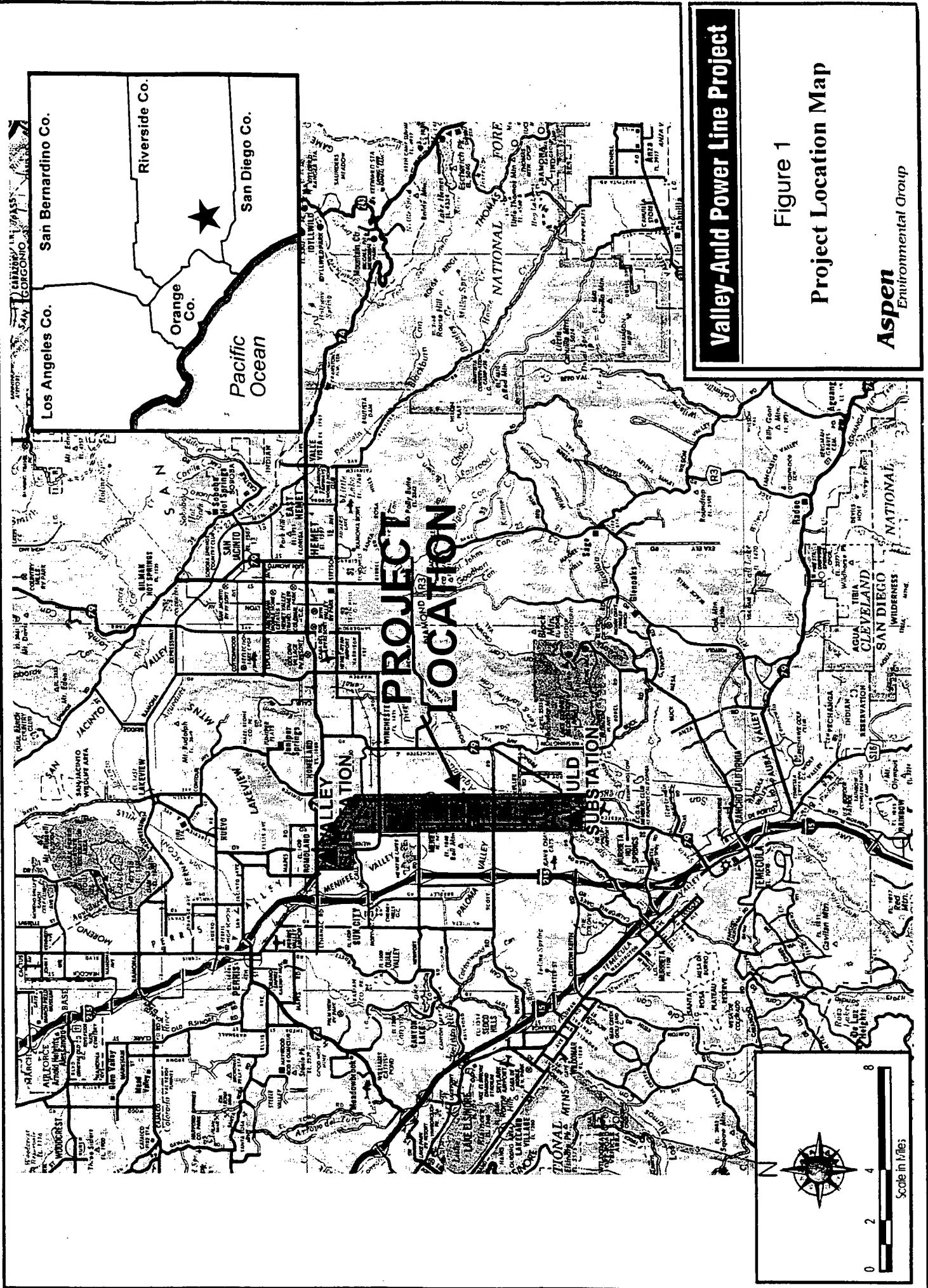
This order becomes effective 30 days from today.

Dated January 20, 2000, at San Francisco, California.

RICHARD A. BILAS
President
HENRY M. DUQUE
JOSIAH L. NEEPER
CARL W. WOOD
LORETTA M. LYNCH
Commissioners

A.98-10-015 ALJ/WRI/eap

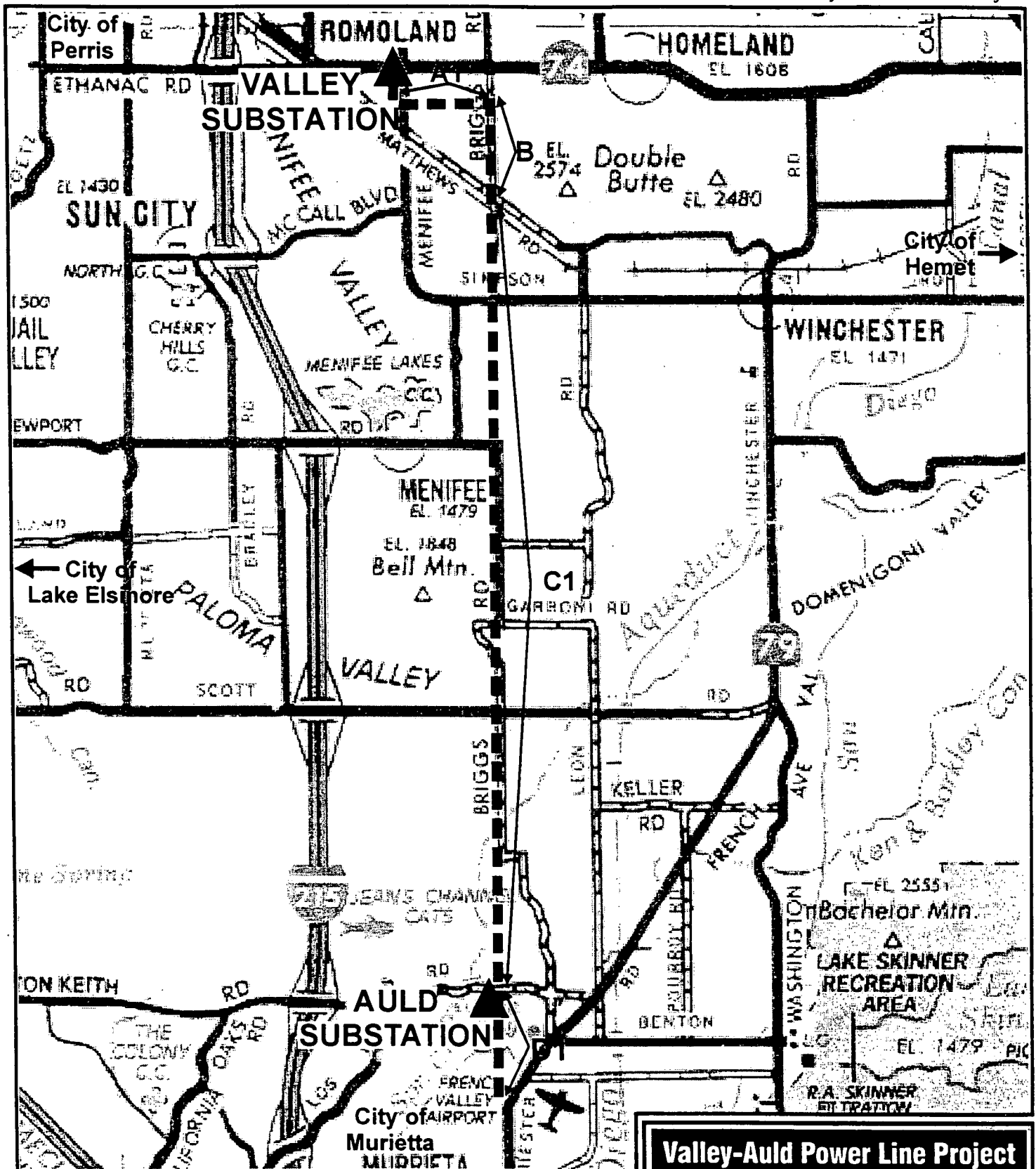
ATTACHMENTS



Valley-Auld Power Line Project

Figure 1
Project Location Map

Aspen
Environmental Group



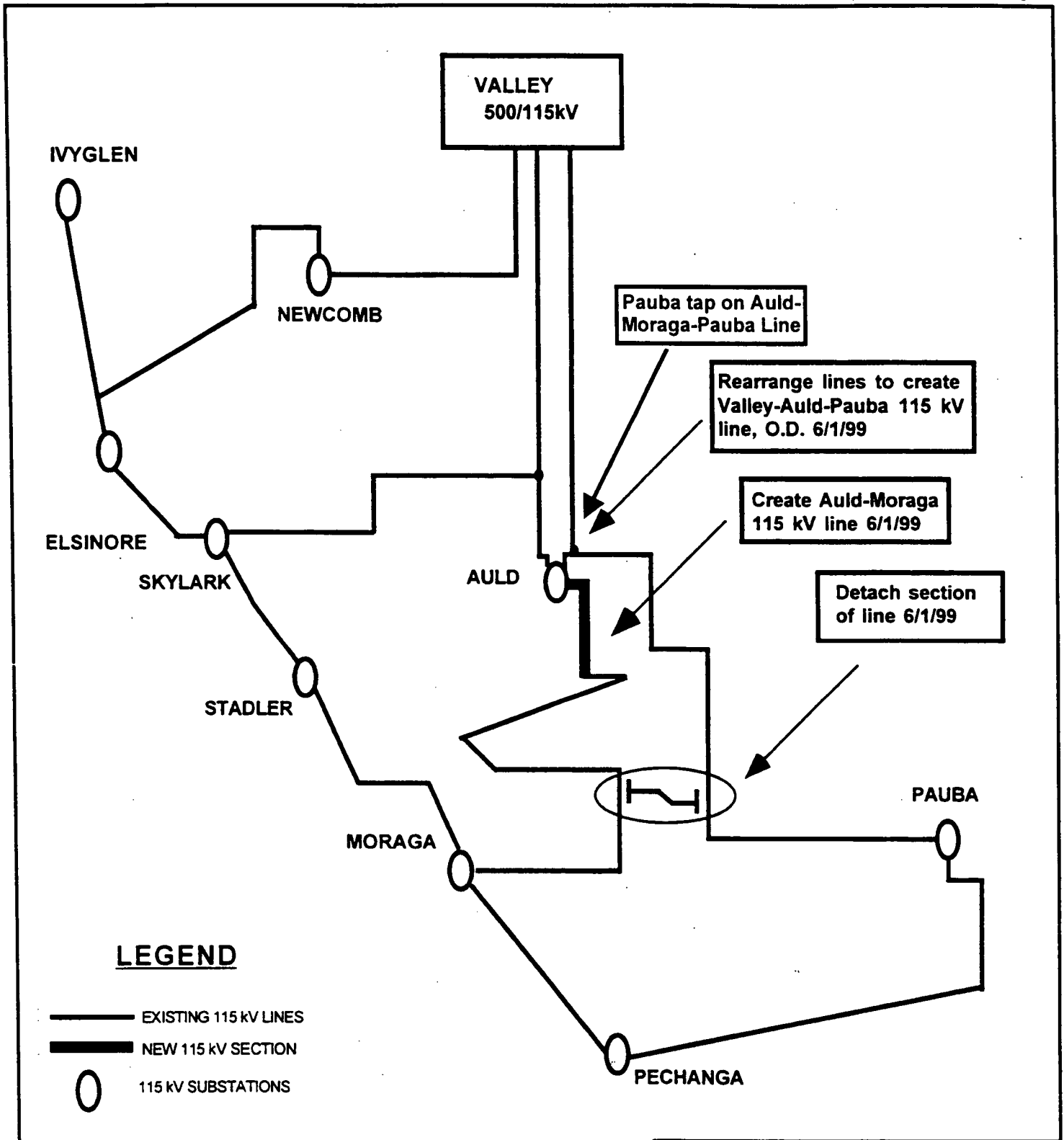
Proposed Action = Segments A1, B, C1, D1



Valley-Auld Power Line Project

Figure 2
Proposed Project Alignment

Aspen
Environmental Group



LEGEND

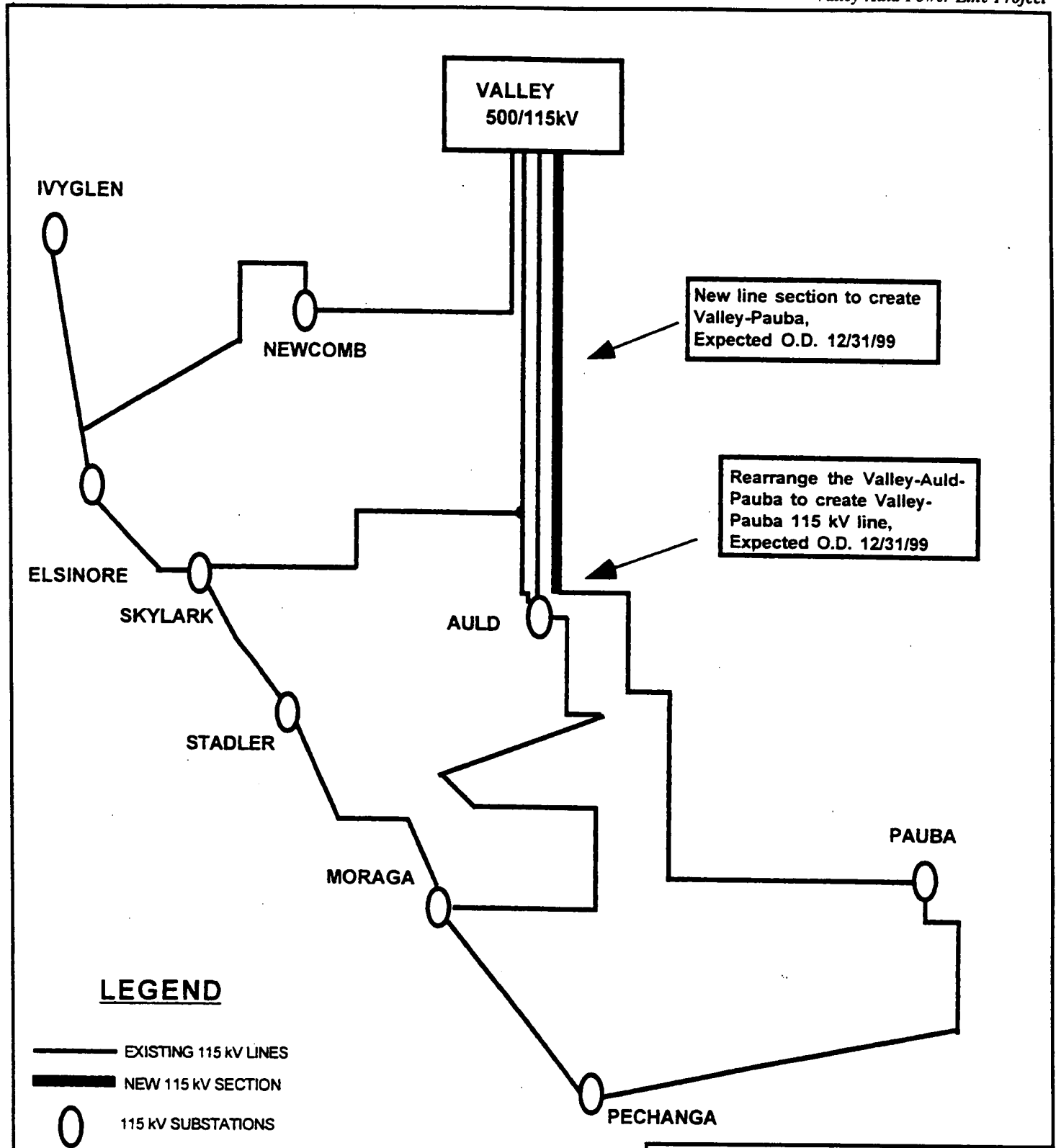
- EXISTING 115 kV LINES
- NEW 115 kV SECTION
- 115 kV SUBSTATIONS

Valley-Auld Power Line Project

Figure 3
1999 Valley 115 kV
System Line Arrangement
Phase 1

Aspen
Environmental Group

Source:
Proponent's Environmental Assessment
Application No. 98-10-05



LEGEND

- EXISTING 115 kV LINES
- NEW 115 kV SECTION
- 115 kV SUBSTATIONS

Source:
Proponent's Environmental Assessment
Application No. 98-10-05



Valley-Auld Power Line Project

Figure 4
1999 Valley 115 kV
System Line Arrangement
Phase 2

Aspen
Environmental Group