

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



July 08, 2011

Susan J. Nelson, AIA
Regulatory Affairs
Southern California Edison
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue, Quad 3D, GO1
Rosemead, CA 91770

RE: Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP), Segments 4-11: Variance Request (VR) #73

Dear Ms. Nelson,

On June 1, 2011, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request for the realignment of one wire stringing site (WSS) to avoid a sensitive resource located in the Segment 10 Transmission Line (T/L) of the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP) in Kern County, California. **This Variance Request is approved by CPUC based on the following factors:**

- SCE submitted the following information:

SCE submitted a request for a Variance to realign one wire stringing site (WSS) needed to construct the Segment 10 T/L of the TRTP in Kern County. Subsequent to the approval of the NTPR (NTP #27 dated March 08, 2011) by the CPUC, a newly identified cultural resource was identified in the approved wire stringing site. The requested realignment is proposed to avoid the newly discovered cultural resource.

The CPUC previously approved the use of a northeast-southwest oriented wire pulling site on the northeast side of Tower 43. Due to the presence of the recently identified sensitive resource within this pulling site, the wire pulling site needs to be repositioned to a north-south orientation on the north side of Tower 43.

As a result of this change, the size of the wire pulling site would increase slightly from 1.7 to 1.8 acres.

- **Biological Resources:** SCE submitted a biological report by ICF International dated May 24, 2011, regarding the Proposed Segment 10 Transmission Line Repositioning of Wire Pulling Site at Construct 43 Variance. The report documents the biological conditions and resources at the realigned wire setup site (Variance Project Component) and a 500-foot buffer (Biological Study Area [BSA]).

The Project Component is located within Mojave creosote bush scrub, and 1.55 acres would be impacted by the wire pulling site. The 500-foot buffer for the Project Component consists primarily of Mojave creosote bush scrub, with some Mojave mixed woody scrub on the eastern perimeter and rabbitbrush scrub on the southeastern perimeter.

Previous focused surveys for special-status plants, burrowing owl, Mohave ground squirrel, Swainson's hawk, and desert tortoise included the BSA (AMEC 2009, 2009c, 2009d, 2009e, 2009f, 2009ai; ICF 2010ag, 2010cq; ICF and Bloom 2010a; ICF and ECORP 2010b). Updated (2011) focused surveys for Swainson's hawk, desert tortoise, and rare plants are currently underway. The BSA was surveyed during special-status plant surveys for Segments 4, 5, and 10 (AMEC 2009c; ICF ag), and no special-status plants were identified in the BSA.

Burrowing owl burrow surveys were conducted along the Segment 10 corridor (AMEC 2009a, 2009f; ICF 2010cq), and any potential and occupied burrows were observed and mapped. No burrowing owl burrows or burrowing owls were identified in the BSA.

The previous focused survey for Mohave ground squirrel along Segment 10 (AMEC 2010d) was negative. However, Mojave creosote scrub provides potential habitat for this species.

Previous protocol-level focused surveys were conducted for Swainson's hawk for Segments 4, 5, and 10 (AMEC 2009ai; ICF and Bloom 2010a). No occupied or unoccupied nests or Swainson's hawks were observed within the BSA.

Focused surveys for desert tortoise (AMEC 2009e; ICF and ECORP 2010b) along Segment 10 were negative.

The Project Component was surveyed and the 500-foot buffer was partially surveyed during the jurisdictional delineation for Segments 4, 5, and 10 (ICF 2010l). No jurisdictional features were observed within the Project Component or 500-foot buffer.

No sensitive biological resources have been identified within the Project Component or the 500-foot buffer.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources: SCE submitted a memorandum dated May 19, 2011, with the Variance Request. Cultural resource record search and surveys, and a paleontological literature review, have been previously conducted for this area (Ahmet et al. 2006; Pacific Legacy 2007, 2008, 2010; Gust and Scott 2009).

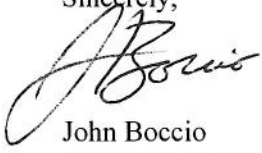
The newly proposed pull-site rotates the originally proposed pull-site from its base at CT-43 approximately 45 degrees, and results in an alignment directly north of CT-43. The move is being proposed to avoid site SEG10-17H, an historic-era ranching site with surface features and artifacts including excavated holes, cans and bottles. The newly proposed pull-site area located directly north of CT-43 is within an area previously surveyed for the TRTP and avoids most of cultural resource site SEG10-17H, although a small portion of the site exists near the south end of the pull-site at the CT-43 Construction Area. The site will be flagged for avoidance during construction and wire stringing activities. An archaeological monitor will be required to monitor ground disturbing activities associated with this TRTP work.

A paleontological review has indicated that the proposed pull-site is located within soils that have the potential to yield paleontological resources (Gust and Scott 2009). Since there is a possibility that paleontological resources exist, paleontological monitoring is recommended when ground disturbing excavation exceeds a depth of two feet.

The conditions noted below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:

- Archaeological monitoring will be required for ground disturbing activities associated with this Variance.
- Paleontological monitoring shall be conducted if construction activities on the road disturb sediment to a depth greater than two feet.
- All conditions required by Notice to Proceed (NTP) #27 shall apply to the subject area and activities.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, NTP #27, and this Variance shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities where applicable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Boccio". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter "J" being particularly large and stylized.

John Boccio
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen