

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



October 3, 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) #93

Dear Ms. Nelson,

On September 30, 2011, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request to allow for a disturbance area at Tower 55A, on Segment 5 Transmission Line (T/L) of the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP) in Los Angeles 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 allow for a disturbance area at Tower 55A, on Segment 5 T/L of the TRTP in Los Angeles County, California. Subsequent to the approval of the NTPR (NTP #15 dated September 10, 2010) by the CPUC, project site conditions have been further evaluated and an additional disturbance area is needed at Tower 55A. Tower 55A is located on a slope and additional area is needed around the CPUC-approved tower disturbance area to allow for grading and slope stabilization activities. The additional disturbance area associated with this change would be approximately 2.4 acres.

- **Biological Resources:** SCE submitted a biological resources report from ICF dated September 30, 2011 for the proposed additional work area at Construct 55A on Segment 5 of the TRTP. The report documents the biological conditions at Construct 55A (Variance Project Component) plus a 500-foot buffer (Biological Study Area [BSA]). Biological resources within the BSA were evaluated during several focused surveys, including 2009, 2010, and 2011 rare plant surveys (AMEC 2009c; ICF 2010ag, 2011cq); 2010 and 2011 tree inventory surveys (ICF 2010bf, 2011cq); 2009, 2010, and 2011 Swainson's hawk survey (AMEC 2009ah; ICF and Bloom 2010a; ICF 2011cq); and 2009 and 2010 burrowing owl surveys (AMEC 2009f; ICF 2010cq1). The biological resources within the BSA were also evaluated during general biological preconstruction surveys, burrowing owl preconstruction surveys, and bat habitat assessment preconstruction surveys within the BSA (ICF 2010bq, 2010bs, 2010cq2, 2011h, 2011i). Additionally, clearance sweeps have been performed in the area at various times. Construction monitoring has been ongoing regularly since the sites in the area became active, and species events and nest events are recorded in the SCE Field Environmental Database (FRED).

Vegetation communities observed in the Variance Project Component include Mojavean juniper woodland scrub and disturbed/developed. During the 2009 focused surveys, short-joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*) was observed within the Variance Project Component (AMEC 2009c). However, during the 2010 focused surveys, it was determined that these individuals were the common beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*) (ICF 2010yy; 2010ag). Vegetation communities observed within the 500-foot buffer include Mojavean juniper woodland scrub, Mojave mixed woody scrub, and disturbed/developed. Beavertail cactus was also observed.

Special-status wildlife species observed within the BSA include loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) (FRED ID 000516).

Jurisdictional resources within the Variance Project Component were evaluated during the 2010 jurisdictional delineation for Segments 4, 5, and 10 (ICF 2010l). Jurisdictional feature 5-44-S-13 overlaps the 500-foot buffer and will be staked as Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and flagged for avoidance. Any additional potential jurisdictional features will also be staked and flagged for avoidance.

No additional impacts to biological resources are anticipated with the implementation of this Variance.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources: SCE submitted a memorandum dated July 29, 2011, titled *TRTP Variance Request – Seg 5, CT-25 and CT-55A Additional Disturbance Areas – Cultural Clearance for Disturbance Area Expansion at CT-25 and CT-55A on Segment 5* with the Variance Request. The memorandum states that no cultural resources will be impacted by the requested additional disturbance area at CT-55A on Segment 5 as part of this Variance Request in support of TRTP. A cultural record search and surveys (Ahmet et al. 2006; Pacific Legacy 2007, 2010a, 2010b), and a paleontological literature review (Gust and Scott 2009), have been previously conducted on Segment 5 for most of the additional work space at CT-55A. Two previously unsurveyed areas at CT-55A were surveyed for this Variance (Pacific Legacy 2011), one on the north and another on the south. The unsurveyed northern area measures approximately 200 by 20-50 feet and the unsurveyed southern area measures approximately 300 by 60 feet. A 100 foot buffer area was also surveyed on the southern area because this parcel is located along the edge of the previously surveyed TRTP. This research and survey identified no cultural resources, but suggested the possibility that paleontological resources may exist.

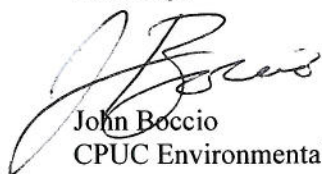
The paleontological review indicated that the expanded work area contains soils that have the potential to yield paleontological resources (Gust and Scott 2009). Since there is a possibility that paleontological resources exist, paleontological monitoring is recommended when ground disturbing excavation exceeds a depth of two feet.

No additional impacts to cultural or paleontological resources are anticipated with the implementation of this Variance.

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

- As proposed, due to the potential for paleontological resources, paleontological monitoring shall be conducted during all ground disturbing project construction activities that exceed a depth of two feet at the Variance project area.
- All conditions required by Notice to Proceed (NTP) #15 shall apply to the subject area and activities.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, NTP #15, and this Variance shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities where applicable.

Sincerely,



John Boccio
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen