

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



January 27, 2012

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) #113

Dear Ms. Nelson,

On January 11, 2012, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request for the expansion of structure work areas in the Montebello Hills area, two additional guard pole structure areas, and use of an existing paved parking lot at Structure M40-T5 on Segment 7 Transmission Line (T/L) of the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP), in the City of Montebello, Los Angeles County, California. Additional information was submitted on January 25 and 26, 2012. **This Variance Request is approved by CPUC based on the following factors:**

- SCE submitted the following information:

SCE submitted a request for a Variance for the expansion of structure work areas in the Montebello Hills area, two additional guard pole structure areas, and use of an existing paved parking lot at Structure M40-T5 on Segment 7 T/L of the TRTP, in the City of Montebello, Los Angeles County, California. Additional information was submitted on January 25, 2012. As part of Project approval, an Amendment to the Biological Opinion was submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. The Biological Opinion Amendment included several additions to structure work areas in the Montebello Hills area of the Segment 7 T/L (i.e. the area between Montebello Boulevard and San Gabriel Boulevard). Specifically, these additions to structure work areas occur at structures M41-T3, M41-T2, M41-T1, and M40-T5. These additions to structure work areas were identified after the NTPR was approved (NTP #17 dated September 24, 2010) by the CPUC. Additionally, Wilson Construction has requested a variance to include two guard structure areas within Montebello Boulevard and Plaza Drive and an existing paved parking lot as a work area at Structure M40-T5. The purpose of the proposed work area addition is to allow for parking and staging of equipment within the existing paved parking lot and to allow direct access to the northern part of the M40-T5 structure from the parking lot. Listed below are the proposed disturbance area acreages for each site.

Site 1 – Guard Pole along Montebello Boulevard (approximately 0.19 acre)

Site 2 – Structure Work Area Additions at M41-T3 (approximately 0.03 acre)

Site 3 – Structure Work Areas Additions at M41-T2 (approximately 0.07 acre)

Site 4 – Structure Work Areas Additions at M41-T1 (approximately 0.01 acre)

Site 5 – Guard Pole along Plaza Drive (approximately 0.10 acre)

Site 6 – Existing Parking Lot and Structure Work Area Additions at M40-T5 (approximately 0.39 acre)

- **Biological Resources:** SCE submitted a biological survey report by ICF International dated January 5, 2012, titled *Proposed Segment 7 Montebello Hills Structure Work Area Additions and Use of Parking Lot Adjacent to M40-T5*. The letter documents the biological conditions at the proposed Montebello Hills structure work area additions and use of a parking lot adjacent to M40-T5 (Variance Project Component) and the 500-foot buffer (Biological Study Area [BSA]). Biological resources within the Variance Project Component and 500-foot buffer (BSA) were evaluated during several focused surveys, including 2009, 2010, and 2011 rare plant surveys (AMEC 2009o, ICF 2010at, 2011cq); 2010 and 2011 tree inventory surveys (ICF 2010av, 2011hd); 2007, 2009, 2010, and 2011 coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) focused surveys (AMEC 2008d, 2009m; ICF 2010ww, 2011gq) and 2010 burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) focused surveys (ICF 2010xx). Biological resources within the BSA were also evaluated during general biological preconstruction surveys and bat habitat assessment preconstruction surveys (ICF 2010bg, 2010bi, 2010fz, 2011fb, 2011fl). A literature review was also performed as part of the Biological Review for Segment 7 (ICF 2010ay). Combined general biological preconstruction survey and clearance sweeps were performed on August 16, 2011 (ICF 2011fl). Construction monitoring has been ongoing regularly since the sites became active, and species events and nest events are recorded in the Field Reporting Environmental Database (FRED).

There are six sites included within the Variance Project Component that are numbered from west to east and described below.

Site 1 – Guard Pole along Montebello Boulevard

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component and the 500-foot buffer include coastal sage scrub, ruderal grassland, and disturbed/developed. No special-status plant species or regulated trees were observed within the BSA. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher, Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), and Merlin (*Falco columbarius*). The Variance Project Component is within coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. The 500-foot buffer is within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat.

Site 2 – Structure Work Area Additions at M41-T3

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component include coastal sage scrub. Vegetation communities within the 500-foot buffer include coastal sage scrub, nonnative woodland, ruderal grassland, and disturbed/developed. No special-status plant species or regulated trees were observed within the BSA. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher, Swainson's hawk, and Merlin. The Variance Project Component and 500-foot buffer are within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. An inactive red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) nest was observed within the 500-foot buffer (FRED Nest ID 000024).

Site 3 – Structure Work Areas Additions at M41-T2

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component include coastal sage scrub and disturbed/developed. Vegetation communities within the 500-foot buffer include coastal sage scrub, nonnative woodland, and disturbed/developed. No special-status plant species or regulated trees were observed within the BSA. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher. The Variance Project Component and 500-foot buffer are within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. Potential solitary bat roost habitat occurs within the 500-foot buffer.

Site 4 – Structure Work Areas Additions at M41-T1

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component include coastal sage scrub. Vegetation communities within the 500-foot buffer include California annual grassland, coastal sage scrub, nonnative woodland, ruderal grassland, southern willow scrub, and disturbed/developed. No special-status plant species or regulated trees were observed within the BSA. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot

buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher and San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) potential midden. The Variance Project Component and 500-foot buffer are within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. Potential solitary bat roost habitat occurs within the 500-foot buffer.

Site 5 – Guard Pole along Plaza Drive

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component include nonnative woodland and disturbed/developed. Vegetation communities within the 500-foot buffer include California annual grassland, coastal sage scrub, nonnative woodland, ruderal grassland, southern willow scrub, and disturbed/developed. Special-status plant species, Catalina mariposa lily (*Calochortus catalinae*), occurs within the 500-foot buffer. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher, Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), and San Diego desert woodrat potential midden. The Variance Project Component is within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat. The 500-foot buffer is within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. Potential solitary bat roost habitat occurs within the 500-foot buffer.

Site 6 – Existing Parking Lot and Structure Work Area Additions at M40-T5

Vegetation communities within the Variance Project Component include coastal sage scrub and disturbed/developed. Vegetation communities within the 500-foot buffer include California annual grassland, coastal sage scrub, nonnative woodland, and disturbed/developed. Special-status plant species, Catalina mariposa lily, occurs within the 500-foot buffer. Wildlife species observed within the Variance Project Component include coastal California gnatcatcher and potential burrowing owl feature. Wildlife species observed within the 500-foot buffer include coastal California gnatcatcher, Cooper's hawk, and yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*). The Variance Project Component is within coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. The 500-foot buffer is within coastal California gnatcatcher designated critical habitat and coastal California gnatcatcher occupied habitat. Potential solitary bat roost habitat occurs within the 500-foot buffer. An inactive red-tailed hawk nest occurs within the 500-foot buffer.

Jurisdictional resources within the Variance Project Component were evaluated during the 2010 jurisdictional delineation for Segments 7 and 8 (ICF 2010h). No jurisdictional features were mapped within the Variance Project Component. Subsequently identified potential jurisdictional features will be staked and flagged as Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESAs) for avoidance.

No additional impacts to biological resources are anticipated with the implementation of this Variance and the conditions noted below.

- **Cultural and Paleontological Resources:** SCE submitted a memorandum dated December 19, 2011 regarding the SCE TRTP Cultural and Paleontological Resources Guidelines for Segment 7 T/L, Variance Request – Montebello Hills Structure Work Area Additions and Use of Parking Lot Adjacent to M40-T5. The memorandum states that no cultural or paleontological resources will be impacted by the Montebello Hills structure work area additions and use of the parking lot adjacent to M40-T5 in support of TRTP Segment 7 T/L. These additional work areas at Structures M41-T3, M41-T2, M41-T1, the two guard pole areas, and the existing paved parking lot at M40-T5 were included in the previous surveys for the TRTP project and no cultural or paleontological resources were identified (Pacific Legacy 2007; Gust and Scott 2009; Aron 2010).

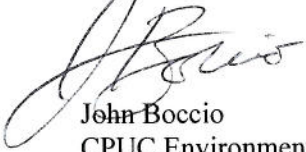
No additional impacts to cultural or paleontological resources are anticipated with the implementation of this Variance and the conditions noted below.

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

- All conditions required by Notice to Proceed (NTP) #17 shall apply to the subject area and activities.

- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, NTP #17, 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 "John Boccio", written in a cursive style.

John Boccio
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen