

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



April 9, 2014

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) #153

Dear Ms. Nelson:

On April 7, 2014, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request for an additional temporary wire setup site (WSS) near Structure M44-T2 and use of existing access roads on the Segment 8 Transmission Line (T/L), Phase 4, of the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP) in unincorporated Los Angeles County, California. SCE submitted additional information on April 8 and 9, 2014. **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 an additional wire setup site (WSS) near Structure M44-T2 and temporary use of existing access roads on Segment 8 T/L Phase 4 in unincorporated Los Angeles County, California. Subsequent to the approval of the NTPR (NTP #24 dated January 12, 2011) by the CPUC, project site conditions have been further evaluated, and an additional WSS and temporary use of existing access roads are needed for constructability purposes. Specifically, the additional WSS is situated southeast of Structure M44-T2, extending approximately 1,463 feet from the CPUC-approved work area for Structure M44-T2. The use of existing access roads is proposed in two locations to enable vehicular access on the existing roads in the Rose Hills Memorial Park. The additional WSS, which measures approximately 6.8 acres, and the additional access roads, measuring a total of approximately 280 linear feet are needed to safely conduct wire activities, including the installation of ground snubs or screw anchors and equipment staging.

This area is within the Rose Hills Memorial Park, which is a cemetery. In the event that a grave site falls in the path of the conductor to be wound up, the contractor will protect head stones by covering them with rubber mats. Additionally, vehicles will stay on the approved access roads with the exception of the area identified for snub installation.

Based on the existing site conditions, no vegetation removal or grading is planned.

- **Biological Resources:** SCE submitted biological resource information with the variance request. The variance request area consists of a 6.8 acre area southeast of Structure M44-T2, along with the use of two existing roads to access the area, within previously surveyed portions of the Segment 8 T/L. The area is characterized as a combination of disturbed/developed and ruderal grassland. Vegetation communities located within 500 feet of the Project Component include ruderal grassland, disturbed/developed, coastal sage scrub, and agriculture (ICF 2012). These surrounding vegetation communities will not be impacted by the Project Component.

The Project Component is located within 500 feet of occupied habitat for least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*). The Project Component is located within 500 feet of designated critical habitat and occupied habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliptila californica*). Construction will occur in compliance with the conditions of the USFWS Biological Opinion (BO) and CDFW Incidental Take Permit (ITP) if active least Bell's vireo and/or California gnatcatcher nests or territories are present. As of April 1, 2014, one active nest (Northern mockingbird Nest Event 5706) is located in or within 500 feet of the Project Component. The disturbance free buffer associated with this nest event does not overlap the Project Component. Special-status species observed in or within 500 feet of the Project Component include California gnatcatcher, Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), least Bell's vireo, Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia*), and white-tailed kite (*Elanus caeruleus*).

Jurisdictional resource 8-11-S-1 and 8-11-S-5 are located adjacent to the Project Component, but will not be impacted by the Project Component. Special-status biological resources are demarcated in the field by Environmentally Sensitive Area staking, where applicable. Construction began in this area in October 2011.

The Variance Project Component does not overlap suitable habitat for special-status species as included in the CDFW ITP or the USFWS BO. The proposed Variance Project Component includes a total of approximately 6.8 acres of new temporary disturbance. Temporary impacts will be mitigated on-site per the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and APM BIO-1a, as well as SWPPP requirements, weed control (Mitigation Measure [MM] B-3a), dust control (MM AQ-1a), and visual resources (MM V-1 and APM AES-8 and APM AES-13).

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 April 7, 2014 with the Variance Request titled the *TRTP Cultural and Paleontological Resource Guidelines for Segment 8 T/L Phase IV, Variance Request –Additional Work Area and Temporary Access Road*. The memorandum states that no cultural or paleontological resources will be impacted by the additional work area and the temporary use of existing access roads in support of the TRTP Segment 8 Phase IV. The additional work area and existing access roads identified in this variance request were included in previous surveys for the TRTP and no cultural resources were identified (Pacific Legacy 2007, 2010).

Previous paleontological assessments conducted for the TRTP indicate that the additional work area and existing access roads are located within the Fernando Formation, which has a high sensitivity for yielding paleontological resources (Gust and Scott 2009; Aron 2010). However, all of the areas proposed are highly disturbed and the two proposed access roads are currently paved and no improvements to the existing access roads are required.

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:

- The boundaries of the wire setup site (WSS) and the temporary existing access roads (Project Component) shall be staked and flagged, and verified by a CPUC EM prior to use of these areas.
- All conditions required by Notice to Proceed (NTP) #24 shall apply to the subject area and activities.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, NTP #24, 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. Coontz', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason Coontz
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen