

**FINAL
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
AND INITIAL STUDY**

**PARADISE AREA REINFORCEMENT PROJECT
(A.00-01-026)**

Prepared for the:

**California Public Utilities Commission
Energy Division**

August, 2000

Prepared by:

**Aspen Environmental Group
San Francisco, California**

(Contract No. 98PS5027)

**MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
AND INITIAL STUDY
PARADISE AREA REINFORCEMENT PROJECT**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	
A. Mitigated Negative Declaration	
Introduction	A-1
Project Description	A-1
Purpose and Need	A-2
Environmental Determination	A-2
B. Initial Study	
Environmental Checklist Form	B-1
Evaluation of Environmental Impacts	B-16
C. Mitigation Implementation and Monitoring Plan	
C-1	
D. Responses to Comments and Comment Letters	
Introduction	D-1
Responses to Comments	D-2
Comment Letters	D-9
Appendix	
Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration	
Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study Mailing List	
List of Tables	
Table B-1 Applicant Proposed Mitigation Measures	B-7
Table B-2 CPUC Recommended Mitigation Measures	B-13
Table B-3 Agencies Other Than CPUC Whose Approval May Be Required	B-14
Table B-4 Potentially Contaminated Sites in the Project Area	B-30
Table B-5 Initial Study Preparers	B-40
Table C-1 Mitigation Implementation and Monitoring Plan	C-1

List of Figures

Figure B-1 Project Location	B-3
Figure B-2 Proposed Power Line Route	B-4
Figure B-3 Power Pole Structure	B-6
Figure B-4 Photo Simulation Points	B-17
Figure B-5 Existing View and Photo Simulation (Paradise Memorial Trailway)	B-18
Figure B-6 Existing View and Photo Simulation (Skyway looking SE)	B-19
Figure B-7 Existing View and Photo Simulation (Skyway looking NE)	B-20
Figure B-8 Existing View and Photo Simulation (Skyway at Longview Drive)	B-21
Figure B-9 Existing View and Photo Simulation (Neal Road at Goa Way)	B-22
Figure B-10 Traffic Volumes on Paradise Roads	B-38

PARADISE AREA REINFORCEMENT PROJECT MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND INITIAL STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) General Order 131-D, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) has filed an application with the CPUC for a Permit to Construct power lines and associated substation modifications known as the Paradise Area Reinforcement Project. The Application (A.00-01-026) was filed on January 28, 2000, and includes the Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA, 2000) prepared by PG&E pursuant to Rules 17.1 and 17.3 of CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure. PG&E requests authority to: 1) construct approximately 6.1 miles of 115-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit electric power line; and 2) modify the existing Paradise Substation to change it from a 60 kV to a 115 kV operating system.

On May 22, 2000, the CPUC released for public review a Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Draft Initial Study for the proposed construction of PG&E's Paradise Area Reinforcement Project in portions of the Town of Paradise and unincorporated Butte County, California, in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Rule 17.1 of the CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure. The reports were filed with the State Clearinghouse on May 24, 2000. A 30-day review and comment period (CEQA Guidelines § 15105) began on May 24 and closed on June 22, 2000.

Following closure of the public review period, responses to all comments received on the document were completed, and modified to the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study were undertaken, as appropriate, to reflect these comments.

This document represents the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study necessary for the Commission to consider approval of the Project. It includes: the comments received on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study; modifications to the text of the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study, where appropriate, to address comments; and a Mitigation Monitoring Plan for Commission adoption if the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and Initial Study are approved.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298

**MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION****PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY (PG&E)'S APPLICATION
NO. A.00-01-026 PARADISE AREA REINFORCEMENT PROJECT****INTRODUCTION**

Pursuant to the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) General Order 131-D, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) has filed an application with the Commission for a Permit to Construct power lines and associated substation modifications known as the Paradise Area Reinforcement Project (A.00-01-026). The Application was filed on January 28, 2000, and includes the Proponents' Environmental Assessment (PEA, 2000) prepared by PG&E pursuant to Rules 17.1 and 17.3 of CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure. PG&E requests authority to: 1) construct approximately 6.1 miles of 115-kilovolt (kV) double-circuit electric power line; and 2) modify the existing Paradise Substation to change it from a 60 kV to a 115 kV operating system. Under the Commission's General Order 131-D, approval of this project must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in order to assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. Based on the completion of an Initial Study, this Mitigated Negative Declaration has been prepared.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PG&E proposes to upgrade its existing 60kV power line and substation that serves the Town of Paradise and the surrounding communities to a 115kV power line and 115kV transformer at the existing substation site. The primary components of the project include a new double-circuit 115kV power line, approximately 6.1 miles long and a new 115kV transformer and related operating equipment at the existing Paradise Substation to replace the 60kV equipment.

Proposed 115kV Line

The proposed 115kV power line would extend between the existing Table Mountain-Butte #3 115kV line (the source of the 115kV power) and the Paradise Substation. It would be approximately 6.1 miles long and the corridor would be up to 85 feet wide. The entire route primarily follows existing utility right-of-way (ROW) corridors or road ROWs. The proposed route is described by the segments below:

- Segment 1: Beginning approximately 2,000 feet east of Neal Road, the new power line will proceed northeast, parallel to an existing PG&E natural gas pipeline ROW to and across Neal Road
- Segment 2: Parallel the west side of Neal Road for approximately 1.5 miles, until it reaches the Centerville-Table Mountain-Oroville 60kV line

- Segment 3: Proceed northwest along the west side of the Centerville-Table Mountain-Oroville line to Skyway
- Segment 4: Follow Skyway, in the same alignment as the existing Paradise Tap #1, to the Paradise Memorial Trailway
- Segment 5: Continue to follow the existing Paradise Tap #1 along the Trailway to the Paradise Substation.

Proposed Substation Modifications

The proposed project also involves upgrading the Paradise Substation from a 60kV to a 115kV operating system. The primary substation upgrades would include:

- Replacing the existing 60/12kV, 27 MVA Transformer Bank #1 with a 115/12kV, 45 MVA transformer
- Installing new line and transformer protection equipment, breakers, and switchers
- Installing metering and circuit disconnect switch controls in the existing empty control building.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Paradise Area Reinforcement Project is necessary to provide reliable and safe electric service to PG&E customers in the Paradise area. PG&E's electric load studies show that, without immediate action, electric loads within the Paradise area will routinely and substantially exceed the system's capacity by the summer of 2001. The area's population is increasing by approximately 3,000 persons per year and, correspondingly, the area's electric load and overload are projected to increase 2.0 megawatt (MW)/year, and 4%/year, respectively.

Already peak electric loads (e.g. occurring on hot summer days) exceed the system's capacity to maintain normal operations, and still provide adequate back-up and maintain power if there is an unforeseen problem with the power lines or substation equipment (which becomes more likely the longer the equipment is overloaded). Under present conditions, the power lines could be loaded to 103 percent of their normal rating during the 2000 summer peak. If the 60kV system remains, blackouts will likely occur more frequently and rotating outages will be instituted among PG&E customers.

The proposed Paradise Area Reinforcement Project would improve the reliability of the power supply serving the area of Paradise, add capacity that would provide adequate back-up service during peak demands and emergency situations, and meet the electric service demands in the Paradise area for approximately 20 years (PEA, 2000).

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

The Initial Study (see page B-1) was prepared to identify the potential effects on the environment from the construction and operation of the proposed project and to evaluate the significance of these effects. The Initial Study was based on information presented in PG&E's PEA filed on January 28, 2000, site inspection by the CPUC environmental team, and other environmental analyses of the project. Within the PEA, mitigation measures addressing potentially significant impacts were proposed by the Applicant, and have been incorporated into the project description.

Based on the Initial Study, the project as proposed by PG&E would be mitigable to less-than-significant effects or no impacts in the areas of aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources,

cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards & hazardous materials, hydrology & water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, recreation, transportation & traffic, and utilities and service systems. As part of PG&E's PEA, applicant proposed mitigation measures were included to reduce potential impacts to a level less than significant (see Table B-1 of the Initial Study). In addition, the Commission has recommended additional mitigation measures (see Table B-2 of the Initial Study), which PG&E has agreed to include in the project. Implementation of these mitigation measures would avoid the potential impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

A Mitigation Implementation and Monitoring Plan (see page C-1) has been prepared to ensure that the mitigation measures are properly implemented. The plan describes specific actions required to implement each mitigation measure, including information on the timing of implementation and monitoring requirements.

Based on the analysis of the Initial Study and the mitigation measures identified therein and incorporated into the project, the Commission finds that the project will not have a significant effect on the environment.



Natalie Walsh, Manager
Analysis Branch
Energy Division
California Public Utilities Commission

Date: August 1, 2000