

Pacific Crest Trail Route Compensation

*Prepared Pursuant to Sunrise Powerlink
Mitigation Measure WR-2c*

*Prepared by:
San Diego Gas & Electric Company
Sunrise Powerlink*

May 2012

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INTRODUCTION

This report identifies feasible compensation options to off-set impacts at the Sunrise Powerlink (Sunrise) Modified Route D Alternative transmission line crossing of the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), in satisfaction of Mitigation Measure WR-2c. This report is submitted in light of the impacts analysis contained in Exhibit 20 to the Forest Service Special Use Permit (SUP) which was prepared and submitted pursuant to Mitigation Measure WR-2b.

San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) has been working closely with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) to address impacts from Sunrise crossing the PCT in accordance with the terms of mitigation measures WR-2b and WR-2c and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Mitigation measures WR-2b and WR-2c were adopted with the limited objective of addressing potential impacts to the PCT from selection of the Modified Route D Alternative as a component of the final Sunrise route approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), BLM, and USFS. This report is being submitted in fulfillment of WR-2c's obligation to prepare and submit a report to the BLM and USFS for approval that identifies feasible PCT compensation options.

BACKGROUND

The selection by the agencies of the Modified Route D Alternative as part of the Final Environmentally Superior Southern Route (FESSR) co-located Sunrise with an existing 69 kV transmission line that crosses the PCT three times in the Potrero area (Figure 1). The FEIS analyzed this routing and mitigation measure WR-2c was adopted to provide "compensation to the Forest Service for the final impact to the PCT identified by the route revision plan included in Mitigation Measure WR-2b."¹ Specifically, WR-2c requires:

PCT Route Impact Mitigation. SDG&E shall consult and coordinate with the USFS, BLM, and PCTA to develop mitigation options to compensate for the final impacts to the PCT identified by the route revision plan required by Mitigation Measure WR-2b. Compensation measures will include enhancements to other PCT trail segments to off-set the impacts at the Modified Route D Alternative transmission line crossing. SDG&E shall prepare and submit a report to the BLM and USFS for approval prior to energizing the new transmission line. The report shall identify feasible PCT compensation options, including improved or additional trailhead parking, trail improvements, and site improvements at the trail terminus. If directed by the BLM, SDG&E shall be responsible for implementing compensation projects in manner acceptable to the BLM and USFS. Projects shall be completed within one year of energizing the transmission line.

¹ BLM Sunrise ROD at 4.

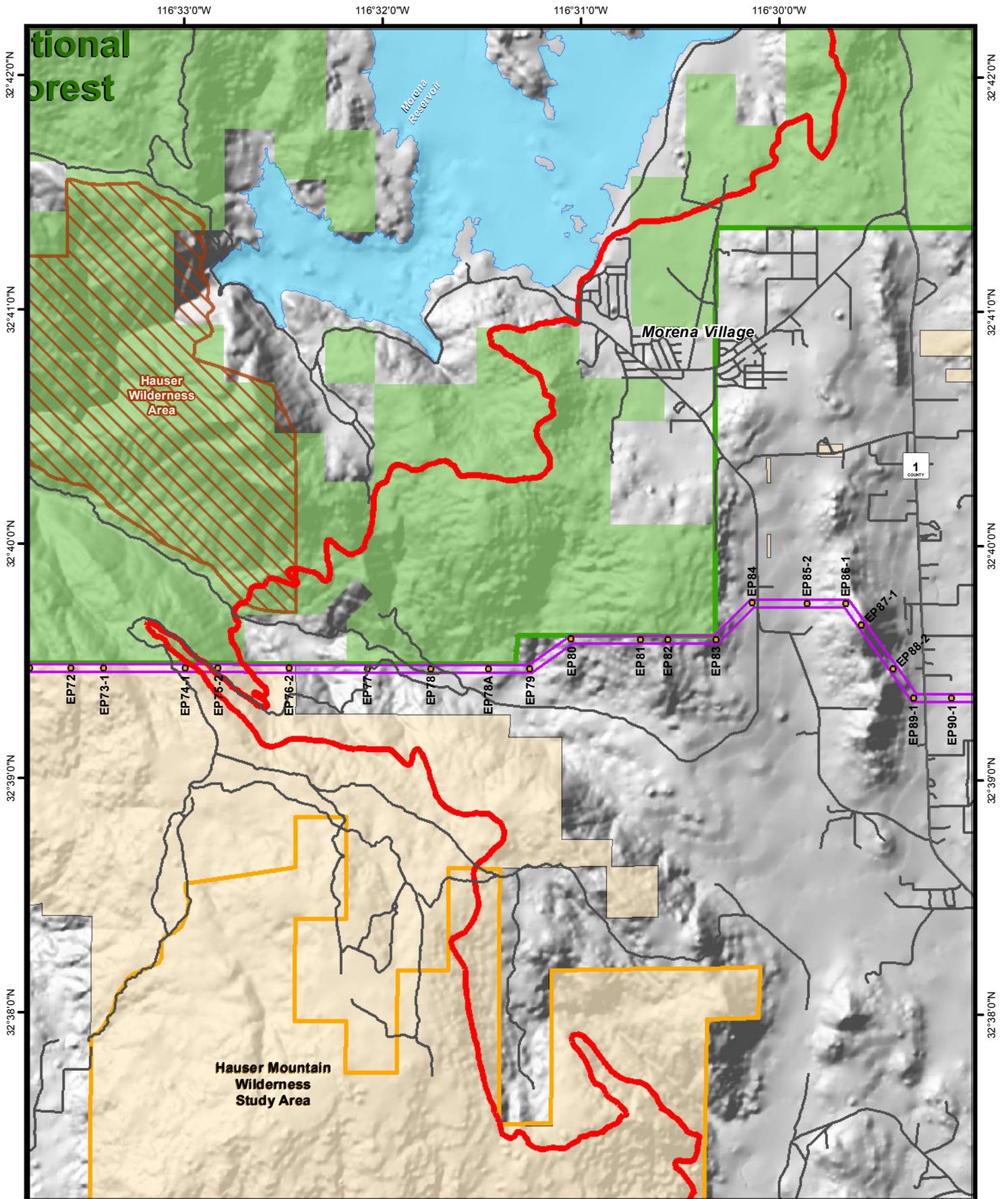


Figure 1

- Legend**
- Structure
 - Right of Way
 - Roads
 - Existing Pacific Crest Trail
 - BLM-Administered Land
 - USFS-Administered Land

1:40,000
1 inch = 3,333 feet

0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000 Feet

N

SUNRISE POWERLINK™ SDGE
Sempia Energy, Inc.

Mitigation measure WR-2c thus specifically concerns and is limited to impacts arising from Sunrise's crossing of the PCT, and requires that, prior to energizing Sunrise, SDG&E prepare and submit a report for BLM and U.S. Forest Service that identifies compensation options to "off-set the impacts at the Modified Route D Alternative transmission line crossing."² After Sunrise is energized, and the agencies have evaluated potential compensation options, WR-2c provides that BLM may direct SDG&E to be responsible for implementing compensation projects.³

IDENTIFICATON OF FEASIBLE COMPENSATION

The Pacific Crest Trail Route Mitigation Plan,⁴ completed pursuant to WR 2-b, concludes that implementation of any one of five feasible relocation options (identified as Options "E" "F" "G" "H" and "I" in the Pacific Crest Trail Route Mitigation Plan) would, by reducing the number of PCT crossings by Sunrise from three to one, decrease visual impacts and auditory impacts (the sights and sounds) of a high voltage transmission line and co-located 69-kV tie line for trail users, as compared to leaving the trail in its current location. Further, implementation of any one of the five route options would create a single trail crossing under the transmission line and any one of the five options would eliminate a 0.75 mile road-walk on South Boundary Road. As discussed in the Pacific Crest Trail Route Mitigation Plan, Option "I" (if selected) would create a 1.99 mile walk on Cottonwood Creek Road. Options "G" and "H" would create shorter overall trail lengths, less decent/ascent into and out of Hauser Canyon and would eliminate close-up views of mining activities on private land, as compared to Options "E" "F" or "I".

Disadvantages of implementing any one of the five feasible relocation options include increased soil disturbance from new trail construction, increased vegetation disturbance from new trail clearing and construction, increased wildlife habitat disturbance, increased potential human interaction with certain wildlife, potential disturbance of cultural resources and cultural sites and increased costs of construction and environmental restoration. The exact amount of soil disturbance varies by Route Option, with the amount of disturbance for an 18" to 24" trailbed ranging from slightly less than 1 mile to more than 2 ¼ miles. The calculated vegetation disturbance from these options was for slightly less than 1 acre to slightly more than 2 ¼ acres. Similar impacts were expressed for wildlife habitat disturbance and interaction, and the potential for perceived impacts to cultural resources from trail construction and restoration.

Compensation thus far for impacts created by the reroute of the PCT to avoid crossing under Sunrise three times has been accomplished through a Collection Agreement between SDG&E and USFS, reimbursing the cost to the Cleveland National Forest (CNF) for participation in the Optimal Location Review (OLR) process to evaluate the segment of trail crossed by Sunrise in accordance with measure WR-2b. The Collection Agreement also provides funding for the construction of up to 3 miles of new trail and restoration of up to 3 miles of abandoned (old) trail

² Sunrise Mitigation Measure WR-2c.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Exhibit 20, Pacific Crest Trail Route Mitigation Plan (May 30, 2012)

if directed by BLM, and administration and oversight of the process by CNF staff. SDG&E has obligated more than \$252,000 in funds directly to the Forest for these efforts. In addition, SDG&E hired a landscape architect to prepare Exhibit 20 – the Pacific Crest Trail Route Mitigation Plan and has provided administrative and technical support (GIS) for this process since March of 2010. For these tasks SDG&E has obligated \$100,000.00.

In light of the compensation that has been provided thus far pursuant to WR-2b and in consideration of SDG&E's collaboration efforts with the larger OLR process, additional feasible compensation in accordance with WR-2c could be:

1. Improved (or additional) trailhead parking;
2. Trail improvements (specifically, with relation to signage); or
3. Site improvements at the trail terminus.

Trailhead parking at Morena Village near the Morena Campground provides the closest direct access point to the general segment of the PCT that is crossed by Sunrise, a distance of approximately 5.4 miles. This trailhead is on Lake Morena Drive and is across the street from the campground at Lake Morena Regional Park. From this trailhead, PCT travelers proceed south on the PCT toward Sunrise. If additional directional and/or informational signage improvements were made at this trailhead, it would provide a better overall trail experience for PCT hikers.

The only other trailhead near Sunrise is at the International Border of the United States and Mexico. This trailhead consists of a large expanse of bare earth on a gently rounded brush-covered knob, with a bare-earth loop road passing in front of the wooden PCT Border Monument. Multiple bare-earth roads have been created and are maintained by the Border Patrol and the Army Corps of Engineers has created a wall of steel plates at this segment of the border. There is no formal parking at this location, and there are no PCT facilities or improvements other than the wooden Border Monument. The existing signage for the PCT provides information that the distance is 14.4 miles to South Boundary Road and 19.5 miles to Lake Morena from the sign's location. Additional directional or interpretive signs could be provided at this location to enhance the trail user's experience.

There are no hiker or equestrian facilities at the International Border; however, it might be possible to have equestrian facilities at the CalFire Station in Campo, approximately 1.5 miles north of the border. Equestrian facilities at a location such as this, which has a permanent on-site staff, would discourage property damage and/or theft of installed site improvements. Possible improvements at the Campo CalFire Station could include a hitching post, water trough, holding corral, loading ramp, and porta-potty, all of which would benefit the trail users.

Other site improvements at the International Border and trail terminus, such as a hitching post, water trough, holding corral, loading ramp, or porta-potty could also provide for a better overall experience to trail hikers and equestrians but these improvements would likely be discouraged by the Border Patrol and, given that the trail terminus location remains in flux due to the ongoing OLR process, such an undertaking may not be prudent at this time.

Based on the analysis performed pursuant to WR-2b, and an assessment of the conditions of the PCT segment in the vicinity of the Sunrise crossing, SDG&E recommends that the most suitable and appropriate mitigation would be improving the trail itself through upgrading, repairing, and/or replacing trail signage in the vicinity of the Sunrise crossing and specifically at the Morena Village trailhead parking area and the Boulder Oaks Campground, which is near the Interstate 8 crossing (the northern extent of the OLR study area).

SDG&E will provide financial compensation to USFS in the form of a collection agreement for \$50,000.00 to carry out mitigation in satisfaction of WR-2c. Upon approval of this recommendation by BLM and USFS, SDG&E will prepare and execute a collection agreement with USFS for \$50,000.00, for the applications of the funds to one or all of the trail related features discussed above, and as deemed appropriate by the USFS for enhancement or replacement of the identified trail needs.