

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298

January 9, 2009

Donald Johnson  
Project Manager  
Southern California Edison  
2131 Walnut Grove Ave.  
Rosemead, C 911770

RE: SCE Antelope-Pardee 500 kV Transmission Project, Segment 1 – Variance Request #23

Dear Mr. Johnson,

On January 7, 2009, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance requesting an additional disturbance area near Construction Tower 25 and WSS14 on Section 1, Segment 1 of the Antelope-Pardee 500 kV Transmission Project in the City of Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County. The area is on an existing road approximately 850 feet east of the tower and will be expanded from 50 feet by 35 feet to approximately 60 feet by 70 feet. **This Variance Request is approved by CPUC for the proposed activities based on the following factors:**

SCE submitted the following information:

- The area near Construction Tower 25 is on an existing road approximately 850 feet east of the tower and will be expanded from 50 feet by 35 feet to approximately 60 feet by 70 feet. The proposed area will be used as a pulling site for wire stringing activities. SCE states that this area is needed to meet the angled requirements for Tower 25.
- An existing wire stringing site (WSS 14), approximately 900 feet northeast of Tower 25, will also be used as a puller setup site. The WSS has an allotted area of 100 feet by 100 feet, which will be utilized in order to properly place equipment in the area. Activities within the approved disturbance area for WSS 14 may include a slight widening by cutting into the adjacent mountain side. Also, the road leading to WSS 14 will be graded for better accessibility.
- Biological surveys were conducted as part of SCE mitigation requirements for construction of this transmission line. Since WSS 14 has not been surveyed since early summer 2008, the survey report for the described activity addressed a biological survey of both sites (Burns & McDonnell, 12-22-08 letter). A field survey was conducted by Burns & McDonnell on behalf of SCE on December 19, 2008. The survey focused on biological issues as described in the mitigation measures of the Final EIR/EIS. No sensitive species were observed during the survey. Several ground squirrel burrows were observed on the downward slope about 30 feet below WSS 14. One of the burrows was about five inches in diameter, but there were new sprouts growing in the entrances and no evidence of tracks, trails, scat, feathers, or fresh earth to suggest occupation by either squirrels or burrowing owls. A colony of Botta's pocket gopher was noted on the hill above the upper site. A covey of about 30 California quail were sited. A red-tailed hawk landed on the southernmost of the two 500 kV towers at the proposed site, then flew away after a few minutes and was not seen again. There is a loose collection of sticks and twigs on the top of the tower between the southernmost tower and the proposed pull site where an active red-tailed hawk nest was sited last year. These may be remnants

from the removal of the nest after fledging. No significant impacts to biological resources are anticipated.

- On behalf of SCE, Cogstone Resource Management conducted the cultural resource studies (Cogstone, December 2008). The record search revealed no recorded cultural resources within a 1-mile search radius of the project area. No paleontological localities have been previously discovered in the project vicinity, but the sediments (Castaic Formation) are known to be highly sensitive for paleontological resources. Cogstone conducted the survey of the proposed project area on November 23, 2008. The survey consisted of a one person walking the project areas while closely inspecting the ground surface. Transects were walked at 5 meter intervals. The survey area consisted of the access road and the work area. The survey areas are located on small ridge tops at about 1,564 and 1,520 feet in elevation. The area has brush and grasses on either side of a dirt access road. Ground visibility was moderate in most areas. No historic or prehistoric artifacts were observed nor were fossils observed. Cogstone recommends full-time paleontological monitoring of earthmoving activities due to the highly sensitive paleontological sediments that are known throughout the proposed project area. No significant impacts to cultural resources are anticipated with the implementation of the conditions noted below.

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

- All project mitigation measures, compliance plans, and permit conditions shall be implemented during construction activities. Some measures are on-going/time-sensitive requirements and shall be implemented prior to and during construction where applicable.
- Biological surveys shall be re-conducted and results submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to equipment and vehicles mobilizing to the project area. After complete surveys have been submitted and approved by the CPUC, site occupation can occur; however, if occupation does not occur within seven calendar days of survey submittals, biological clearance sweeps shall be conducted prior to site occupation, including nesting bird surveys.
- SCE has assigned Biological Monitors to the Project. They are responsible for ensuring that impacts to special-status species, native vegetation, wildlife habitat, or unique resources are minimized to the fullest extent possible. The Biological Monitor shall be on-site to monitor all work and shall conduct sweeps of the approved areas which will be impacted. If breeding birds with active nests are found, a biological monitor shall establish a 300-foot buffer around the nest and no activities will be allowed within the buffer until the young have fledged from the nest or the nest fails. The 300-foot buffer may be adjusted to reflect existing conditions including ambient noise and disturbance only with the approval of the CDFG and/or USFWS (Please note that the CPUC must be notified prior to the onset of construction). The biological monitor shall conduct regular monitoring of the nest to determine success/failure and to ensure that project activities are not conducted within the buffer until the nesting cycle is complete or the nest fails. If nesting birds move into the work area SCE will monitor the nest to ensure that their activities do not result in the loss or failure of the nest. A preliminary 300-foot buffer area around the nest will be established and SCE shall coordinate with the CPUC, CDFG and/or USFWS.
- After use, all areas proposed under this Variance shall be completely restored to preexisting conditions following the construction activities.
- If construction debris or spills enter into environmentally sensitive areas, the jurisdictional agencies and CPUC EM shall be notified immediately.

- If not already provided, copies of all landowner agreements/lease agreements shall be submitted to the CPUC prior to use.
- Prior to the commencement of construction activities, all crew personnel including crane, haul truck and concrete truck drivers shall be appropriately WEAP trained on environmental issues including protocols for air quality, hazardous materials, biological resources, known and unanticipated cultural materials, as well as SWPPP BMPs. A log shall be maintained on-site with the names of all crew personnel trained.
- All work boundaries shall be flagged prior to construction. No movement or staging of construction vehicles or equipment shall be allowed outside of the approved areas.
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be implemented at all times during the use of the project area, as will Best Management Practices. Implementation of all necessary erosion control devices will be properly installed and maintained throughout the duration of project area use. A copy of the SWPPP will be available on-site for reference.
- Per Cogstone's recommendations, full-time paleontological monitoring during earthmoving activities shall be implemented due to the highly sensitive paleontological sediments that are known throughout the proposed project area.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, 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