

SUPPLEMENTAL EVALUATION 3 FOR WILDERNESS TRANSMISSION LINE MODIFICATION

**ON SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON'S
APPLICATION FOR**

Antelope Transmission Project, Segments 2 & 3

Application No. A.04-12-008

SCH No. 2006041160

Prepared By:



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A. Introduction and Background

The Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Antelope Transmission Project, Segments 2 & 3 (Project) was certified and a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) was granted by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) (Docket #A.04-12-008, SCH #2006041160) on March 15, 2007. For a history, background and overview of the Project, please see Section A of the First Supplemental Evaluation (March 2009).

Southern California Edison (SCE) has completed final engineering on the approved Project and has begun building portions of the Project. Based on final engineering, additional details of various components of the Project have been further defined. Please see Supplemental Evaluations 1 and 2 for a description and analysis of previous Project modifications.

This Third Supplemental Evaluation addresses an additional modification to the approved Project that was submitted to the CPUC on April 15, 2009. A description of this modification is described below in Section B.

Based on the evaluation of SCE's proposed modification to the approved Project described in Section C below, no new or substantially different impacts have been identified and no new mitigation is necessary. Therefore, there is no need for any additional CEQA analysis.

B. Modification to the Project

Based on final engineering completed by SCE, an additional modification to the Project has been identified, as presented in electronic communication dated April 15, 2009. This is a project component that was referenced in the Final EIR (2006) but lacked the detail to determine the engineering designs and construction methodology needed to cross the existing Wilderness Transmission Line. Because this Project detail could not be fully analyzed in the Final EIR due to the lack of specificity available at the time the Final EIR was prepared, an analysis of this modification to the Project has been conducted herein to determine whether or not any new or significant impacts would result. A description of the modification is provided below.

B.1 Wilderness Transmission Line Modification

One location exists where the Wilderness Transmission Line (WTL) requires a modification in order to accomplish construction of the Project's 220 kV Transmission Line, Segment 3B. The WTL must be lowered by 22 feet in order for Segment 3B to cross the WTL in the Project's Construction Site (Const 3B-61) to Const 3B-62 span (Figure B.1-1). The WTL is a wind generation line and scheduling an outage would be difficult due to technical constraints during high winds to reliably ensure no power generation from individual turbines. Therefore, the decision was made to utilize specialized construction crews that can perform these modifications assuming the WTL is energized. As these crews have been mobilized to perform similar work at Sagebrush modifications on Segment 2 of the Project, it is desired to utilize the same crews and perform the WTL modification at the same time. The crossing of the existing WTL corridor is referenced in the Final EIR (2006). The EIR states, "Just before Mile S3-7.9, the new 220-kV transmission line would turn east, cross over Oak Creek Road and the existing 66-kV transmission corridor, and continue along the south side of Oak Creek Road paralleling the existing private Sagebrush-Skyriver 220-kV transmission line (see Figure B.2-7)",

(Page B-7 of the Final EIR). The WTL modification consists of removing an existing single steel pole (No. 8, 140 feet) and installing a new 2-steel pole H-frame (118 feet) and an additional single steel pole structure (No. 8A, 110 feet) east of the H-frame structure. Figure B.1-1 provides a map depicting the location and disturbance areas related to the WTL modification and Figure B.1-2 shows the plan and profile drawings for the Wilderness crossing at Segment 3B.

The WTL crossing modification requires working on and around energized lines and requires specialized equipment designed to handle conductors that are energized at 220 kV. Crews possessing the training required to work conductors energized would already be mobilized to the Project site to perform Sagebrush line structure modifications on Segment 2 of the Project. Aside from the specialized tools and personnel, similar equipment and construction methodologies for the Project's 500 kV transmission lines would be used.

C. Evaluation of Modification

After review of the Final EIR, it was determined that only two environmental issue areas would potentially be affected by the proposed modification: Biological Resources and Cultural Resources.

The proposed removal of an existing single steel pole (No. 8) and installation of a new 2-steel pole H-frame and an additional single steel pole structure (No. 8A) would occur within the same right-of-way analyzed in the Final EIR and utilize existing roads. Therefore, potential environmental impacts to agriculture, air quality, geology/soils, hazards and hazardous materials, land use, and mineral resources are not expected to change or increase in severity from the approved Project.

The modification to the WTL would be expected to result in similar noise levels as generated for the construction of the transmission line and would not be expected to result in a change in corona noise levels. Therefore, impacts to noise would not differ from the approved Project.

Groundwater would not be affected by the proposed modification and proposed construction is not expected to require or new utilities and service systems or affect existing systems. Public services that would potentially be required for construction of the approved Project would be utilized for the proposed modification. Therefore, impacts to hydrology, public services, and utilities and service systems would not differ from the approved Project.

The installation of a new 2-steel pole H-frame and an additional single steel pole structure (No. 8A) would not remarkably alter existing visual effects of the approved Project's visual resources. Additionally, construction crews already on site to perform Sagebrush line structure modifications on Segment 2 of the approved Project would be utilized to perform the WTL modification. Therefore, visual resources and traffic/transportation impacts would not differ from the approved Project.

The following section evaluates the potential biological and cultural impacts associated with the modification to the approved Project as identified by SCE in their electronic communication dated April 15, 2009.

C.1 Biological Resources

Minimal impacts to biological resources are anticipated from the WTL Crossing for several reasons: the results of the biological survey found very few target species and species populations, some of the impacts would be temporary, the Project area is limited in size and would utilize existing roads, the detected biological resources are common and widespread throughout the region, and all sensitive biological resources would be flagged and a biological monitor would check the flagged areas during construction activities to minimize impacts to biological resources to the fullest extent possible. Biological monitors, as required by APM BIO-5, and a Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP) education program, as required by APM BIO-6, would identify sensitive areas prior to construction and inform construction personnel and contractors prior to the start of construction. Biological monitors would be responsible for ensuring that impacts to special-status species, bird nests, native vegetation, wildlife habitat, or unique resources would be minimized to the fullest extent possible. Biological monitor(s) would be on-site to monitor all work as needed and would conduct sweeps of the approved areas. Monitors would flag the boundaries of areas where activities need to be restricted in order to protect special-status species. These restricted areas would be monitored to ensure their protection during construction.

No new or substantially different impacts have been identified and no new mitigation is necessary. Please see the biological survey results report (Appendix A) prepared by LSA Associates, Inc. on April 8, 2009 for a complete analysis.

C.2 Cultural Resources

Two cultural resources were identified adjacent/within the disturbance areas for Structures 8 and 8A. By implementing avoidance measures in the form of monitoring and flagging of the resource boundaries, it is anticipated that both resources would be avoided and would not be impacted during construction activities. In addition, construction work at the WTL crossing modification would require paleontological monitoring due to the presence of older alluvial soils that may contain fossils.

No new or substantially different impacts have been identified and no new mitigation is necessary. Please see the cultural survey results report (Appendix B) prepared by Cogstone Resource Management, Inc. (April 2009) for a complete analysis.

D. Other CEQA Considerations

D.1 Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The environmental impacts of the approved Project are described in detail in Section C (Environmental Analysis) of the Final EIR, and for the proposed modifications in Supplemental Evaluations 1 (March 2009), 2 (April 2009), and Section C (Evaluation of Modification) of this supplemental evaluation. All the significant and unavoidable (Class I) impacts identified for the approved Project, as discussed in Section E.1 (Significant and Unavoidable Impacts) of the Final EIR, would be the same as for the approved Project with implementation of the proposed modification, although the severity of biological impacts may slightly increase due to additional construction work associated with the proposed modification.

D.2 Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Construction of the proposed modification identified by SCE would result in the same irretrievable commitment of natural resources as described in the Final EIR. Please see Section E.2 of the Final EIR for a complete discussion of irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources for the approved Project.

D.3 Growth-Inducing Effects

Construction and operations of the proposed modification identified by SCE would not change the growth-inducing effects described for the approved Project in the Final EIR. Please see Section E.3.1 and E.3.2 of the Final EIR for a complete discussion of growth-inducing effects for the approved Project.

D.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Section E.5 (Cumulative Impact Analysis by Issue Area) of the Final EIR discusses the impacts of the Project that could potentially be “cumulatively considerable” or might be able to combine with similar impacts of other identified projects in a substantial way. Below is a discussion of the cumulative impacts of the approved Project with implementation of the proposed modification.

Biological Resources

Sensitive natural communities, listed or proposed wildlife species, or critical habitat that occurs or has the potential to occur in the Project area, would potentially be impacted by the proposed modification to the approved Project; however, implementation of the mitigation measures described in the Final EIR would be applied to reduce impacts (see Appendix A). Additionally, impacts to special-status species and the movement of any native resident or migratory fish species could occur from the construction of the proposed modifications; however, adherence to mitigation measures described in the Final EIR would reduce these impacts (see Appendix A). Therefore, the proposed modifications would not substantially change the magnitude of the Project’s impacts or the cumulative conclusion of the Final EIR. As such, cumulative impacts related to biological resources would be the same as described in Section E.5.2 (Biological Resources) of the Final EIR.

Cultural Resources

Construction of the proposed modification identified by SCE would not have effects on cultural resources eligible for the CRHR, including alteration of the characteristics that make resources eligible. Therefore, impacts resulting from construction activities associated with the proposed modification would not change the cumulative conclusion of the Final EIR. As such, cumulative impacts related to cultural resources would be the same as described in Section E.5.3 (Cultural Resources) of the Final EIR.

D.5 Effects Found Not to be Significant

As discussed in Section E.6 (Effects Found Not to be Significant) of the Final EIR, impacts related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Mineral Resources, Public Services, and Utilities and Service Systems for the approved Project would not be significant.

The proposed modification identified by SCE would not result in any different or new impacts to these issue areas and as such would not change the impact significance as identified in the Final EIR.

E. References

Aspen Environmental Group 2006. Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), Antelope Transmission Project, Segments 2 and 3. Report prepared for the California Public Utilities Commission. December.