

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298

September 29, 2009

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

RE: SCE Antelope Transmission Project, Segment 3A – Variance Request #58

Dear Mr. Johnson,

On September 16, 2009, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance requesting additional wire setup sites throughout Segment 3A of the Antelope Transmission Project in Kern and Los Angeles counties, California. **This Variance Request is approved by CPUC for the proposed activities based on the following factors:**

- SCE submitted the following information:

Southern California Edison (SCE) is requesting a variance for additional wire setup sites throughout Segment 3A. In order to prevent multiple variances throughout the wire stringing operations, the Contractor has evaluated wire sleeving needs for the entirety of Segment 3A. Evaluation of wire setup sites for Segment 3A was completed and it was determined that 27 additional sites are needed, and four original sites will be removed. If approved, there will be a total of 40 wire setup sites throughout Segment 3A. Each of the proposed new wire setup sites measure 200 feet x 400 feet or 80,000 square feet (1.84 acres) for a total of 49.59 acres of additional wire setup sites. Sites that are found mid-span will be used as splice locations and therefore will not require all of the space that is depicted in the maps, but the availability of the space will ensure proper placement of the equipment necessary to complete the splices. The existing wire setup sites between Constructs 38 – 39, 62 – 63, 72 – 73, and 84 – 85 will be removed. These sites measure 200 feet x 400 feet and will result in the removal of 320,000 square feet (7.35 acres) of disturbance areas. The additional proposed new wire setup sites are needed for several reasons throughout Segment 3A. The table below addresses each wire setup site (WSS), its status, and justification for why it is needed.

WSS	Status	Justification
1 – 2	New	Sites are needed due to the large angles in the transmission line and resultant dead-end structures.
3 – 4	New	New sites are needed due to the heavy congestion of transmission lines and towers nearby.
5 – 8	Existing	n/a
9 – 10	New	New sites are necessary due to the complexity of the Sagebrush crossing, which may require spans to be installed separately.
11 – 12	Existing	n/a
13 – 19	New	Reel lengths are 8,200 feet. As a result, splice locations are needed every 7,500 feet to accommodate the bull wheels of the stringing equipment, and

		the extra length needed to pull the conductor from the tower to ground level.
20 - 21	New	Sites needed due to the large angles of the transmission line.
22 - 23	Existing	n/a
24 - 27	New	Reel lengths are 8,200 feet. As a result, splice locations are needed every 7,500 feet to accommodate the bull wheels of the stringing equipment, and the extra length needed to pull the conductor from the tower to ground level.
28 - 29	Existing	n/a
30 - 31	New	Reel lengths are 8,200 feet. As a result, splice locations are needed every 7,500 feet to accommodate the bull wheels of the stringing equipment, and the extra length needed to pull the conductor from the tower to ground level.
32 - 33	Existing	n/a
34 - 35	New	Reel lengths are 8,200 feet. As a result, splice locations are needed every 7,500 feet to accommodate the bull wheels of the stringing equipment, and the extra length needed to pull the conductor from the tower to ground level.
36 - 39	New	Sites needed due to the large angles of the transmission line. Also needed due to the differences in span lengths and tensions.
40	Existing	n/a

New Temporary Access

Proposed wire setup sites 18 and 30 will require new temporary overland travel routes to access these sites. The proposed overland travel access roads will be used during construction only. At WSS 18, the proposed overland travel road will run from Construct 59 south to the wire setup site, a distance of approximately 420 feet. The Contractor has proposed two routes at WSS 30; however, only one route will be used at the time of construction. Both of these overland travel routes run from the existing access road on the east side of Constructs 23 and 24, in a westerly direction to the wire setup site 30. The northern route is approximately 144 feet and the southern route is approximately 152 feet. This area is heavily covered by Montane Scrub habitat and may require some minor brush clearing to ensure proper access.

- Biological Resources:** Burns & McDonnell submitted a report dated August 28, 2009 for the *Biological Clearance Survey for the Newly Proposed Disturbance Areas for the Antelope Transmission Project, Segment 3A in Kern County, California*. LSA conducted preconstruction surveys of the right-of-way corridor in 2007 and 2008 (LSA 2007a-k, 2008a-e). Burns & McDonnell conducted a preconstruction burrowing owl survey in 2009. On July 24, 27, and 29, 2009, biological clearance surveys for these newly proposed disturbance areas were also conducted. The mapped disturbance area for each WSS with a 500-foot buffer was surveyed for biological resources. These sites were not flagged in the field, so the biologists surveyed an approximate size and location. In addition, the presence of Joshua trees within the WSS and the surrounding buffer were noted for mitigation as required by the EIR. This species will be quantified following clearance surveys and just prior to vegetative clearing.

Proposed WSS 1 and 2

The survey found no sensitive resources. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 3 and 4

Four potential burrowing owl burrows (*Athene cunicularia*) were found within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found in this area. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 9

Many potential burrowing owl burrows and four inactive nests were found within the 500-foot buffer survey area. One burrow (ID #190) was previously active during the spring of 2009. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 10, 13, and 14

The survey found no sensitive resources. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 15

The survey found a burrowing owl burrow in a concrete irrigation structure located within the 500-foot buffer survey area. This burrow was previously active during the spring of 2009; however, an owl was observed during the field validation of the variance request data by the CPUC Environmental Monitor on September 23rd. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 16

An inactive raven nest (*Corvus corax*) located on a telephone pole within the 500-foot buffer survey area was noted. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 17

An inactive western kingbird nest (*Tyrannus verticalis*) located in an elm tree was found within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 18 and overland travel road

No sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 19

The survey found a potential burrowing owl burrow within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 20 and 21

The survey found no sensitive resources. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 24

The survey found no sensitive resources. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 25

The survey found an animal den and an inactive raven nest within the 500-foot buffer survey area. The animal den is a potential kit fox burrow (*Vulpes macrotis*) located underneath a creosote bush. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 26

The survey found a complex of three potential burrowing owl burrows within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were not located within the disturbance area, but were located in the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 27

The survey found a potential burrowing owl burrow within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 30 and overland travel roads

The survey found an active mourning dove nest (*Zenaida macroura*), an animal den, and potential burrowing owl burrows within the 500-foot buffer survey area. The mourning dove nest had eggs in the nest at the time of the survey. The animal den is a potential kit fox burrow. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area, overland travel roads, and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 31

The survey found no sensitive resources. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 34

The survey found three inactive nests within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 35

The survey found no sensitive resources. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 36

The survey found an inactive nest, three animal dens, and two potential burrowing owl burrows within the 500-foot buffer survey area. The animal dens are potential kit fox burrows. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 37

The survey found four inactive nests and a potential burrowing owl burrow within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 38

The survey found two inactive nests within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

Proposed WSS 39

The survey found two potential desert tortoise burrows (*Gopherus agassizii*) and a potential burrowing owl burrow within the 500-foot buffer survey area. No other sensitive resources were found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area.

- **Cultural & Paleontological Resources:** The proposed disturbance areas for the WSS activities on Segment 3A were investigated for archaeological and paleontological resources by ECORPS Consulting, Inc. (Ahmet, Mason, and Bholat 2006). Pacific Legacy Inc. (Way, Jackson and Holm 2008) and Cogstone Resources Management (Scott and Gust 2008, Harper et al 2009). Cultural resources have been identified at WSS 16, WSS 19, WSS 30, adjacent to WSS 31, and at WSS 36. Cultural resources shall be flagged prior to wire stringing activities and avoided during wire stringing activities. To ensure avoidance, a cultural resources monitor is required during all setup and wire stringing activities at WSS 16, 19, 30, 31 and 36.

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

- Biological survey sweeps shall be conducted and results submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to equipment and vehicles mobilizing into an 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 re-conducted prior to site occupation, including nesting bird surveys during the breeding season.
- 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.
- Potential desert tortoise burrows (*Gopherus agassizii*) were found within the 500-foot buffer survey area of WSS 39. CDFG and USFWS consultation shall be conducted regarding required desert tortoise fencing between Tehachapi Willow Springs Road and Windhub Substation prior to entry into any WSS within the noted area. A qualified biological monitor familiar with desert tortoise monitoring shall be on site during WSS activities.
- Per Mitigation Measure B-4b, CDFG and CPUC shall field verify temporary and permanent impacts to Joshua tree woodland habitat. SCE shall coordinate with CDFG and CPUC to acquire and ensure permanent protection of mitigation lands.
- If special-status plant or animal species are observed within the project area, the CPUC EM and CDFG shall be notified immediately.

- Cultural resources have been identified at WSS 16, WSS 19, WSS 30, adjacent to WSS 31, and at WSS 36. Cultural resources shall be flagged prior to wire stringing activities and avoided during wire stringing activities. To ensure avoidance, a cultural resources monitor is required during all setup and wire stringing activities at WSS 16, 19, 30, 31 and 36. All newly identified cultural sites shall be updated on the field maps and drawings, and distributed to appropriate field personnel **prior to entry** into the subject WSSs.
- If unanticipated cultural discoveries occur, work must halt in the immediate vicinity until the find can be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist to determine if it meets significance criteria under CEQA.
- 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. In addition, all disturbed areas shall be restored in accordance with approved restoration plans and permit conditions.
- Prior to the commencement of construction activities, all crew personnel including 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 occupation. In addition, all approved access roads, spur roads and overland travel routes to be used shall be flagged prior to construction.
- If construction debris or spills enter into environmentally sensitive areas, the jurisdictional agencies and CPUC EM shall be notified immediately.
- Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, and this Variance shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities where applicable, including the variance request and maps.

Sincerely,



John Boccio
CPUC Environmental Project Manager

cc: V. Strong, Aspen