

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

November 18, 2009

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

RE: SCE Antelope Transmission Project, Segment 3A – Variance Request #62

Dear Mr. Johnson,

On November 16, 2009, Southern Californian Edison (SCE) submitted a variance requesting the expansion of five previously approved wire stringing sites, adding fiber wire sites at four structure locations, and replacing one wire stringing / snub site with one new wire stringing site, 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 to expand five previously approved wire stringing sites, add fiber wire sites at four structure locations, and replace one wire stringing / snub site with one new wire stringing site. If approved, there will be a total of 19.47 acres of additional disturbance areas, including the removal of 1.84 acres of disturbance areas, throughout Segment 3A.

The expansion of wire stringing site (WSS) disturbance areas at Constructs 16, 26 and 49 is being requested due to the tower heights at these locations. The additional disturbance area at these sites is necessary to proceed with operations in a safe manner. Additionally, several fiber wire site (FWS) disturbance areas are required for the construction of the 500 kV transmission line and do not fall within previously identified WSS disturbance areas. SCE is requesting that these sites be added at Constructs 37, 64, 75 and 86. These FWS disturbance areas measure 200 feet wide and 400 feet long. Lastly, SCE is proposing to remove a snub site between Constructs 59 and 60, and replace this site with new WSS disturbance areas at Construct 59. The new WSS disturbance areas at Construct 59 will not require grading, but will involve the use of tracked and rubber-tired equipment. This will eliminate the need to dig snubs, which would have caused more invasive impacts, at the previous location (WSS 18).

The following table represents a summary of the requested changes herein.

Construct Site	Number	Existing / New Site	Additional Disturbance Area Required (square feet)
16	WSS 33	Existing	15,000
16	WSS 32	Existing	17,000
26	WSS 29	Existing	3,000
26	WSS 28	Existing	8,000
37	FWS 37a	New	80,000
37	FWS 37b	New	80,000
49	WSS 23	Existing	45,000
59	WSS 18	Existing	80,000

Construct Site	Number	Existing / New Site	Additional Disturbance Area Required (square feet)
59	WSS 59a	New	100,000
59	WSS 59b	New	100,000
64	FWS 64a	New	80,000
64	FWS 64b	New	80,000
75	FWS 75a	New	80,000
75	FWS 75b	New	80,000
86	FWS 86a	New	80,000
86	FWS 86b	New	80,000
<b>Total Additional Disturbance Area</b>			<b>848,000</b>

- Biological Resources:** On November 9 and 10, 2009, biological clearance surveys for these additional WSS disturbance and the newly proposed FWS disturbance areas were conducted by biologists with ECORP, LSA, and Burns & McDonnell. The mapped disturbance area for the Wire Setup Sites (WSS) with a 500-foot buffer was surveyed for biological resources. These particular sites were not flagged in the field to avoid confusion, so the biologists surveyed on 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 (Mitigation Measure B-4). This species will be quantified following clearance surveys and just prior to vegetative clearing (number of removed and saved Joshua trees). In addition, 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.

#### **Additional disturbance at WSS 23**

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

#### **Additional disturbance at WSS 28**

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

#### **Additional disturbance at WSS 29**

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

#### **Additional disturbance at WSS 32**

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

#### **Additional disturbance at WSS 33**

Within the 500-foot buffer survey area, an inactive nest located in a Joshua tree was found. Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area and the 500-foot buffer area. No other sensitive resources were found.

#### **Proposed FWS for Construct 37**

Within the 500-foot buffer survey area, one potential burrowing owl burrow (*Athene cunicularia*) was found. There was no sign present indicating that this burrow was being used by burrowing owls. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.



**Proposed FWS for Construct 64**

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

**Proposed FWS for Constructs 75**

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

**Proposed FWS for Constructs 86**

Within the 500-foot buffer survey area, two potential burrowing owl burrows were found. There was no sign present indicating that these burrows were being used by burrowing owls. No other sensitive resources were found. No Joshua trees were located within the disturbance area or the 500-foot buffer area.

**Proposed WSS Construct 59**

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

No significant impacts to biological resources are anticipated with the implementation of the conditions noted below.

- **Cultural & Paleontological Resources:** The proposed disturbance areas for the subject WSS/FWS activities on Segment 3A were investigated for archaeological resources by ECORPS Consulting, Inc. (Ahmet, Mason, and Bholat 2006) and Pacific Legacy Inc. (Way, Jackson and Holm 2008), and for paleontological resources by Cogstone Resources Management (Scott and Gust 2008, Harper et al 2009). One isolated artifact was identified by Pacific Legacy during the cultural resources field survey on November 10, 2009. Isolated artifacts do not meet CRHR eligibility requirements under CEQA. No additional cultural or paleontological resources were identified. No significant impacts to cultural or paleontological resources are anticipated with the implementation of the conditions noted below.

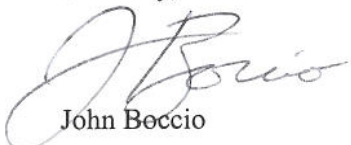
**The conditions noted below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:**

- *Within seven calendar days of this variance approval, updated Segment 3A maps which illustrate all new and expanded WSS/FWS approved under this variance and Variance #58 shall be issued to all necessary field personnel. Any eliminated WSS/FWS shall also be removed. If the updated maps are not issued by the specified date, all work within the WSS/FWS approved under this variance and Variance #58 shall cease until such time the updated maps are issued.*
- 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.

- 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.
- The potential burrowing owl burrows at FWS 37 and 86 shall be avoided. If avoidance isn't feasible, CDFG consultation and approval shall be provided prior to use of these FWS.
- If special-status plant or animal species are observed within the project area, the CPUC EM and CDFG shall be notified immediately.
- 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. The CPUC EM shall be notified immediately.
- 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