Chapter 1
Executive Summary

Overview

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) owns and operates a 115 kV overhead electric power line system in San Benito and Monterey Counties near the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista (Figure 3-1). Both the communities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista are currently served by the Hollister Substation.

In the existing power line system configuration, the Hollister Substation is supplied by two 115 kV power lines, the Hollister Nos. 1 and 2 115 kV power lines, that begin as a section of the double-circuit Moss Landing–Salinas–Soledad 115 kV power line. In the event of an outage on either 115 kV line serving Hollister, all of the Hollister load would be served from the remaining lines.

The Hollister 115 kV Power Line Reconductoring Project (proposed project) includes replacing the conductors (reconductoring) on two segments of this system, the Hollister Tower Segment, which is approximately 7 miles long, and the Hollister Pole Segment, which is approximately 9 miles long. PG&E's proposal to reinforce the power line system serving the Hollister area consists of two components:

- Replacing the existing double-circuit lattice tower section of the Moss Landing–Salinas–Soledad 115 kV power line between Lagunitas Switches and Anzar Junction (Hollister Tower Segment) with new towers and higher-capacity 115 kV conductors; and
- Replacing the existing single-circuit wood pole section of the Hollister No. 1 115 kV power line between Anzar Junction and Hollister Substation (Hollister Pole Segment) with a new, double-circuit 115 kV power line with higher-capacity conductors supported by tubular steel poles (TSPs) and light-duty steel (LDS) poles.

An approximately 1.3-mile section of the Hollister Pole Segment, the Proposed River Crossing, will be relocated out of the San Benito River floodplain (the existing river alignment).

Except for the Proposed River Crossing, the proposed project lies within existing utility easements and entails modifying existing facilities within an existing

utility corridor. It also takes advantage of existing access roads needed to construct and maintain the power line system.

Purpose and Need

The proposed project is intended to meet the following objectives:

- **Meet electric demand**—To ensure that the electric system includes adequate capacity to safely and reliably serve the communities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista and the surrounding areas in San Benito County.
- **Replace aging infrastructure**—To replace aging towers that support the 115 kV power lines on the Hollister Tower Segment; existing tower structures are approximately 70 years old.
- **Improve power line system reliability and reduce harm to birds**—To reduce the frequency of line outages by installing new structures with greater spacing between the conductors and steel supports to reduce avian interactions and mortalities
- **Comply with the California ISO Grid Planning Criteria—**To comply with the California Independent System Operator (CA ISO) grid reliability planning criteria.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, the Hollister 115 kV Power Line Reconductoring Project is needed to improve transmission capacity and reliability in the Hollister area in order to continue to provide safe and reliable electric service to customers in the area. PG&E's local 115 kV power line system is at risk of overloading should there be a loss of one of the two 115 kV power lines that supply the Hollister area. If either 115 kV line into Hollister fails during peak demand load levels, the existing system will not be able to reliably serve the existing load. Overloading of either line could result in outages to both residential and commercial customers and could lead PG&E to institute rolling black-outs. The proposed reconductoring work will correct this problem and help meet future demand, maintain compliance with applicable grid reliability criteria, and make it easier to maintain the power line system.

Growth in the project area is carefully planned and regulated by city and county general plans that contain land use policies to protect the region's open spaces and agricultural land uses and to control urban development. The project is designed to meet immediate and projected electrical power needs in the San Benito-Monterey service area based on current and projected demand.

Scope of the PEA and Conclusions

The PEA describes the affected environment and project-related environmental effects for the following resources:

- Aesthetics;
- Agriculture;
- Air Quality;
- Biological Resources;
- Cultural Resources;
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity;
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials;
- Hydrology and Water Quality;
- Land Use and Planning;
- Mineral Resources;
- Noise;
- Population and Housing;
- Public Services;
- Recreation;
- Transportation and Traffic;
- Public Utilities; and
- Growth-Inducing and Cumulative Impacts.

The project was planned and engineered to avoid or minimize environmental impacts. As part of PG&E's standard construction practices, applicant-proposed measures (APMs) have been incorporated into the project design and will be implemented to avoid or minimize impacts to biological and other environmental resources. PG&E also has proposed resource-specific measures to ensure that potential impacts are less than significant. These APMs are identified in the respective resource section. Chapter 5 contains a list of all APMs.

With implementation of the proposed APMs, all potential project-related impacts will be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level.

There are no known areas of controversy, and no major issues that must be resolved related to the project.

Organization of the PEA

The remainder of the document is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2. Project Purpose and Need
- Chapter 3. Project Description
- Chapter 4. Affected Environment and Environmental Effects
- Chapter 5. Applicant's Proposed Measures
- Chapter 6. List of Preparers
- Appendices:
  - Appendix A. Common and Scientific Names of Plant Species Identified in the Project Area and Mentioned in Text
  - Appendix B. Common and Scientific Names of Wildlife Species Identified in the Project Area and Mentioned in Text
  - Appendix C. Documentation of Native American Consultation
  - Appendix D. Electric and Magnetic Fields
  - Appendix E. Final Jurisdictional Determination
  - Appendix F. Preliminary Delineation of Wetlands and Other Waters of the United States for the Hollister 115 kV Power Line Reconductoring Project