Section 4.16
Public Utilities

Introduction

This section describes the affected environment and regulatory setting for public utilities, including water, wastewater/sewer, storm drainage, and solid waste. It also analyzes the potential impacts on public utilities that will result from implementation of the project.

The proposed project will result in relatively small impacts on water, wastewater, storm drainage, and solid waste during construction. Potential impacts will be caused by water use for cement mixing, increased impervious surfaces for access roads, and increased waste from both the removal of poles and general waste created by PG&E employees. Measures regarding utility notification, application of drainage standards where applicable, and reuse of replaced poles as appropriate will ensure that construction of the project will result in a less-than-significant impact on water, wastewater/sewer, storm drainage, and solid waste services. The project will result in a positive impact on electrical services by providing increased capacity and improved reliability to the service area.

Methodology

Existing conditions were determined from a review of published literature, examination of aerial photographs, and site-specific field inspection of the locations of project components. Descriptions of public utilities in the project area were derived from current general plans of the affected cities and San Benito and Monterey Counties.

Information on solid waste was obtained from the California Waste Stream Profiles of the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB).

Affected Environment

Regulatory Setting

No federal or local plans or policies concerning public utilities apply to the proposed project.

State of California

California Urban Water Management Planning Act

The California Urban Water Management Planning Act requires management of urban water demands and efficient use of urban water supplies. Urban water suppliers serving more than 3,000 customers are to prepare and adopt an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) as defined by the law. The UWMP must describe the supplier's existing and planned water demand management measures, as well as how proposed measures will be implemented. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is responsible for reviewing and certifying UWMPs prepared pursuant to the act. A UWMP is required to contain a chapter on the water conservation BMPs that are to be implemented by urban water users. San Benito County Water District (SBCWD) and Sunnyslope County Water District will be the water suppliers for the proposed project. The proposed project also will be under the jurisdiction of the Hollister Area Urban Water Management Plan and the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

California Integrated Waste Management Board

The CIWMB promotes a "Zero Waste California" in partnership with local government, industry, and the public. This means managing the estimated 92 million tons of waste generated each year by reducing waste whenever possible; promoting the management of all materials to their highest and best use; regulating the handling, processing, and disposal of solid waste; and protecting public health and safety and the environment.

Assembly Bill 939 – Solid Waste

AB 939 (enacted in 1989) requires each city and/or county to include an implementation schedule for the following: a 25-percent diversion of all solid waste from landfill disposal or transformation by January 1, 1995, through source reduction, recycling, and composting activities—followed by a 50-percent

reduction to the waste stream by January 1, 2000. The CIWMB continues to track compliance with this law.

Project Setting

San Benito County

Water Service

There are five public water districts in the unincorporated area of the county: the Aromas Water District, Pacheco Pass Water District, Sunnyslope County Water District, San Benito County Water District, and Tres Pinos Water District. For the proposed project, SBCWD and Sunnyslope County Water District will be the providers. The SBCWD encompasses around 47,000 acres of San Benito County and delivers water to approximately 32,000 acres. SBCWD primarily delivers agricultural water; however, it also delivers a small amount of municipal and industrial water. SBCWD manages the groundwater in the San Benito County portion of the Hollister–Gilroy basin, operates the San Benito River System and the San Felipe Distribution System, delivers imported CVP water to irrigation and municipal and industrial customers, and manages recharge through local streams. Current revenue-producing water use is about 42,500 acre-feet per year. The District is governed by an elected five member Board of Directors and is administered by the District Manager/Engineer (SBCWD 2007). The principal water available to the proposed project is local water and imported CVP water. Local surface supplies are primarily percolated into the groundwater basin for later recovery through pumping by individual users and domestic water suppliers. The imported water supply from the San Felipe Project is available for use within Hollister, San Juan Bautista, and other unincorporated areas near the proposed project. The system provides for direct delivery to agricultural and other rural properties and for centralized delivery to the Hollister area and San Juan Bautista for urban use (SBCWD 2007).

Wastewater Service

Less than 1 percent of the unincorporated area of the county has the potential to utilize public sewer and water service. Wastewater from rural dwellings and other buildings usually are disposed of in the ground. If soil and site conditions are favorable, and maintenance is adequate, a septic tank system can be expected to provide satisfactory service. In a septic system, the intermittent flow of waste materials is decomposed by anaerobic bacteria.

Stormwater Drainage

San Benito County does not maintain a storm drainage system in the project vicinity. Storm water drainage is handled by the individual incorporated cities. Therefore, further details relating to storm drains are discussed under the individual city jurisdictions.

Solid Waste Service

The John Smith Landfill serves San Benito County and Hollister and San Juan Bautista (described in further detail below). The landfill is located on John Smith Road, east of Fairview Road and just east of the City of Hollister. The landfill is owned by San Benito County and is operated by Hollister Disposal Company, under contract with the County. Currently, only 28 acres of the 57-acre landfill are being utilized, which would provide sufficient capacity to dispose of waste at a level of 250 tons per day for an estimated 15 to 18 years. The landfill currently handles an average of approximately 75 tons per day. The Hollister Disposal Company is updating its permit to allow full utilization of all 57 acres of the landfill site. Although it is uncertain how technology will alter current packaging and disposal methods and affect long-term success of recycling efforts, it is estimated that utilization of the full site will provide a life span of between 40 and 45 years, based on projected population growth in the service area. (City of Hollister 2005.)

Preliminary data for 2006 show that the recycling diversion rate for the County was 41 percent. The County has yet to meet the AB 939 goals of 50-percent diversion. These diversion rates are consistent throughout the incorporated and unincorporated cities of the County (CIWMB 2008a).

City of Hollister

Water Service

Sunnyslope County Water District and SBCWD are the water providers for the City of Hollister. Sunnyslope County Water District was incorporated in December 1954 with the mission to supply a safe and reliable water source to Hollister area residents at the lowest possible cost, and to provide adequate and dependable water flow for fire protection. The District now serves water to over 5,200 customers and operates wastewater facilities for more than 1,200 customers. In 1990, the Board of Directors passed Ordinance #45, prohibiting water waste; this includes use of water for construction purposes, such as consolidation of backfill, except when no other method can be used (SSCWD 2000).

UWMP 2000 discusses SBCWD's role as wholesaler and purveyor of the San Felipe Project. This imported water has been serving the community since 1988; as noted, it is anticipated to become a supplemental source of potable water

supply to the City of Hollister. The area of study encompassed by the Hollister UWMP includes the Hollister East, Hollister West, and Tres Pinos sub-basins. These sub-basins, as well as the remaining areas in the Hollister Valley, receive water supplies from a variety of sources:

- Imported San Felipe Project water,
- Groundwater supplies, and
- Surface water recharge from reservoirs.

As the Hollister area's residential population grows, some lands currently used for agriculture will become urbanized. However, it is anticipated that the agricultural and urban communities will continue to coexist well into the 21st century, each with its separate patterns of water demand and consumption, and shared water supplies. (SSCWD 2000.)

Wastewater Service

The San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Regional Agency handles the sewer services for the City of Hollister.

The Hollister wastewater treatment facilities provide secondary treatment at municipal and industrial plants, using three-stage ponding systems. The secondary effluent from these facilities is percolated back to the groundwater basin. Thus, the Hollister area has and continues to support a longstanding practice of water recycling. (SSCWD 2000.)

Stormwater Drainage

In response to growth in and around the city, a series of planning and engineering studies to address drainage needs in Hollister were commissioned, and a series of necessary storm drainage improvements were identified. Since these studies were completed, a number of drainage improvements and detention ponds have been installed or are in the process of construction. Those that have been completed include the San Juan Road/South Street/Hillcrest Road trunk line; the Rustic Street system, including the detention pond; and a downstream portion of the Bundeson storm line south of Nash Road in the Cienega Road area. Currently, the Enterprise Road storm line, which serves a portion of the southeast sector of the City, is under construction. (City of Hollister 2005.)

Solid Waste Service

Solid waste disposal within Hollister currently is provided under contract via the Hollister Disposal Company. Solid waste is disposed of at the John Smith Landfill (described above). It is the only permitted landfill (a Class III non-hazardous solid waste disposal facility) serving the Hollister area. (City of Hollister 2005.)

City of San Juan Bautista

Water Service

The City of San Juan Bautista provides water to most properties within the city limits and a limited number of customers in the unincorporated area. The City's water supply system consists of three wells, although only two are operational. Water is pumped to a 200,000-gallon covered reservoir in the southwest part of the City. It is chlorinated and then distributed to homes and businesses through a series of mains. (City of San Juan Bautista 1998.)

Customers in the more remote parts of San Juan Bautista rely on private wells for potable water. Agricultural water is provided in the city by the SBCWD. Water is transported to the area via pipeline from the San Felipe Water Project. The San Felipe Project has an annual allocation of 1.2 acre-feet of water per acre for users in the direct distribution system. Because this amount is usually not sufficient to support crops, it is supplemented with water pumped from private wells on individual farms. (City of San Juan Bautista 1998.)

Wastewater Service

The City of San Juan Bautista provides sewer services to most properties within the city limits and a few properties in the unincorporated area. Most residents in the unincorporated area are on private septic systems. Urban wastewater is collected by a network of pipes. The collection system includes two lift stations—one located at the end of Lang Court and the other on Old San Juan Highway.

The City's sewage treatment plant is located at the end of Third Street. The plant is operated by a private firm through a contractual agreement with the City. The plant recently was upgraded to provide treated effluent that meets State standards for tertiary treatment; treated effluent may be used for certain types of irrigation, including landscaping.

The plant is designed to have an average dry weather flow of 273,000 gallons per day (gpd). Average daily flow in 2004 was 205,000 gpd, down from 215,000 in 1998. This reduction of daily flow is due to the City's promotion of water-saving devices such as low-flow toilets. The City also replaced many larger mains that had allowed water from saturated ground to seep into the system. During storm events, the plant exceeds capacity for a short period. The City engineers suspect inflow of stormwater due to cross connections. The City has installed new storm drain and flood control systems within the City.

Stormwater Drainage

Storm drainage in San Juan Bautista is handled by a combination of storm drains and sewers, roadside ditches, and surface drainageways. Some streets have underground storm drains; others do not. Where drainage facilities do not exist, runoff occurs through sheet flow to nearby ditches or drainageways. In general, runoff follows the prevailing contours to the north and east, flowing toward the

area below the San Andreas Fault. The lack of a coordinated drainage system creates a number of problems during heavy rains. Stormwater tends to pond in low spots (such as the intersection of Fourth Street and Muckelemi Street), and inadequately sized culverts and channels can cause overbank flooding along San Juan Creek and the Salinas Grade Tributary.

Solid Waste Service

The City of San Juan Bautista has an agreement with a private vendor for collection and disposal of solid waste. All residences and businesses are required by ordinance to have garbage collection service. About 825 tons of solid waste a year is collected. Waste is hauled to a variety of landfills, including the Crazy Horse Landfill in Salinas and the Guadalupe Landfill in San Jose. Outside the city limits and in the rest of San Benito County, solid waste collection and disposal is provided by the Hollister Disposal Company (which includes disposal to the John Smith Landfill, about 13 miles to the east). The Crazy Horse, Guadalupe, and John Smith Landfills have sufficient capacity or planned expansion areas to meet expected waste streams for the next 20 years. (City of San Juan Bautista 1998.)

Monterey County

Water Service

Monterey County is underlain with aquifers that provide a high-quality water source essential for agriculture as well as every other type of land use. Groundwater is the principal source of water in the County, accounting for more than 80 percent of the total water use. Wells that are used to obtain groundwater are operated by many different entities (cities, special assessment districts, investor-owned utilities, mutual water companies, and individual property owners), making ground water resource management difficult.

The availability and quality of water remain the most crucial issues facing North County, the planning area in which the proposed project is located. Water is critical for both agricultural and development demands. A key component of the North County's water issues is Elkhorn Slough, with a 43,600-acre watershed. Lack of developed infrastructure, groundwater overdraft, nitrate contamination, and saltwater intrusion into the groundwater aquifer are serious problems faced by all of the communities in the planning area. Some individual water/sewer systems and ailing municipal systems are increasingly unable to meet the current and rising demand for development and services. Imposition of a water moratorium has temporarily slowed development in the Planning Area. Based on citizen input, County plans indicate that long-term solutions to the critical water issues facing the Planning Area should be addressed before additional growth is permitted. Aquifer recharge is a vital need. To achieve aquifer recharge, significant percolation areas must be protected, water sources higher in the aquifer must be used for irrigation, dual water systems should be created in new

subdivisions, and landscape watering should use properly designed and inspected "grey" water or de-ionized nitrate laden water when possible. Additional creative solutions to the water crisis, such as the use of cisterns, must be investigated. (Monterey County 2006.)

Sewer Service

In Monterey County, there are two means of sewage disposal: septic disposal systems and wastewater treatment plant systems. The project alignment is located in unincorporated rural and agricultural areas, with some low residential and open space areas; thus, septic systems are the likely form of wastewater service provided. Since groundwater quality is critical for continued operation in the county, higher density development and urban areas generally are required to include wastewater treatment plants to handle the higher sewage loads.

Solid Waste Service

CIWMB has designated the Monterey County Health Department, Environmental Health Division as the Local Enforcement Agency for Monterey County. Solid waste in Monterey County is the responsibility of the landowner in rural and unincorporated areas. As the project is located in unincorporated Monterey County, the project waste will be the responsibility of the applicant.

With respect to proximity and capacity, project construction and demolition waste will most likely be diverted to the Johnson Canyon Sanitary Landfill, located at 31400 Johnson Canyon Road in Gonzales, California. Operated by the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Facility, the landfill currently accepts 1,574 tons per day. As of 2000, the remaining capacity of the landfill was estimated at 50 percent, with a planned closure date of December 2040. (CIWMB 2008b.)

Environmental Effects

This section describes the impact analysis relating to public utilities for the proposed project. It describes the impacts of the project and lists the thresholds used to conclude whether an impact was considered significant. Implementation of BMPs will ensure that all impacts will be less than significant.

Significance Criteria

For this analysis, significance criteria are based on professional practice and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.). An impact pertaining to public utilities was considered potentially significant if the project would result in:

- Construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects;
- The need for a new or expanded water supply;
- Exceeding the wastewater treatment requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board;
- The need for new or substantially altered water or wastewater treatment facilities or storm drainage facilities;
- A breach of published national, state, or local standards relating to solid waste or litter control;
- Extension of a sewer trunk line with capacity to serve new development;
- Inadequate access to a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodated the project's solid waste disposal needs; or
- Contact and/or disturbance of underground utility lines and/or facilities during construction activities.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Potential impacts related to water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and solid waste during construction – less-than-significant impact

Water

Project construction will require the use of small amounts of water for making cement footings for the poles and lattice towers, as well as, dust control and drinking water for construction employees. The principal water available to the proposed project is local water and imported CVP water. Water used during dust suppression on PG&E access roads will be minimal, and because this water will evaporate or be absorbed by the ground, disposal will not be required. The short period of use will negligibly affect local water supplies and create no need for water treatment facilities. Although the project is not expected to displace any known existing permitted water wells nor create substantial alteration of a well field during construction activities, PG&E will implement APM PU-1 described below to ensure that any potential impacts will be less-than-significant levels.

APM PU-1: CONDUCT A PRECONSTRUCTION RECORDS SEARCH/FIELD SURVEY TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC LOCATIONS OF WATER WELLS AND WELL FIELDS.

To ensure minimal disturbance or alteration of water wells or well fields within the project alignment, PG&E will conduct a preconstruction records search and field survey to identify specific locations of water wells and well fields.

Wastewater

Project construction will negligibly affect wastewater, as construction crews will use portable toilets. No other sources of wastewater are anticipated for construction, and the project will not exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. No changes to wastewater treatment facilities will be required because of the small amount of waste generated by crews. The project does not require construction of new water or wastewater facilities or pipelines and will not require moving of any such lines.

The placement of footings for the poles and towers is not expected to significantly alter septic field drainage should they be present. As the majority of project construction takes place in existing easements along foothills, within open-space, and through agriculture lands, any damage to septic fields is unlikely.

Stormwater Drainage

Prior to power line construction, lay down (staging) areas will be prepared to provide space for materials delivery, storage, and preparation; equipment storage; crew parking; and offices prior to installation. In addition, there will be helicopter landing zones and pull sites. These construction areas will involve vegetation removal and may affect drainage temporarily (see Chapter 3 for discussion of sizing of construction areas that may be prepared for staging areas). However, once the staging areas are leased by PG&E, the appropriate permits will be obtained for potential drainage impacts. Additionally, construction areas will be temporary and will be restored, and will not result in a permanent impact to drainage in the area. In addition to the staging areas, permanent access roads will be added to assist with construction as well as maintenance (long-term). Existing and proposed access routes are presented in Table 3-3. Approximately 1.5 miles (2.7 acres) of new permanent access roads are proposed. Access roads will need to meet local government requirements for design, which may involve drainage standards. With acquirement of the appropriate permits and application of any necessary design requirements, it is expected that new or expanded storm water drainage facilities will not be required. Therefore, impacts are considered less than significant.

Solid Waste

When existing wood poles are removed, PG&E will make the poles available for reuse or, if demand does not exist for the poles, will dispose of them in an

appropriate landfill with sufficient capacity to accept the material. San Benito County's John Smith Landfill currently has a remaining permitted capacity of 3.6 million cubic yards, and it is not estimated to close until 2024. Other miscellaneous non-hazardous construction materials that cannot be reused or recycled likely will be acceptable for disposal at municipal county landfills. Any hazardous materials and wastes will be recycled, treated, and/or disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and local laws. Although San Benito County has yet to meet its AB 939 50-percent diversion goal, the County is implementing a countywide integrated waste management plan to address this shortfall. PG&E will attempt to make the poles available for reuse to limit the volume sent to the landfill while increasing recycling efforts. Therefore, the proposed project will not be in conflict with any statures and/or regulations related to solid waste.

Potential for inadvertent disturbance of underground utilities during construction – less-than-significant impact

Construction activities could inadvertently contact underground facilities, such as water and sewer utility lines, during excavations and placement of buried steel poles that could lead to short-term service interruptions. The likelihood of such an occurrence is low, and implementation of standard practices, such as contacting Underground Service Alert before excavation, will ensure that impacts are less than significant. PG&E will implement APM PU-2 described below.

APM PU-2: NOTIFY UNDERGROUND SERVICE ALERT AT LEAST 14 DAYS PRIOR TO INITIATION OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES IN THE UNDERGROUND PORTION OF THE POWER LINE.

PG&E will ensure that Underground Service Alert is notified at least 14 days prior to initiation of construction activities of the underground portion of the power line. Underground Service Alert verifies and physically marks the location of all existing underground utilities in the area of anticipated construction activities to prevent accidental disturbance.

Potential impacts related to water, wastewater, stormwater drainage, and solid waste associated with operation – less-than-significant impact

Operation of the proposed project will not require additional workers other than those currently employed for operation and maintenance. The project will not require additional infrastructure from other utilities to operate in the project area. The project is located primarily within existing PG&E easements. The project will not extend water, wastewater/sewer, storm drainage, or solid waste services to new areas—or require the extension of other public services to previously non-serviced areas.

As the project is a utility line and does not require water to operate, the project will not generate a substantial demand for water or generate substantial amounts of wastewater.

A minor amount of solid waste will be generated over the years, such as replacement of worn or damaged equipment; this is the same as existing requirements for the Hollister Tower and Hollister Pole Segments.

Overall, operation of the proposed project will not result in a significant impact on public utilities.

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