

Contents

1. Mitigated Negative Declaration	1-1
1.1 Project Information.....	1-1
1.2 Background and Description of Project.....	1-1
1.3 Required Approvals.....	1-2
1.4 Environmental Determination	1-3
1.5 Applicant Proposed Measures and Mitigation Measures.....	1-3
1.6 Findings.....	1-12
2. Environmental Determination	2-1
2.1 Environmental Factors Potentially Affected.....	2-1
2.2 Environmental Determination	2-1
3. Introduction to the Initial Study	3-1
3.1 Proposed Project Overview.....	3-1
3.2 Environmental Analysis.....	3-1
3.2.1 CEQA Process.....	3-1
3.2.2 CEQA Lead Agency	3-2
3.2.3 Initial Study	3-2
4. Project Description	4-1
4.1 Project Title.....	4-1
4.2 Lead Agency Name and Address	4-1
4.3 Lead Agency Contact Person and Phone Number.....	4-1
4.4 Project Location	4-1
4.5 Project Sponsor's Name and Address.....	4-1
4.6 General Plan Designation	4-1
4.7 Zoning.....	4-2
4.8 Surrounding Land Uses and Setting.....	4-2
4.9 Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required.....	4-2
4.10 Description of the Project.....	4-3
4.10.1 Overview	4-3
4.10.2 Project Objectives.....	4-3
4.10.3 Project Location.....	4-4
4.10.4 Project Components.....	4-25
4.10.5 Project Construction Activities.....	4-37
4.10.6 Operations and Maintenance	4-61
4.10.7 Required Approvals.....	4-62
4.10.8 Applicant Proposed Measures.....	4-62
4.10.9 Electric and Magnetic Fields Summary	4-70
4.10.10 Alternatives.....	4-72
5. Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts	5-1
5.1 Aesthetics.....	5-1
5.1.1 Environmental Setting	5-1
5.1.2 Regulatory Background.....	5-26
5.1.3 Visual Analysis.....	5-27
5.1.4 Aesthetic Impacts of Construction, Operation, and Maintenance	5-65

5.2	Agriculture and Forestry Resources.....	5-77
5.2.1	Environmental Setting	5-77
5.2.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-82
5.3	Air Quality.....	5-93
5.3.1	Environmental Setting	5-93
5.3.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-98
5.4	Biological Resources.....	5-103
5.4.1	Environmental Setting	5-103
5.4.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-125
5.5	Cultural Resources.....	5-139
5.5.1	Environmental Setting	5-139
5.5.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-150
5.6	Geology and Soils.....	5-153
5.6.1	Environmental Setting	5-153
5.6.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-158
5.7	Greenhouse Gas Emissions.....	5-161
5.7.1	Environmental Setting	5-161
5.7.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-164
5.8	Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....	5-167
5.8.1	Environmental Setting	5-169
5.8.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-171
5.9	Hydrology and Water Quality	5-177
5.9.1	Environmental Setting	5-177
5.9.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-188
5.10	Land Use and Planning	5-195
5.10.1	Environmental Setting	5-195
5.10.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-197
5.11	Mineral Resources	5-211
5.11.1	Environmental Setting	5-211
5.11.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-211
5.12	Noise.....	5-213
5.12.1	Environmental Setting	5-213
5.12.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-217
5.13	Population and Housing	5-223
5.13.1	Environmental Setting	5-223
5.13.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-224
5.14	Public Services	5-225
5.14.1	Environmental Setting	5-225
5.14.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-226
5.15	Recreation.....	5-229
5.15.1	Environmental Setting	5-229
5.15.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-229
5.16	Transportation/Traffic	5-231
5.16.1	Environmental Setting	5-231
5.16.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-234
5.17	Utilities and Service Systems.....	5-239
5.17.1	Environmental Setting	5-239
5.17.2	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-240

5.18	Mandatory Findings of Significance.....	5-245
5.18.1	Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-245
5.19	Corona and Induced Current Effects.....	5-259
5.19.1	Environmental Setting	5-259
	5.19.2 Environmental Impacts and Assessment.....	5-259
6.	Mitigation Monitoring Plan	6-1
6.1	Minor Project Changes or Variances.....	6-1
6.2	Dispute Resolution.....	6-2
7.	Response to Comments	7-1

Tables

Table 1-1	Permits and Approvals Necessary for the Proposed Project.....	1-2
Table 4-1	Access Roads Area.....	4-40
Table 4-2	Summary of Approximate Pole Metrics	4-55
Table 4-3	Anticipated Personnel and Equipment Required for Project Construction.....	4-59
Table 4-4	Equipment Expected to be Used During Construction.....	4-60
Table 4-5	Permits and Approvals Necessary for the Proposed Project.....	4-62
Table 4-6	Applicant Proposed Measures	4-63
Table 5.1-1	Summary of Landscape Units within the Project Viewshed	5-6
Table 5.1-2	Visual Impact Significance Criteria.....	5-28
Table 5.1-3	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Aesthetics	5-29
Table 5.1-4	Approximate Dimensions of Major Project Components.....	5-30
Table 5.1-5	Summary of Simulation Views.....	5-32
Table 5.2-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Agriculture and Forestry Resources	5-81
Table 5.3-1	National and California Ambient Air Quality Standards.....	5-94
Table 5.3-2	Summary of Maximum Ambient Air Monitoring Data in the Project Area	5-94
Table 5.3-3	Attainment Status for SJVAPCD	5-95
Table 5.3-4	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Air Quality.....	5-97
Table 5.3-5	Construction Emission Estimates with Implementation of APMs.....	5-99
Table 5.4-1	Approximate Extent of Vegetation and Other Land Cover Types within the Survey Area.....	5-107
Table 5.4-2	Special-Status Species with Potential to Occur within the Survey area.....	5-117
Table 5.4-3	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Biological Resources	5-123
Table 5.5-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Cultural and Paleontological Resources	5-148
Table 5.6-1	Peak Ground Acceleration In the Project Area	5-156
Table 5.6-2	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Geology and Soils	5-157
Table 5.7-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Greenhouse Gas Emissions	5-163
Table 5.7-2	Potential SF ₆ Process Loss Emissions	5-165
Table 5.8-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....	5-171
Table 5.9-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Hydrology and Water Quality.....	5-186
Table 5.10-1	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Land Use and Planning.....	5-196
Table 5.12-1	Acoustical Terms and Definitions	5-213
Table 5.12-2	Typical Sound Levels Measured in the Environment.....	5-215
Table 5.12-3	Summary of Federal Guidelines and Regulations for Exterior Noise (dBA).....	5-216
Table 5.12-4	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Noise	5-217
Table 5.12-5	Typical Construction Equipment Noise Levels	5-218
Table 5.12-6	Construction Equipment Noise Levels Versus Distance	5-219

Table 5.13-1	Year 2011 Existing Conditions – Population, Housing, and Employment: Merced County.....	5-223
Table 5.16-1	Level of Service Criteria for Roadways	5-231
Table 5.16-2	Summary of Study Area Highway Characteristics	5-231
Table 5.16-3	Summary of Study Area Local Roadway Characteristics.....	5-232
Table 5.16-4	Applicant Proposed Measures Related to Transportation and Traffic.....	5-233
Table 5.16-5	Summary of Projected Study Area Roadway Characteristics During Project Construction.....	5-235
Table 5.18-1	Cumulative Projects in the Project Vicinity.....	5-247
Table 6-1	Mitigation Monitoring Plan.....	6-4

Figures

Figure 4-1	Project Location	4-5
Figure 4-2	Existing Transmission System	4-7
Figure 4-3a	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 1 of 8.....	4-9
Figure 4-3b	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 2 of 8.....	4-11
Figure 4-3c	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 3 of 8.....	4-13
Figure 4-3d	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 4 of 8.....	4-15
Figure 4-3e	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 5 of 8.....	4-17
Figure 4-3f	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 6 of 8.....	4-19
Figure 4-3g	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 7 of 8.....	4-21
Figure 4-3h	Project Components and Construction Elements, Map 8 of 8.....	4-23
Figure 4-4	Typical Light-Duty Steel Pole	4-29
Figure 4-5	Typical Tubular Steel Pole.....	4-31
Figure 4-6	Typical Guard Structure.....	4-33
Figure 4-7	Cressey Substation Existing Aerial View.....	4-41
Figure 4-8	Cressey Substation Modification Profile View	4-43
Figure 4-9	Cressey Substation Existing Aerial View with Proposed Modification Plan View.....	4-45
Figure 4-10	Gallo Substation Existing Aerial View	4-47
Figure 4-11	Gallo Substation Existing Aerial View with Proposed Expansion Plan View	4-49
Figure 4-12	Gallo Substation Expansion Profile View	4-51
Figure 5.1-1	Photograph Viewpoint Locations.....	5-3
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 1 of 8	5-9
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 2 of 8	5-11
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 3 of 8	5-13
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 4 of 8	5-15
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 5 of 8	5-17
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 6 of 8	5-19
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 7 of 8	5-21
Figure 5.1-2	Photographs of Project Route and Vicinity, Sheet 8 of 8	5-23
Figure 5.1-3A	Meadow Drive Looking Toward Cressey Substation.....	5-35
Figure 5.1-3B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Meadow Drive Looking Toward Cressey Substation.....	5-37
Figure 5.1-4A	Arena Way, near Walnut Avenue	5-39
Figure 5.1-4B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Arena Way, near Walnut Avenue	5-41
Figure 5.1-5A	Arena Way, near Liberty Avenue	5-45
Figure 5.1-5B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Arena Way, near Liberty Avenue	5-47
Figure 5.1-6A	KVP-9 photo taken from SR-99 near Liberty Avenue Exit.....	5-49
Figure 5.1-6B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from SR-99 near Liberty Avenue Exit	5-51

Figure 5.1-7A	Lincoln Boulevard, at Newcastle Drive.....	5-55
Figure 5.1-7B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Lincoln Boulevard, at Newcastle Drive....	5-57
Figure 5.1-8A	Magnolia Avenue, near Griffith Avenue.....	5-61
Figure 5.1-8B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Magnolia Avenue, near Griffith Avenue.....	5-63
Figure 5.1-9A	Mercedes Avenue East of Santa Fe Avenue.....	5-69
Figure 5.1-9B	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Mercedes Avenue East of Santa Fe Avenue.....	5-71
Figure 5.1-9C	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Mercedes Avenue East of Santa Fe Avenue with Implementation of Mitigation Measures V-1 and V-2	5-73
Figure 5.1-9D	Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Mercedes Avenue East of Santa Fe Avenue with Implementation of Mitigation Measures V-1 and V-2, with Vegetative Screening.....	5-75
Figure 5.2-1	Existing Agriculture Uses	5-87
Figure 5.2-2	FMMP Farmland Classification	5-89
Figure 5.2-3	Williamson Act Program Contracts	5-91
Figure 5.4-1	CNDDB Occurrences and Critical Habitat	5-115
Figure 5.10-1a	Sensitive Receptors (1 of 4).....	5-201
Figure 5.10-1b	Sensitive Receptors (2 of 4).....	5-203
Figure 5.10-1c	Sensitive Receptors (3 of 4).....	5-205
Figure 5.10-1d	Sensitive Receptors (4 of 4).....	5-207
Figure 5.10-2	Mitigation Measure L-1 Reroute	5-209

Appendices

Appendix A	List of Preparers
Appendix B	References
Appendix C	Biological Resources Technical Reports
Appendix D	Air Quality Emissions Summary