

# Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>1. Mitigated Negative Declaration</b>                            | 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  | 1-13 |
| <b>2. Environmental Determination</b>                               | 2-1  |
| 2.1 Environmental Factors Potentially Affected                      | 2-1  |
| 2.2 Environmental Determination                                     | 2-1  |
| <b>3. Introduction to the Initial Study</b>                         | 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  |
| <b>4. Project Description</b>                                       | 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                                   | 4-62 |
| 4.10.7 Required Approvals   | 4-62 |
| 4.10.8 Applicant Proposed Measures                                  | 4-63 |
| 4.10.9 Electric and Magnetic Fields Summary                         | 4-70 |
| 4.10.10 Alternatives  | 4-73 |
| <b>5. Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts</b>           | 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 and Traffic.....           | 5-231 |
| 5.16.1 | Environmental Setting.....                | 5-231 |
| 5.16.2 | Environmental Impacts and Assessment..... | 5-233 |
| 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      |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>Mitigation Monitoring Plan.....</b>                          | <b>6-1</b> |
| 6.1       | Minor Project Changes or Variances.....                         | 6-1        |
| 6.2       | Dispute Resolution.....   | 6-2        |
| <b>7.</b> | <b>Response to Comments.....</b>                                | <b>7-1</b> |
|           | Introduction.....   | 7-1        |
|           | Comment Set A – California Department of Fish and Wildlife..... | 7-3        |
|           | Responses to Comment Set A.....                                 | 7-11       |
|           | Comment Set B – Jeff Dickey.....                                | 7-23       |
|           | Responses to Comment Set B.....                                 | 7-25       |
|           | Comment Set C – Pacific Gas & Electric Company.....             | 7-29       |
|           | Responses to Comment Set C.....                                 | 7-43       |

## 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 (based on typical estimates)..... | 4-59  |
| Table 4-4   | Equipment Expected to be Used During Construction.....  | 4-61  |
| Table 4-5   | Permits and Approvals Necessary for the Proposed Project.....   | 4-62  |
| Table 4-6   | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs).....   | 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 (APMs) 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 (APMs) 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 (APMs) 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 (APMs) Related to Biological Resources.....                                 | 5-123 |
| Table 5.5-1 | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) 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 (APMs) Related to Geology and Soils.....                                    | 5-157 |
| Table 5.7-1 | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) Related to Greenhouse Gas Emissions.....                             | 5-163 |
| Table 5.7-2 | Potential SF <sub>6</sub> Process Loss Emissions.....   | 5-165 |
| Table 5.8-1 | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) Related to Hazards and Hazardous Materials.....                      | 5-171 |

|              |  |       |
|--------------|--|-------|
| Table 5.9-1  | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) Related to Hydrology and Water Quality .....              | 5-186 |
| Table 5.10-1 | Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) 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 (APMs) 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<br>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 (APMs) Related to Transportation and Traffic .....               | 5-233 |
| Table 5.16-5 | Summary of Projected Study Area Roadway Characteristics During Project<br>Construction ..... | 5-235 |
| Table 5.18-1 | Cumulative Projects in the Project Vicinity .....  | 5-247 |
| Table 6-1    | Mitigation Monitoring Plan .....   | 6-4   |
| Table 7-1    | Comments Received on the Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration .....                       | 7-1   |

## 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<br>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<br>Avenue.....  | 5-71  |
| Figure 5.1-9C  | Simulation of Proposed Project as Seen from Mercedes Avenue East of Santa Fe<br>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<br>Avenue with Implementation of Mitigation Measures V-1 and V-2, with Vegetative<br>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   | CNDDDB Occurrences and Critical Habitat.....   | 5-115 |
| Figure 5.10-1a | Sensitive Receptors.....   | 5-201 |
| Figure 5.10-1b | Sensitive Receptors.....   | 5-203 |
| Figure 5.10-1c | Sensitive Receptors.....   | 5-205 |
| Figure 5.10-1d | Sensitive Receptors.....   | 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          |
| Appendix E | Notice of Intent and Legal Notice      |