

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

# **Notice of Preparation**

## **for a Focused Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Devers–Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project - Colorado River Substation Expansion Proposed by Southern California Edison SCH No. 2005101104**

### **A. Introduction**

Southern California Edison (SCE) filed an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for the proposed Devers–Palo Verde 500 kilovolt (kV) No. 2 Transmission Line project (DPV2) in April 2005. The application was determined to be complete and in compliance with CPUC requirements on September 30, 2005. The CPUC and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) in 2006, and the CPUC approved the DPV2 Project on January 25, 2007 in Decision D.07-01-040 and certified the EIR as being in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.

On May 14, 2008, SCE filed a Petition for Modification (PFM) of the existing CPCN approved in Decision D.07-01-040. SCE requested that the CPUC authorize SCE to construct DPV2 facilities in only the California portion of DPV2 starting from the Desert Southwest–Midpoint Substation near Blythe, California. This California-only portion of DPV2 is called the Devers-Colorado River (DCR) transmission line. The CPUC approved SCE's PFM on November 20, 2009 in Decision D.09-11-007.

After the CPUC's 2009 Decision, several large solar power projects were proposed in the Blythe area. Two of these projects, the Blythe Solar Power Project and the Genesis Solar Energy Project, have requested interconnection to the electricity grid at the Desert Southwest-Midpoint Substation. As a result, the solar developers and SCE developed a plan to expand the Midpoint Substation to allow the required space for generation tie lines to be interconnected with the SCE 500 kV transmission system.

During the 2009 to 2010, the Blythe Solar Power Project (BSPP) and the Genesis Solar Energy Project (GSEP) have been evaluated under CEQA and NEPA by the BLM and the California Energy Commission. A joint Staff Assessment/Draft EIS was released for each of these projects in March 2010. A Revised Staff Assessment for the BSPP was published in June 2010, and for the GSEP in June and July 2010. BLM published its Final EISs on the BSPP and the GSEP in August 2010. These environmental documents addressed the substation expansion, but they did not adequately cover all issues that the CPUC requires to be addressed in accordance with CEQA. Therefore, the CPUC has concluded that it will prepare a focused Supplemental EIR to address only the specific issues not yet covered for its purposes.

SCE has proposed a number of refinements to the DPV2 project as approved, including the locations of the construction yards and telecommunication system components, and modifying transmission line structures. The review of these project refinements will likely occur as a part of the CPUC's mitigation monitoring process.

As required by CEQA, this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is being sent to interested agencies and members of the public. The purpose of the NOP is to inform recipients that the CPUC is beginning preparation of the DPV2 Supplemental EIR and to solicit information that will be helpful in the environmental review process. **This notice includes a description of the substation expansion that SCE proposes to construct, a summary**

of potential project impacts, and information on how to provide comments to the CPUC. This NOP can be viewed on the project web site at the following link:

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/asp/dpv2/dpv2.htm>

## B. Project Description

The expanded Colorado River Substation (CRS) would serve to interconnect solar generation proposed for development in the Blythe area of the Mojave Desert to the DPV2 transmission line. In the DPV2 Final EIR/EIS, the CPUC identified the DPV2 Midpoint Substation and the Desert Southwest-Midpoint Substation as environmentally equivalent. In Decision D. 09-11-007, the CPUC approved both substation locations, and determined that construction at either location did not trigger the need for additional CEQA review. The DPV2 Desert Southwest-Midpoint Substation site (now re-named as the Colorado River Substation) was ultimately selected by SCE as the location for the CRS. The CRS site is a 44-acre site (1,000 feet by 1,900 feet) located in the southeast corner of parcel APN No. 879-080-025.

The expansion of the CRS would require the following new components, each described in more detail below:

- Expanding the proposed and already permitted Colorado River Substation from 44 acres to 90 acres;
- Looping the two 500 kV circuits and terminating the new Devers-Colorado River (DCR) transmission line into the CRS;
- Modifying existing 220 kV structures to allow the DCR to cross the Buck-Julian Hinds 220 kV transmission line;
- Constructing a distribution line to serve the CRS (substation lighting and system power).

**Colorado River Substation Expansion.** The expanded CRS would be located at the same site as the Desert Southwest-Midpoint Substation site evaluated in the EIR/EIS and selected by SCE. However, it would be expanded to approximately 90 acres. It would be located 1.5 miles south of Interstate 10 and 4.75 miles east of Wiley Well Road, in the County of Riverside, California. The proposed CRS site is on public lands managed by the BLM. The proposed CRS Expansion would expand the 500 kV switchyard approved as part of the DPV2 CPCN into a full 500/220 kV substation. The expanded CRS substation would be 1,500 feet by 2,400 feet surrounded by a wall with two gates.

**Transmission Lines.** SCE would loop the existing DPV1 500 kV transmission line and terminate the new Devers-Colorado River (originally called DPV2) transmission line into the CRS by adding a total of approximately 2,000 feet of new transmission lines (two lines of approximately 1,000 feet each located side-by-side within a corridor approximately 1,000 feet wide).

**Modify Existing 220 kV Structures.** The proposed SCE 500 kV loop-in lines would have to cross the recently-installed NextEra Resources Buck-Julian Hinds 220 kV transmission lines, so these structures may require modification to allow the 500 kV crossing. New tubular steel poles at the crossing location may be needed to replace the existing 220 kV concrete poles; design details would be determined during the detailed engineering phase.

**Distribution Line for Substation Power.** SCE would construct approximately 2,500 feet of 12 kV overhead distribution line and approximately 1,000 feet of underground distribution line to connect a nearby existing distribution system to the CRS to provide substation light and power.

## C. Project Location and Affected Jurisdictions

The Proposed Project would be located on approximately 90 acres of land located 1.5 miles south of Interstate 10 and 4.75 miles east of Wiley Well Road, in the County of Riverside, California. In 1989, the BLM granted in perpetuity a 130-foot-wide right-of-way on public land for the DPV2 route. The Proposed Project would be partially within this right-of-way. The proposed CRS site is entirely on property managed by the BLM and within utility corridors as designated in the BLM Resource Management Plans. The project would be located in unincorporated Riverside County.

## D. Potential Environmental Effects

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines, the CPUC intends to prepare a Supplemental EIR to evaluate potential environmental effects of the Colorado River Substation Expansion and the minor transmission line modifications and required distribution line, and to propose mitigation measures to reduce any significant effects identified.

The supplement to the EIR will contain only the information necessary to document all project impacts for the substation expansion (CEQA Guidelines 15163(b)). The CPUC finds that for many disciplines, additional impacts are not likely to occur beyond those analyzed in the DPV2 EIR/EIS and the BLM and CEC documents. For the environmental disciplines listed below, the substation expansion would not require additional analysis:

- Visual Resources
- Wilderness and Recreation
- Noise
- Public Health and Safety
- Geology, Minerals, and Soils
- Land Use
- Agriculture
- Transportation and Traffic
- Socioeconomics

The environmental review in the Supplemental EIR will focus on the disciplines listed below, addressing impacts that could occur due to the Colorado River Substation Expansion that were not covered in the original DPV2 EIR/EIS or the subsequent documents, including the BLM GSEP and BSPP EISs and the CEC GSEP and BSPP Staff Assessments. In addition, the Supplemental EIR may address some minor refinements to the DPV2 project as approved, including facility changes and water use.

- **Biological Resources:** Recent surveys provide information on special-status species at the substation site.
- **Cultural Resources:** Recent surveys of the expanded substation area have been provided and will be addressed in the Supplemental EIR.
- **Air Quality / Greenhouse Gas:** An updated analysis will be presented consistent with current CEQA requirements.
- **Water Resources:** Project water use will be addressed if it will differ substantially from SCE's initial project description.

Attachment 1 to this NOP presents a preliminary list of potential impacts of the Proposed Project. Based on the analysis completed in the Final EIR/EIS, there are several environmental disciplines for which it is not expected that the Colorado River Substation expansion and ancillary facilities would result in substantially more severe impacts.

**Mitigation Measures.** The Final EIR/EIS for the DPV2 project presented numerous proposed measures that were designed to reduce or eliminate potential impacts of the Colorado River Substation as analyzed in the

document. These measures were adopted by the CPUC in its approval of the project. The effectiveness of these measures to reduce impacts to specific resources affected by the expanded substation will be evaluated in the Supplemental EIR, and additional mitigation measures may be developed to further reduce impacts, if required. When the CPUC makes its final decision on the Proposed Project, it will define the mitigation measures to be adopted as a condition of project approval, and the CPUC will require implementation of a mitigation monitoring program.

## E. Scoping Comments

At this time, the CPUC is soliciting information regarding the topics that should be included in the Supplemental EIR. **All comments for the CPUC's CEQA scoping period must be received by November 1, 2010.** You may submit comments by U.S. mail, by electronic mail, or by fax.

**By Mail:** If you send comments by U.S. mail, please use first-class mail and be sure to include your name and a return address. Please send written comments on the scope and content of the Supplemental EIR to:

**Billie Blanchard**  
**California Public Utilities Commission**  
c/o Aspen Environmental Group  
235 Montgomery Street, Suite 935  
San Francisco, CA 94104-3002  
Fax and Voicemail: (800) 886-1888

**By Electronic Mail:** E-mail communications are welcome; however, please remember to include your name and return address in the e-mail message. E-mail messages should be sent to [dpv2@aspenerg.com](mailto:dpv2@aspenerg.com).

**By Fax:** You may fax your comment letter to our information line at (800) 886-1888. Please remember to include your name and return address in the fax, to write legibly, and use black or blue ink. The Supplemental EIR will review and consider all comments received.

## F. Project Information

Information about this application and the environmental review process will be posted on the Internet at: <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/dpv2/dpv2.htm>. This site will be used to post all public documents during the supplemental environmental review process. In addition, a copy of the Final EIR/EIS for the DPV2 project may be found at this site.

## G. Issuance of NOP

**The California Public Utilities Commission hereby issues this Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.**

Billie Blanchard for  
Ken Lewis Deputy Director  
Energy Division  
California Public Utilities Commission

Date: 09/29/10

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**Attachment 1. Summary of Potential Issues or Impacts: Colorado River Substation Expansion**


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**Environmental Issue****Area****Potential Issues or Impacts**

Air Quality/Greenhouse Gas

- Project would create greenhouse gas emissions.

**Biological Resources****Vegetation**

- Direct and temporary impacts from construction would affect stabilized and partially stabilized sand dune communities and special-status plant species therein.

**Wildlife**

- Potential direct, permanent impacts to wildlife, which may be accidentally run over by vehicles during construction, operations, and maintenance procedures.
- Potential direct and indirect impacts to special-status reptile species including: Mojave fringe-toed lizard.

**Mammals**

- Potential direct, permanent impacts to fossorial species, which may be inadvertently killed when burrows are collapsed by heavy machinery.
- Potential direct and indirect impacts to special-status mammalian including desert kit fox.

**Cultural Resources****Cultural Sites**

- Potential impacts to archaeological sites.
- Potential impacts to Traditional Culture Properties (TCPs) or potential TCPs from the construction, operations, and maintenance of the proposed substation expansion.
- Potential impacts to historical sites.

**Paleontological Sites**

- Potential impacts to paleontological resources during excavation and grading of the expanded substation site.

**Hydrology and Water Quality**

- Potential for expanded use of groundwater to affect the groundwater basin or water supply for other users.

**Other Issues**

- Cumulative Impacts (including other proposed transmission lines in or near the expanded substation site)
  - Growth-Inducing Effects
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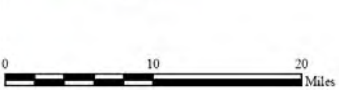
**Colorado River Substation**

**Original Midpoint Substation**

PREPARED BY  
**Aspen**  
Environmental Group

Proposed Project

Mileposts



**OWNERSHIP/JURISDICTIONS (unincorporated areas)**

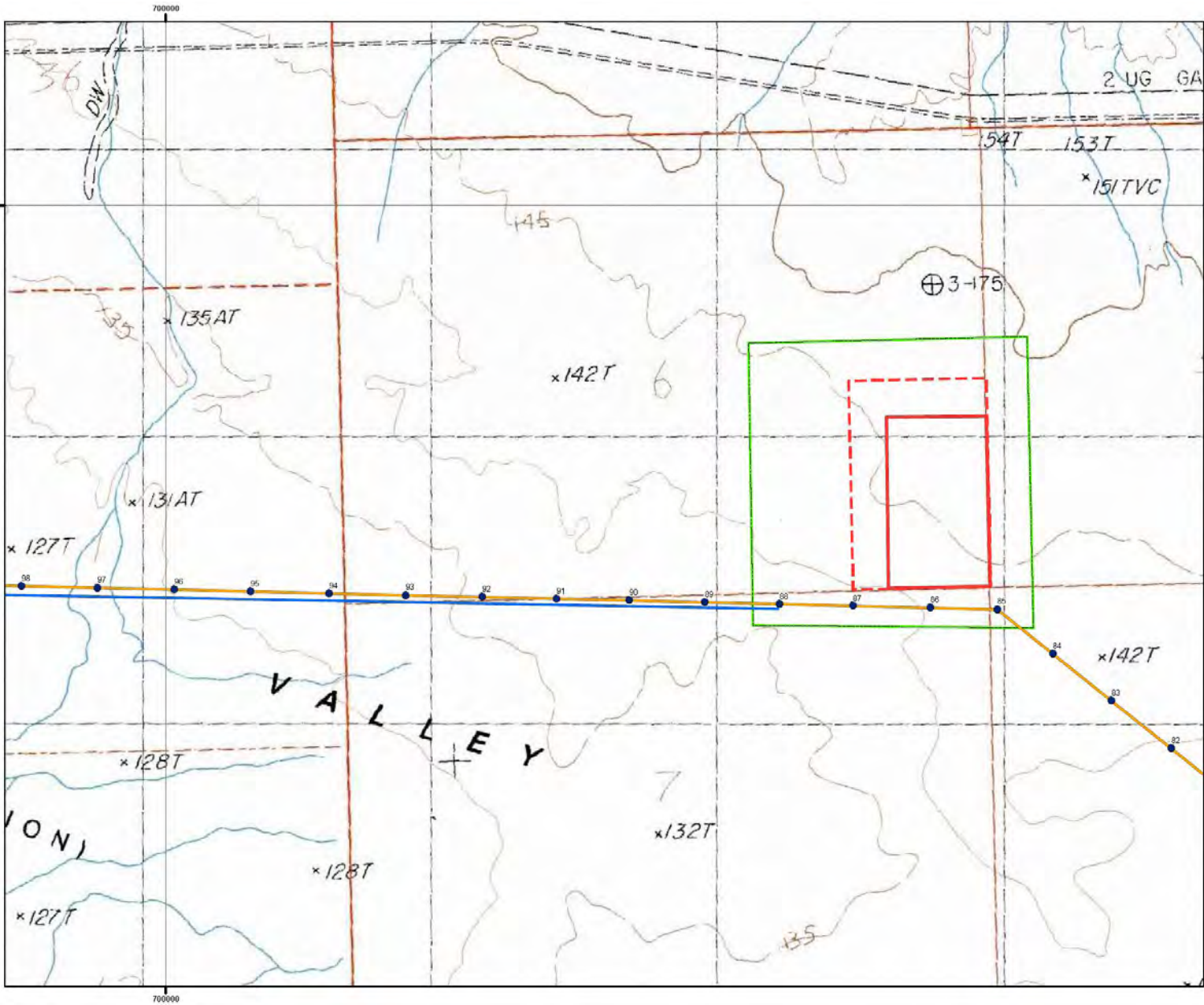
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|---------------------------|---------------------|
| BLM                       | Nature Conservancy  |
| Fish and Wildlife Service | Forest Service      |
| Indian Lands              | State Fish and Game |
| Military                  | State               |
| State Parks & Recreation  | Private             |
| National Park Service     | Wilderness Areas    |

- Substations
- Series Capacitor
- Construction Yard
- Communications Site
- Incorporated Areas

**Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project**

Figure B-2  
**Devers-Harquahala Portion:  
Colorado River to Devers Substation**





GENESIS SOLAR, LLC

GENESIS SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT  
RIVERSIDE COUNTY,  
CALIFORNIA



**Legend**

- Existing Blythe T-line
- Remainder Of Genesis Generation Tie Line
- Spring 2010 Biological Resources Survey Area
- SCE CO River Substation (CRS)**
- 500kv Footprint Permitted By CPUC In 2009
- Proposed 230kv Expansion Area

Notes:  
 (a) UTM Zone 11, NAD 1983 Projection.  
 (b) Source data: ESRI, TTEC, AECOM

**Colorado River Substation  
Expansion Area**

TETRA TECH EC, INC