

# H. Public Participation and Notification

## H.1 INTRODUCTION

The public participation program for the El Casco System Project provided an opportunity to involve concerned citizens, agencies, organizations, and other stakeholders in the environmental review process. The public participation and notification processes for the Proposed Project focus on two areas of CEQA: (1) public scoping and (2) Draft EIR public review. This section describes the outreach methods that were used for this Project.

## H.2 PUBLIC SCOPING

The scoping process for the El Casco System Project EIR consisted of the five elements listed below. Each element is described in more detail in the following sections.

- Publication and distribution of a Notice of Preparation of an EIR and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings soliciting comments from affected public agencies, as required by CEQA, as well as from the public.
- Notification and conduct of public scoping meetings, and conduct of meetings with agencies.
- Summarization of scoping comments in a Scoping Report.
- Distribution of the Scoping Report and scoping comments to the EIR team members for use in work planning and impact analysis, and to public libraries designated as project repository sites for members of the public interested in reviewing the report and comments.
- Establishment of an Internet web site, electronic mail address, a telephone hotline, and local EIR Information Repositories.

### H.2.1 Notice of Preparation

As required by CEQA Guidelines Section 15082, the CPUC issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) on July 16, 2007 that summarized the Proposed Project, stated its intention to prepare an EIR, and requested comments from interested parties (see Appendix 2 for full copy of the NOP). The NOP also included notice of the CPUC's Pre-Hearing Conference for the Proposed Project, and public scoping meetings that were held on August 1, 2007 in the cities of Banning and Beaumont, California. The NOP was filed with the State Clearinghouse on July 16, 2007 (SCH# 2007071076), which initiated the 30-day public scoping period. The review period for the NOP ended on August 14, 2007.

Over 800 copies of the NOP were distributed to federal, State, regional, and local agencies; elected officials; and property owners within 300 feet of the Proposed Project alignment. Property owners were identified by SCE as part of their application to the CPUC and incorporated into the project mailing list. Citizens and community organizations who expressed interest in the Proposed Project prior to receipt of the NOP were also added to the mailing list. In addition, five copies of the NOP were delivered to local repository sites where documents and project information can be reviewed. The NOP and all future Proposed Project-related documents are available for review both online and at the information repository sites, as described in Section H.3.3.

## H.2.2 Scoping Meetings

The CPUC held one Pre-Hearing Conference (PHC) and two public scoping meetings in two locations in northern Riverside County on August 1, 2007. The PHC was held to identify issues related to the CPUC's General Proceeding and to help determine the need to conduct hearings on the Proposed Project. The two public scoping meetings provided an opportunity for the public and government agencies to obtain more information on the proposed El Casco System Project, to learn more about the CEQA environmental review process, to ask questions regarding the Proposed Project, and to provide formal scoping comments. The PHC and public scoping meetings were held at the following locations and on the following dates:

- PHC on August 1, 2007, at 1:00 pm at the City Council Chambers, Banning City Hall, Banning
- Public Scoping Meeting on August 1, 2007, at 2:30 pm at the City Council Chambers, Banning City Hall, Banning
- Public Scoping Meeting on August 1, 2007, at 6:30 pm at the City Council Chambers, Beaumont Civic Center, Beaumont

## H.2.3 Scoping Report

In September 2007, a comprehensive Scoping Report was issued and 15 copies were distributed, summarizing issues and concerns received from the public and various agencies and presenting copies of all written comments received. Approximately 15 comment letters were received during the NOP scoping period from public agencies and private citizens. The Scoping Report was made available for review at the five repositories and on the Internet as listed in Section H.3.3.

The discussion below presents the key issues identified from the written and oral comments received on the Proposed Project during scoping. The specific issues raised during the public scoping process are summarized below according to the following major themes:

- Aesthetic Impacts
- Air Quality Impacts
- Cultural Resources Impacts
- Hazardous Materials/Contamination
- Land Use and Property Value Impacts
- Noise Impacts
- Water Resources/Hydrology Impacts
- Impacts from EMF
- Alternatives
- Other Concerns

The majority of public comments focused on the potential effect of the project on densely populated areas, most often expressing concerns with health risks arising from increased EMF emissions, visual and scenic impacts, impacts to property values, and impacts due to increased noise levels.

- **Aesthetic Impacts.** Several commenters were concerned that the new subtransmission line would negatively impact scenic vistas, especially views of the nearby mountains. Additionally, other commenters were concerned that the aesthetic impacts of a new or upgraded subtransmission line would not be analyzed in sufficient detail in the environmental documents.
- **Air Quality Impacts.** Several comments were received that stated the need to analyze the air quality impacts on adjacent residences and businesses. Also, the South Coast Air Quality Management District provided guidance on the preparation of the air quality analysis. This guidance included both analysis methodology and the types of sources to be analyzed.

- **Cultural Resources Impacts.** The Native American Heritage Commission provided comments about the appropriate preparations and precautions that would be necessary prior to initiation of construction activities. These preparations included a record search, archaeological monitoring, and mitigation planning for accidental discovery of artifacts or remains.
- **Hazardous Materials/Contamination.** The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) provided guidance as to the proper and required sampling, investigation, and remediation of sites that are suspected of contamination. DTSC also provided guidance as to proper handling of both imported and exported soil used during construction, as well as guidance for suspected groundwater contamination.
- **Land Use and Property Value Impacts.** Many residents, especially Sun Lakes residents, were concerned that the taller, newly-energized subtransmission lines would negatively impact the value of their home and would make the home more difficult or impossible to sell. The City of Banning requested consideration of impacts from both the Proposed Project and the Northerly Alternative on City Planning and private projects adjacent to the subtransmission lines.
- **Noise Impacts.** Several residents expressed concern that the new or upgraded subtransmission line and substation would produce levels of noise pollution that are bothersome and unacceptable.
- **Water Resources/Hydrology Impacts.** The Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District suggested that any project-related construction activity be coordinated with the District and that any potential impacts to drainage, floodplains, and storm water runoff be considered.
- **Impacts from EMF.** Individuals expressed concern that the proximity and voltage of the subtransmission lines would produce a level of EMF radiation that is hazardous to human health. They expressed particular concern for the health of the elderly that live in close proximity to the proposed project. Additionally, concerns were presented regarding the possible interference that EMF radiation may cause for electronic devices, such as cell phones, wireless routers, computers, pacemakers, and radios.
- **Alternatives.** Several alternatives were raised identified, the majority of which were either undergrounding the subtransmission line through the Sun Lakes community or routing the subtransmission line around Sun Lakes. Several alternative routes that avoid the Sun Lakes community were also proposed.
- **Other Concerns.** Various other concerns were expressed, including electrocution due to the proximity of the subtransmission lines to the ground, electrocution or crushing due to the line or towers falling on homes, interference with firefighting efforts by helicopters or airplanes, and the possibility that the new subtransmission line would become a terrorist target.

## H.2.4 Public Notification

About two weeks before the scoping meetings, the NOP was mailed on July 16, 2007, to over 800 individuals, groups and government agencies identified for the initial EIR mailing list, based on SCE's list of property owners located within 300 feet of the proposed project alignment, as well as groups and individuals with a vital interest in the proposed project compiled by the EIR Team. The dates, times and locations of the Pre-Hearing Conference and two scoping meetings were included in the NOP mailed to these affected agencies and other interested parties. This information was also posted on the CPUC project website.

A notice for the public scoping meetings and PHC was also published approximately one week before the first meeting in the following papers:

- *The San Bernardino Sun* - Wednesday, July 25, 2007
- *The Press-Enterprise* - Wednesday, July 25, 2007
- *Redlands Daily Facts* - Wednesday, July 25, 2007
- *Calimesa News-Mirror* - Thursday, July 26, 2007

- *Record-Gazette-* Friday, July 27, 2007

### H.3 DRAFT EIR PUBLIC REVIEW

Per State CEQA Guidelines Section 15085, the Notice of Completion (NOC) is a document that must be filed with State Clearinghouse, Office of Planning and Research, as soon as the Draft EIR is completed. The NOC should include: a description of the proposed project, including location, the addresses where copies of the Draft EIR are available for review; and the review period during which public comments may be received.

The CPUC shall also provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIR at the same time it sends the NOC to the State Clearinghouse (CEQA Guidelines Section 15087). In addition to the information disclosed in the NOC, the Notice of Availability should include details for any scheduled public meetings or hearings (date, time, and place); list of significant environmental effects; and whether the project site is listed under Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (hazardous waste facilities). The sections that follow provide information on the public review that will be implemented for the Draft EIR.

#### H.3.1 Notice of Availability and Property Owner Notification

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR was sent to property owners and occupants on or adjacent to SCE's proposed route and the alternative routes on December 12, 2007 at the time the Draft EIR was released. The Notice includes information on how to access the Draft EIR, what is the Environmentally Superior Alternative(s), and the date, time and location for the informational workshop on the Draft EIR and the CPUC's Public Participation Hearing.

#### H.3.2 Informational Workshops and Public Participation Meetings

Following the release of the Draft EIR, two informational workshops will be held in the **City of Banning Council Chambers on January 9, 2008 from 1:30 pm to 2:30 pm, and 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., respectively**. The purpose of this informational workshop is to help affected communities understand the Proposed Project, the Draft EIR, and how to participate in the CPUC's decision making processes, including commenting on the Draft EIR. At this workshop, the EIR Team and CPUC staff will be available to respond to questions and provide clarification regarding the impact analysis and conclusions presented in the Draft EIR.

There will also be a public participation meeting for formal oral comments on the Draft EIR where the public can provide comment on the Draft EIR. Two public participation meetings will be held following the information workshops on **January 9, 2008 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., respectively**, after the information workshop described above. For more information on the informational workshops and public participation meetings, please call the project hotline at (877) 576-8342, or visit the project web site at:

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/elcasco/elcasco.htm>

### H.3.3 EIR Information and Repository Sites

Five sites were identified as repositories for project-related documents. All EIR-related documents, including the Notice of Preparation, the Scoping Report and the Draft EIR have been made available upon their release to the public at the locations listed below.

- *Yucaipa Branch Library*, 12040 5th St. Yucaipa, CA 92399
- *Banning Public Library*; 21 W. Nicolet St., Banning, CA 92220
- *Calimesa Library*, 974 Calimesa Blvd., Calimesa, CA 92320
- *Beaumont Library*, 125 E 8th Street, Beaumont, CA 92223
- *University of Redlands Armacost Library*, 1200 East Colton Avenue, Redlands, CA 92373

A telephone hotline for project information has been established at (877) 576-8342. This number receives voice messages and faxes.

EIR information, including Proposed Project information, the Scoping Report, the environmental review process, and the Draft EIR will be posted on the Internet at:

<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/aspen/elcasco/elcasco.htm>

This site is used to post all public documents during the environmental review process and to announce upcoming public meetings.

### H.3.4 Draft EIR Public Review Period

In compliance with CEQA Guidelines, the CPUC provides a public review period of 45 days for the Draft EIR. This public review period commences upon release of the Draft EIR, on December 12, 2007, and extends for 45 days through January 25, 2008. Written comments on the Draft EIR may be submitted at the informational workshop and Public Participation Hearing, via facsimile transmission on the EIR Hotline (877-576-8342), e-mail at the EIR e-mail address ([elcasco@aspenerg.com](mailto:elcasco@aspenerg.com)), or postal mail at:

Juralynne Mosley  
California Public Utilities Commission  
c/o Aspen Environmental Group  
30423 Canwood Street, Suite 215  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

Written comments must be received or postmarked by January 25, 2008. Please remember to include your name and return address in whatever form you make your written comments. Oral comments will only be received at the CPUC's Public Participation Hearing, in order to ensure an accurate record is made by a court reporter.