

Section 3.0

3.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This section examines the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project and the alternatives that were identified in Section 1.0, Purpose and Need. Section 3 includes the analysis of the resource categories listed below:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Traffic
- Utilities and Service Systems

The analysis of each resource category (Sections 3.1 to 3.16) presented above begins with a discussion of the existing physical conditions that may be affected by the Proposed Project and alternatives.

Significance criteria are identified for each resource category. The significance criteria serve as a benchmark for determining if a project would result in significant adverse environmental impacts when evaluated against the baseline (i.e., existing conditions). According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a significant effect on the environment means "...a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project..." The significance criteria utilized in this PEA are derived from the thresholds of significance identified in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.

The potential impacts of the Proposed Project are evaluated by considering both the initial construction activities (Construction Impacts) and long-term operation (Operation Impacts) of the proposed substation, subtransmission lines, substation modifications, and telecommunications improvements. For some resource categories where the potential impacts are the same or similar for all project elements, the impacts analysis generally applies to the project as a whole. However, for resource categories where impacts would differ, the potential impacts are evaluated individually for each project element. Where potentially significant impacts may occur as a result of the Proposed Project, feasible mitigation measures are identified that would avoid or reduce the impacts to the greatest extent possible.

Finally, each resource category section assesses the potential impacts of the alternatives to the El Casco System Project that have been selected for analysis in this PEA. The two alternatives analyzed in each section include:

- Northerly 115 kV Subtransmission Line Route Alternative
- Site 38 (Alternate Site)

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has primary jurisdiction over the Proposed Project because it authorizes the construction, operation, and maintenance of public utility facilities in the State of California. Although such projects are exempt from local regulations and discretionary permitting, General Order (GO) No. 131-D, Section III. C requires “the utility to communicate with, and obtain the input of, local authorities regarding land use matters and obtain any non-discretionary local permits.” Therefore, SCE will consider local and state regulations, where applicable, as part of the current environmental review process. In addition, when evaluating the potential project impacts, the analysis assumes that SCE would comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulatory requirements.