

United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

RECORD OF DECISION

for

**San Diego Gas & Electric Company's Power Line Replacement Project for
Tie Line 625, Tie Line 629, and Tie Line 6923**

San Diego County, California

Lead Agencies:

*United States Department of Agriculture
United States Forest Service
Cleveland National Forest*

California Public Utilities Commission

Cooperating Agencies:

*United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Indian Affairs*

Responsible Agency:

California State Department of Parks and Recreation

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes the Record of Decision (ROD) of the Department of Interior (DOI) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) for San Diego Gas & Electric Company's (SDG&E) power line right-of-way (ROW) renewals and replacement projects for portions of Tie Line (TL) 625 BLM Serial Number CALA0146985, TL629 BLM Serial Number CACA54414, and TL6923 BLM Serial Number 646 that traverse BLM-administered lands. This approval will take the form of BLM ROW grants, under the authority of Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA). The ROWs will allow SDG&E to conduct the power line replacement work for the portions of TL625, TL629, and TL6923 on the public lands under BLM jurisdiction and will also grant SDG&E the rights for continued operation and maintenance of the power lines on these lands.

1.1 Background

On February 26, 2007 and January 4, 2012, the existing 69 kV power lines CALA0146985 and CACA 646 expired under the terms of the ROW grants. The BLM discovered that existing 69kV TL 629 (CACA54414) had no valid authorization that granted SDG&E the authority to operate and maintain the line on public lands. SDG&E filed renewal applications for CALA0146985 and CACA646 on August 15, 2012 and a new ROW application for CACA 54414 on April 17, 2013.

SDG&E submitted an application to the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service), Cleveland National Forest, to obtain a Master Special Use Permit (MSUP) in 2005. The purpose of the MSUP was to consolidate SDG&E's rights and responsibilities under a single permit in connection with the continued operation of its electric lines and other existing facilities located within the Cleveland National Forest (CNF). As part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process, the Forest Service circulated an Environmental Assessment (EA) for public comment in 2009. In response to public comments received on that EA, the Forest Service determined that additional fire risk reduction measures within the CNF, including fire hardening, and additional undergrounding should be evaluated as part of the MSUP review process and that, as a result, an Environmental Impact Statement was required.

After publication of the EA in 2009, the scope was expanded to include fire hardening, undergrounding, and relocation of improvements both within and outside the CNF. The power line replacement projects cross other federal jurisdictions, including land managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and BLM. A Permit to Construct (PTC) from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) was also necessary. Additionally, SDG&E proposed new construction within Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, which is under the jurisdiction of the California State Department of Parks and Recreation (CSP).

The Forest Service is the lead agency under NEPA, and the CPUC is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The CPUC and the Forest Service agreed to develop a joint Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the MSUP and power line replacement projects to comply with these laws. The joint document is called the "SDG&E Master Special Use Permit and Permit to Construct Power Line Replacement Projects EIR/EIS."

The Final EIR/EIS was issued July 10, 2015. The Final EIR/EIS describes SDG&E's proposed action; evaluates and describes the potential environmental impacts associated with the construction and operation of the MSUP and power line replacement projects; identifies those impacts that could be significant; and presents mitigation measures, which, if adopted, could avoid or minimize those impacts. The Final EIR/EIS also evaluates several alternatives to SDG&E's proposal, including the Federal Proposed Action, No Action Alternative, and No Project Alternative, as required by NEPA and CEQA. The BLM and BIA joined the Forest Service as federal cooperating agencies under NEPA, and the CSP is participating as a responsible agency under CEQA.

When taking actions on a ROW grant, the BLM must comply with NEPA. To meet its obligations under NEPA, BLM can adopt another agency's environmental review if that review has addressed all the environmental issues associated with the action. The Final EIR/EIS fully addressed all of the environmental issues for the proposed action. The Final EIR/EIS states that it may be used by other state, local, and federal agencies for those that have portions of the project proposed on lands under their jurisdiction, including BLM. Accordingly, the BLM relies on the Final EIR/EIS for the entire action in making the decisions in this ROD and adopts the Final EIR/EIS and incorporates by reference necessary related documents to address the NEPA requirements for this approval.

1.2 Forest Service and BIA Determinations

The Forest Service has authorized the MSUP and power line replacement projects through a Forest Service ROD that applies to National Forest System lands. Specifically, the Forest Service, based on an evaluation of the information provided by the applicant and a review of the analysis disclosed in the Final EIR/EIS, decided to implement the components of the Federal Preferred Alternative that are located on the National Forest System lands. This decision is memorialized in the Forest Service's Final ROD dated March 11, 2016.

BIA has issued a ROD authorizing the components of the Federal Preferred Alternative located on lands held in trust on the La Jolla, Campo, and Pauma-Yuima Indian reservations. In issuing its ROD, BIA adopted the relevant mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS. Based on the analysis in the Final EIR/EIS and the entirety of the administrative record, BIA determined that the Federal Preferred Alternative meets the purpose and need of BIA and the respective tribes. This decision is memorialized in BIA's ROD dated March 30, 2016.

1.3 BLM Determination

This BLM ROD authorizes the components of the rights-of-way and power line replacement projects located on lands under BLM jurisdiction. This ROD evaluates applicant-provided information, reviews the disclosed analysis in the Final EIR/EIS, and adopts the relevant mitigation measures identified in the Final EIR/EIS. Based on the analysis in the Final EIR/EIS and the entirety of the administrative record, BLM determines that the Federal Preferred Alternative meets the purpose and need of BLM and authorizes the components of the Federal Preferred Alternative that are located on lands managed by BLM.

2.0 AGENCY PURPOSE AND NEED

The BLM purpose is consider authorizations for the power lines and associated facilities needed to continue electric service to a variety of users within and adjacent to the National System of Public Lands in a manner that is consistent with the South Coast Resource Management Plan, 1994.

Description of the Proposed Action

The BLM action would: (1) authorize the power line replacement work for the portions of TL625, TL629, and TL6923 located on public lands administered by BLM as set forth in the Federal Preferred Alternative and modified by the Forest Service Final ROD; and (2) issue ROW grants for the continued use, occupancy, and maintenance of power lines CACA 646, CALA0146985, CACA54414 on public lands under BLM jurisdiction as identified on figure B-2, B-5, B-6, and B-7 of the FEIS and attached to this Record of Decision. The ROW grants will be issued under the authority of Title V of the FLPMA. The ROW grants will authorize the ongoing operation, maintenance, and replacement of the power lines identified above. The ROW grants will be issued for a term of 30 years with a right of renewal so long as the lands are being used for the purposes specified in the grant.

CALA0146985: TL625

An approximately 0.05 mile section of TL625 is located within BLM's jurisdiction. TL625 is an existing 22.5-mile 69 kilovolt (kV) power line from Loveland Substation to Barrett Tap and from Barrett Tap north to Descanso Substation and south to Barrett Substation. The action would replace TL625's existing wood poles with weathered steel poles. Existing access roads would be maintained.

CACA54414: TL629

An approximately 0.71 mile section of TL629 is located within BLM's jurisdiction. TL629 is an existing 29.8-mile 69 kV power line from Descanso Substation to Cameron Tap and from Cameron Tap South to Cameron Substation and east to Crestwood Substation. The action would replace TL629's existing wood poles with weathered steel poles. Existing access roads would be maintained.

CACA646: TL6923

An approximately 3.22 mile section of TL6923 is located within BLM's jurisdiction. TL6923 is an existing 13.4-mile 69 kV power line from Barrett Substation to Cameron Substation. The action would replace TL6923's existing wood poles with weathered steel poles. Existing access roads would be maintained.

3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Final EIR/EIS evaluated the following alternatives in detail. A comparison of the alternatives considered in detail can be found in Section E of the Final EIR/EIS.

SDG&E's Proposed Project – SDG&E's proposed project would include issuance of a MSUP for the SDG&E system, including 102 miles of electric lines within the SDG&E system totaling approximately 146 miles both on and off the CNF.

Federal Proposed Action – The Federal Proposed Action modifies certain actions proposed by SDG&E on National Forest System lands and BLM lands. Under this alternative, TL626 would be relocated to the east of the Cedar Creek canyon, and relocated to the east of the Inaja Fire Memorial Overlook. This alternative also requires additional undergrounding for Circuit (C) 440 within the Laguna Recreation Area, and also requires a short section of undergrounding for TL682 within the La Jolla Indian Reservation.

No Action Alternative – No MSUP Issued – Under this required alternative, the Forest Service would not issue a MSUP and the existing permits would terminate according to their terms. SDG&E would be required to remove all the improvements according to the permit terms.

No Project Alternative – Under this alternative, which is required under CEQA, the existing alignments within the CNF would be maintained as they are currently, under their approximately 70 separate permits and easements. In addition, none of SDG&E's proposed power line replacement projects including proposed fire hardening activities would be authorized.

Partial Removal of Overland Access Roads – This alternative, which is based on SDG&E's proposed project, would remove up to 10.5 miles of regularly maintained access roads that are in general greater than 25% grade and in close proximity to creeks, particularly along TL626 (Boulder Creek) and TL625 (Barber Mountain/Carveacre).

Removal of TL626 from Service – Under this alternative, TL626 would be removed from service and replaced by one of two options described in Section C.4.2 of the Final EIR/EIS. The remaining system components would be treated the same as SDG&E's proposed project.

The Federal Preferred Alternative – As described in Section E.6 of the Final EIR/EIS, the Federal Preferred Alternative is a composite of three alternatives. The Federal Proposed Action is the basis of the preferred alternative; however the TL626 relocation option has been replaced by the TL626 Removal from Service Alternative Option 1 (the upgrade to TL6931), combined with the off-grid solution for the Boulder Creek Substation. The Federal Preferred Alternative adopts Option 2 for the C157 relocation out of the Hauser Wilderness. The Federal Preferred Alternative also analyzed the conversion of TL626 to 12 kV to continue service to the Boulder Creek Substation if the off-grid solution was not feasible. The Forest Service ROD does not authorize this conversion. The Federal Preferred Alternative would also convert a 6.8 mile section of TL626 that is co-located with C79 to a 12 kV fire hardened line to serve local residences along Boulder Creek Road. The Federal Preferred Alternative adopts Option 2 for C157 relocation out of the Hauser Wilderness. The Federal Preferred Alternative also incorporates the portions of the Partial Removal of Overland Access Roads applicable to TL626/C79, TL625, C442 and TL629. This alternative as modified and adopted in the Forest Service ROD best meets the purpose and need for the reasons described in the decision rationale section.

In addition to the alternatives considered in detail, the Final EIR/EIS evaluated fifteen additional alternatives but eliminated them from detailed study as described in Section C.5 of the Final EIR/EIS. As described in Section C.5, alternatives that were not carried forward for full analysis did not meet project objectives, feasibility, or environmental effectiveness criteria.

4.0 MITIGATION AND MONITORING

SDG&E, as the applicant, proposed numerous measures to protect resources as described in Section B.7.1 of the Final EIR/EIS. The Forest Service and CPUC, as lead agencies, identified additional measures throughout Section D of the Final EIR/EIS. Both applicant-proposed measures and agency-required mitigation measures will be included in the right-of-way as requirements and will be implemented as part of the Mitigation, Monitoring, Compliance and Reporting Program (MMCRP), which is generally described in Section H of the Final EIR/EIS and set forth in the Mitigation Appendix A of this ROD. The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service issued Biological Opinion FWS-SD-15B0191-15F0339 on November 19, 2015 with additional conservation measures. BLM adopts the measures applicable to the portions of the power lines that traverse BLM lands. Furthermore, the holder will adhere to the conditions outlined in the Programmatic Agreement executed by the California State Historic Preservation Officer (CASHPO).

5.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A notice of intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on September 23, 2013 (78 FR 58270), and the scoping comment period was open for 45 days. The proposed action was also listed in the CNF Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the environmental analysis. The public was invited to review and comment through direct distribution of a joint Forest Service and CPUC Notice of Preparation and by legal notices published in local papers. A supplemental scoping period was offered starting on January 17, 2014, and ending on March 7, 2014. Public meetings were held in Alpine and Julian during the first scoping period, and in Alpine during the supplemental scoping period. All project information was maintained on the project webpage (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/dudek/CNF/CNF.htm>) hosted by the CPUC.

Issues were identified from scoping comments and were summarized in the Scoping Report dated January 16, 2014, and were updated in March 2014 after the supplemental scoping period. The issues significant to the proposed action are summarized Table A-1 of the Final EIR/EIS.

The Draft EIR/EIS was published for review and comment on September 5, 2014, when the Environmental Protection Agency published the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register (79 FR 53061). Notices were distributed to the project mail list, and copies of the Draft EIR/EIS were available on the internet, at local libraries, and provided to those who requested copies. Notice of the opportunity to comment was published in the San Diego Union-Tribune on September 5, 2014. A public meeting was held in Alpine on October 1, 2014. The 60-day comment period closed on November 4, 2014.

The Forest Service and CPUC received comments on the Draft EIR/EIS from two federal agencies, seven state and local agencies, two Native American tribes, eight community groups,

the applicant, and fifteen individuals. The comments and responses are presented in Volume 2 of the Final EIR/EIS. Summaries of the public participation process are discussed in Section I of the Final EIR/EIS.

6.0 AUTHORITY

The Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA) establishes policies and procedures for management of public lands. In section 102(a)(8), Congress declared that it is the policy of the United States that:

the public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; that, where appropriate, will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition; that will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and that will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use (43 U.S.C.1701(a)(8)).

FLPMA requires, in part, that right-of-way authorizations contain conditions to minimize damage to scenic and aesthetic values, fish and wildlife habitat and otherwise protect the environment. Adopting the applicant proposed measures and the agency required mitigation measures described in the Final EIR/EIS ensures that the project is in compliance with this requirement.

7.0 DECISION TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED ACTION

BLM has determined that it will: (1) issue the ROW grants to SDG&E for the portions of TL625, TL629, and TL6923 that traverse BLM lands, and (2) authorize the wood to steel pole replacements for the portions of those lines on BLM lands. BLM's decision to authorize these activities is based on the following rationale:

1. This action best meets BLM's purpose and need described in the Final EIR/EIS and is technically and legally feasible.
2. The analysis of the environmental impacts identified in the Final EIR/EIS, along with corresponding mitigation measures that reduce or eliminate those impacts to the extent feasible, supports the mission of BLM and its policy goals and objectives.
3. The construction, operation, and maintenance activities associated with the power line replacement projects are in conformance with BLM policy and guidance for issuing ROWs, including BLM Manual 2801. Specifically, BLM Manual 2801.9 identifies "[s]ystems for generating, transmitting, or distributing electricity" as a proper use of public lands pursuant to a BLM ROW.
4. The action is consistent with BLM Visual Resource Management guidelines described in the BLM South Coast Resource Management Plan.
5. The action will provide for fire hardening activities (wood-to-steel pole replacement and reconductoring) for the sections of TL625, TL629, and TL6923 that are within BLM

jurisdiction. These activities will provide public benefits by reducing the risk of wildfires in a high fire hazard area.

6. The action will implement the environmentally preferred alternative identified in the Final EIR/EIS, as modified by the Forest Service's Final ROD.

This decision shall take effect immediately upon the date it is signed by the Authorized Officer and shall remain in effect while any appeal is pending unless the Interior Board of Land Appeals issues a stay. Any appeal of this decision must follow the procedures set forth in 43 CFR Part 4. Within 30 days of the decision, a notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the Authorized Officer at 1201 Bird Center Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92262. If a statement of reasons for the appeal is not included with the notice, it must be filed with the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of Hearings and Appeals, U.S. Department of the Interior, 801 North Quincy St., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed with the Authorized Officer.

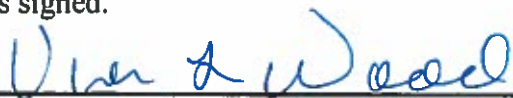
If you wish to file a petition for stay pursuant to 43 CFR Part 4.21(b), the petition for stay should accompany your notice of appeal and shall show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

1. The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied,
2. The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits,
3. The likelihood of irreparable harm to the appellant or resources if the stay is not granted, and
4. Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

If a petition for stay is submitted with the notice of appeal, a copy of the notice of appeal and petition for stay must be served on each party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken, and with the IBLA at the same time it is filed with the Authorized Officer.

8.0 SIGNATURE

It is my decision to: (1) authorize the power line replacement work for the portions of TL625, TL629, and TL6923 located on public lands administered by BLM as set forth in the Federal Preferred Alternative (2) issue ROW grants for the continued use, occupancy, and maintenance of power lines CACA 646, CALA0146985, and CACA54414 on public lands subject to the terms, condition, and stipulations. This decision is effective on the date this Record of Decision is signed.



9-28-2016

Vicki L. Wood

Date

Palm Springs South Coast Field Manager, Acting

9.0 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix A: Mitigation Monitoring Compliance and Reporting Program