# 3. Introduction to the Initial Study

## 3.1 Proposed Project Overview

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), a regulated California utility, filed an application with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on September 30, 2015, for a Permit to Construct (PTC) the Sanger Substation Expansion Project (proposed project). The application was deemed complete by the CPUC on January 26, 2016.

PG&E is proposing to expand the existing Sanger Substation in unincorporated Fresno County, California, to contain a new breaker-and-a-half bus configuration. As proposed by PG&E, the project includes:

- **Substation Expansion:** PG&E would install equipment including circuit breakers, switches/disconnects, steel support structures for disconnect switches, bus supports and Capacitor Coupling Voltage Transformer equipment, two Modular Protection Automation Control (MPAC) buildings, and a microwave tower for communications. PG&E would also elevate the existing transfer bus and make alterations to interconnect reconfigured power lines.
- **Substation Equipment Removal:** PG&E would remove obsolete circuit breakers, switches, steel support structures, and the concrete control building at the existing substation.
- **Power Line Reconfiguration:** PG&E would rearrange existing power lines leading to the substation by removing existing lattice steel towers (LSTs) and wood poles and installing tubular steel poles (TSPs) in a different alignment. Existing power lines would be relocated to change their angle.
- **Existing Substation Changes:** On transformer bank 1, PG&E would remove wood poles that support a temporary line from the dead end structure and would replace them with a new TSP to terminate the new 115kV line for bank 1. On transformer bank 3, PG&E would relocate the existing dead end structure to terminate at the new 115kV line for bank 3 using new TSPs.
- **Telecommunications Receiver:** PG&E would install two antenna dishes on an existing microwave tower at the Fence Meadow Repeater Station.

The proposed project would increase reliability of electric service by upgrading the equipment at the existing substation to be in conformance with PG&E internal design standards as well as industry standards.

## 3.2 Environmental Analysis

### 3.2.1 CEQA Process

This Initial Study (IS) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the amended State CEQA Guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations 15000 *et seq.*) and the CPUC CEQA rules (Rule 2.4). The purpose of this IS is to inform the decision-makers, responsible agencies, and the public of the proposed project, describe the existing environment that would be affected by the project, and identify the potential environmental effects that would occur if the project is approved. The IS also identifies proposed mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce environmental effects.

All potentially significant impacts associated with the project can be mitigated to a level below significance; therefore, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) can be adopted by the CPUC in accordance with Public Resources Code section 21080.

### 3.2.2 CEQA Lead Agency

The CPUC is the lead agency for review of the project under CEQA because the CPUC is the agency that must decide whether to adopt the MND and to approve or deny the PTC.

### 3.2.3 Initial Study

The IS presents an analysis of potential effects of the proposed project on the environment. The IS has been prepared based on information from PG&E's Proponent's Environmental Assessment and associated submittals, site visit, CPUC data requests, and additional research.

Construction activities could have direct and indirect impacts on the environment. The following environmental parameters are addressed in the IS, based on the potential for the proposed project to have effects on the environment:

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

The IS has been organized into the following sections:

- **Section 3: Introduction.** Provides an introduction and overview of the proposed project and the CEQA process, and identifies key areas of environmental analysis.
- **Section 4: Project Description.** Presents the project objectives and provides an in-depth description of the proposed project, including construction details and methods.
- **Section 5: Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts**. Includes a description of the existing conditions and the analysis on the proposed project's potential environmental impacts, and identifies mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts to less than significant levels.
- **Section 6: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan.** Identifies the monitoring requirements for application proposed measures, mitigation measures that PG&E must implement as part of the project, actions required to implement these measures, monitoring requirements, and timing of implementation for each measure.

- **Appendices.** Includes the list of preparers of the IS/MND and persons contacted during its preparation, the air quality and greenhouse gas emissions estimated from the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod), and cultural resources consultation documentation.

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