

505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102-3298



# Mitigated Negative Declaration

Southern California Edison's Triton Substation Project  
Application No. A.08-11-019

## Introduction

Pursuant to California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) General Order 131-D, Southern California Edison (SCE) has filed an application (A.08-11-019) with the CPUC for a Permit to Construct the Triton Substation Project (the project). The application, filed on November 21, 2008, included the Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) prepared by SCE pursuant to Rules 17.1 and 17.3 of CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure. In accordance with the CPUC's General Order 131-D, approval of the project must comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Pursuant to CEQA, the CPUC prepares an Initial Study (IS) for the project to determine whether significant adverse effects on the environment would result from project implementation. The IS uses the significance criteria outlined in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as a basis for analysis. If the IS for the project indicates that a significant adverse impact could occur, the CPUC would be required to prepare an Environmental Impact Report.

According to Article 6 (Negative Declaration Process) and Section 15070 (Decision to Prepare a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration) of the CEQA Guidelines, a public agency shall prepare or have prepared a proposed negative declaration or mitigated negative declaration (MND) for a project subject to CEQA when:

- (a) *The initial study shows that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, or*
- (b) *The initial study identifies potentially significant effects, but:*
  - (1) *Revisions in the project plans or proposals made by, or agreed to by the applicant before a proposed mitigated negative declaration and initial study are released for public review would avoid the effects or mitigate the effects to a point where clearly no significant effects would occur, and*
  - (2) *There is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the agency, that the project as revised may have a significant effect on the environment.*

Based on the analysis in the IS, it has been determined that all project-related environmental impacts could be reduced to less-than-significant levels with the incorporation of mitigation measures. Therefore, adoption of an MND will satisfy the requirements of CEQA. The mitigation measures included in this MND are designed to reduce or eliminate the potentially significant environmental impacts described in the IS.

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## **Public Review Period and Comments**

**On November 18, 2009, the CPUC circulated the Draft MND/IS for the Triton Substation Project for public review in compliance with CEQA and CPUC Rule 17.1. The MND/IS was filed with the State Clearinghouse on November 18, 2009, initiating a 30-day public review period for the MND/IS.**

**The majority of the issues and concerns raised during the public comment period included aesthetic and visual effects, alternatives, hazards including electric and magnetic fields (EMF), hydrology, land use and planning, adverse effects on property values, and public notification and requests for a public hearing. These issues are addressed both in General Responses to comments, which are intended to address similar issues raised by several commenters, and in individual responses to each comment letter. Following closure of the public review period on December 17, 2009, the CPUC prepared written responses to comments received, and the MND/IS was revised, as appropriate, to reflect these comments. All written comments, a transcript of the comments made at the public meeting held December 7, 2009, and associated responses are presented in Chapter 6 of this document.**

## **Project Location, Description, and Purpose**

The project would be located in the Cities of Temecula and Murrieta and unincorporated areas of southwestern Riverside County in California. The project would include construction of the 56 megavolt ampere (MVA) 115/12 kilovolt (kV) Triton Substation, decommissioning of the existing 33/12 kV Canine Substation, and decommissioning of an emergency 33/12 kV transformer bank at the 115/33/12 kV Auld Substation. The Triton Substation would be located on an approximately 10-acre parcel at the southeast corner of Nicolas Road and Calle Medusa in Temecula, Riverside County, California. Canine Substation is a temporary facility that is scheduled to be retired by June 2010. Similarly, the emergency transformer bank at Auld Substation is scheduled to be disconnected in 2010.

The project would also include construction of a 115 kV subtransmission line loop-in along Nicolas Road from an existing subtransmission line to the new Triton Substation (approximately 0.25 miles). The subtransmission line loop-in would be installed on seven to eight new tubular steel poles. Two new 12 kV underground, distribution duct banks would be built on the Triton Substation site. The project would include installation of new telecommunications lines from the Triton Substation to the Auld and Moraga Substations. Minor telecommunications equipment upgrades would be conducted within the Auld, Moraga, Pauba, Pechanga, Stadler, and Valley Substations.

SCE has designed the project to meet the long-term forecasted electrical demands of the Cities of Temecula, Murrieta, and unincorporated areas of southwestern Riverside County; maintain system reliability; and enhance operational flexibility. The Triton Substation has been designed for potential future expansion from 56 MVA to 112 MVA. SCE forecasts that demand in the service area may exceed the designed operating limits of existing facilities as early as the summer of 2010. A more detailed description of the project and its objectives is provided in Chapter 1 of the IS (Background Information).

## **Alternatives**

The purpose of an alternatives analysis pursuant to CEQA is to identify options that would feasibly attain the project objectives while reducing the significant environmental impacts resulting from the project. CEQA does not require inclusion of an alternatives analysis in MNDs because the IS concludes that, with

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incorporation of mitigation measures, there would be no significant adverse impacts resulting from the project. Pursuant to Section IX.B.1.c of CPUC General Order 131-D, however, the PEA did present information on several alternatives. While the information provided was not sufficient for a detailed analysis, the alternatives that were considered are presented and discussed in Appendix A of the IS.

## Environmental Analysis

The IS was prepared to identify the potential environmental effects resulting from project implementation and evaluate the level of significance of these effects. The IS was based on SCE's PEA, project site reconnaissance by the CPUC environmental team, and other environmental analyses for the project. Measures to address potentially significant impacts, proposed in SCE's PEA, are referred to as project design features (PDFs) and have been incorporated into the analysis presented in the IS. A complete listing of PDFs is provided in Table 1.8-3 of the IS.

Based on the analysis presented in the IS, additional mitigation measures are recommended to ensure that project impacts are less than significant. The additional mitigation measures either supplement or supersede the PDFs. Implementation of the following mitigation measures (MMs) would avoid potentially significant impacts identified in the IS or reduce them to less-than-significant levels.

### Aesthetics

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

### Agriculture and Forest Resources

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

### Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

### Biological Resources

**MM BIO-1: Limit Removal of Native Vegetation Communities.** The applicant will avoid removal of intact coastal sage scrub and any host plants (plantain, Indian paintbrush, and white snapdragon) of the Quino checkerspot butterfly, as determined by the onsite qualified biologist/biological monitor.

**MM BIO-2: Best Management Practices (BMPs).** BMPs to be prescribed by the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (PDF BIO-5) shall include but are not limited to the following:

- The applicant will use public roads and pre-existing, established routes for access to work areas for installation of the telecommunications lines.
- Construction employees shall strictly limit their activities, vehicles, equipment, and construction materials to the proposed project footprint and designated staging areas and routes of travel within the proposed project footprint.
- The applicant shall not stockpile brush, loose soils, excavation spoils, or other similar debris material within sensitive habitats.

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- The applicant will ensure proper handling of invasive native and non-native plant species removed during construction to prevent sprouting or regrowth.
  - **If visible dust is present during construction activities, standard dust suppression techniques (e.g., water spraying) will be used in all ground disturbance areas.**

**MM BIO-3: Protection of Special Status Plant Species.** This mitigation measure enhances and clarifies measures the applicant will implement under PDF BIO-8. The applicant will conduct protocol-level botanical surveys within areas that contain habitat suitable to support special status plant species during the blooming season. These surveys will occur **no more than 1 year** prior to construction to determine presence or absence of special status plant species of concern in areas where construction activity is planned. **For example, if construction is planned for fall 2010, then plant surveys will be conducted in the spring and summer blooming period of 2010.** Desktop evaluation **and mapping** of soil types within the project area will be conducted prior to the pre-construction botanical survey to determine if suitable soils for special status plants are present. Special status plant species of concern include, but are not limited to, Munz's onion, San Diego ambrosia, Plummer's mariposa lily, intermediate mariposa lily, long-spined spineflower, and round-leaved filaree. **Additionally, plants listed as "Narrow Endemic" and "Criteria Area Survey Plant Species" will be surveyed for within the Criteria Area Species Survey Area 4 of the Western Riverside County MSHCP.** Construction can occur within the area if these surveys show special status plants to be absent there.

The applicant will flag and avoid all project activities in areas where these surveys show special status plants to be present. The applicant will also report geo-referenced plant locations to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game (Wildlife Agencies). The applicant will implement avoidance measures including, but not limited to, the following:

- **No construction work (e.g., vegetation clearing, ground disturbance) will be authorized to begin until pre-construction surveys have been completed and results submitted to the Wildlife Agencies.**
- Flags will be placed to mark the boundaries of areas where special status plants are present near all areas where project activities are planned.
- The applicant will avoid the flagged areas and will not drive vehicles, go by foot, or place equipment or materials in any area with special status plants.
- **Overhead installation of telecommunication lines will be accomplished by crews on foot as necessary to negotiate around flagged sensitive resources. This will also occur in areas where there is no established access road within the ROW and sensitive resources have been flagged during pre-construction surveys.**
- Trenching to install telecommunications or other equipment will be conducted in existing, established access roads and other areas where special status plants are absent.
- Trenching will be conducted with equipment that is small enough to maneuver to avoid adjacent areas where special status plants are present.
- If special status plants are present in an area where trenching to install telecommunications or other equipment would be required to connect to an existing subtransmission structure, the applicant will identify and connect to an alternate structure where disturbance of special status plants can be avoided. This may require the applicant to extend the length of the trench to reach the alternate structure, **or to avoid underground trenching in certain areas.**
- **TSP and line positioning and installation activities will avoid and span all flagged resources.**

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If the applicant cannot avoid construction activities in areas where there are special status plants present, then the applicant will become a Participating Special Entity (PSE) under the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). As a PSE, the applicant will consult with the Wildlife Agencies, and the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) and follow the provisions set forth in the MSHCP, including but not limited to:

1. Conducting protocol-level surveys during the appropriate blooming season for “covered species” of concern.
2. Submittal to the RCA of required documentation, including quantitative evaluations for the Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (DBEST), as needed.
3. **Adhering to policies and procedures in MSHCP Section 6.1.2 (Riparian/Riverine/Vernal Pool Policy), Section 6.1.3 (Narrow Endemic Plant Species Policy), and Section 6.3.2 (Additional Survey Needs and Procedures for Criteria Area Species).**
4. **Proposing and implementing mitigation measures developed in consultation with and approved by the Wildlife Agencies and the RCA.**

In consultation with the Wildlife Agencies and the RCA, the applicant will develop appropriate mitigation measures to reduce impacts on special status plant species to a less than significant level and consistent with provisions set forth in the MSHCP. Mitigation will include a tiered approach as summarized below and any other measures determined in consultation with the Wildlife Agencies and the RCA:

1. Preservation of 90% of the plant populations found within suitable habitat within the project area. **If 90% conservation cannot be maintained, then a DBEST will be prepared according to MSHCP provisions.** Established, high quality populations known to occur within the project footprint will be avoided by construction and conserved 100%.
2. **Restoration of impacted special status plants will be implemented as directed by the RCA and the Wildlife Agencies. Restoration may be onsite and/or offsite.** Depending on the species and the likely success of replanting ~~it~~, as determined through consultation with the Wildlife Agencies, ~~as appropriate,~~ plants will may be relocated to a suitable replacement site. This will be accomplished by transplantation and seed/bulb collection within the project site. The applicant will relocate plants and/or seeds to adjacent areas that contain site specific requirements necessary for successful cultivation of the plant species. The applicant will identify appropriate replacement sites in consultation with the RCA. The applicant will prepare a quantitative evaluation for the DBEST based on survey results to determine the ratio of **restoration and** replacement conservation needed. The applicant will prepare a ~~Revegetation~~ **Habitat Mitigation and** Monitoring Plan that will be submitted to and approved by the RCA and Wildlife Agencies prior to initiating revegetation. The plan will outline ~~transplanting~~ **restoration** activities, locations, monitoring requirements, and criteria to measure ~~transplanting~~ **restoration** success.
3. The applicant will establish conservation easements on replacement site(s) to protect the populations in perpetuity.

**MM BIO-4: Protection of Special Status Wildlife Species.** This mitigation measure enhances and clarifies measures the applicant will implement under PDF BIO-1 and PDF BIO-3. ~~If avoidance cannot be ensured (e.g., seasonal construction restrictions, passive relocation of the animal from the disturbance area, adjusting project footprint),~~ ~~†~~ The applicant will conduct protocol-level surveys prior to construction to determine presence or absence of special status wildlife species of concern in areas where suitable habitat occurs or is potentially present within the project area. Wildlife species of concern include, but are

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not limited to, coastal California gnatcatcher, loggerhead shrike, white-tailed kite, burrowing owl, Quino checkerspot butterfly, orange-throated whiptail, northern red-diamond rattlesnake, and the spotted bat. The protocol-level surveys will be conducted in areas where project activities could affect the species or their associated habitat including, as applicable, the substation property, the subtransmission line loop-in route, locations of wooden pole removal and new tubular steel pole installation, the Canine Substation, the telecommunications routes, other areas where there may be ground disturbance, and areas where noise may affect wildlife species.

The applicant's biological monitors will institute avoidance and construction activity monitoring measures as described in PDF BIO-3 to avoid potential impacts in areas where surveys show the presence of special status wildlife. The applicant will also report geo-referenced wildlife locations to the Wildlife Agencies. **Additional avoidance measures will include: 1) seasonal construction restrictions (PDF BIO-6), 2) establishment of buffer exclusion zones, particularly for nesting birds (PDF BIO-6 and PDF BIO-7), 3) passive relocation of animals from the disturbance area as monitored by a qualified biologist, and 4) adjusting project footprint around sensitive resources.**

If the applicant cannot avoid impacts on special status wildlife species, their associated habitat, and/or unique resources due to construction activities, then the applicant will become a PSE under the Western Riverside County MSHCP. As a PSE, the applicant will consult with the Wildlife Agencies, and the RCA and follow the provisions set forth in the MSHCP, including but not limited to:

1. Conducting protocol-level surveys during the appropriate season (e.g., nesting) for "covered species" of concern.
2. Submittal to the RCA of required documentation, including quantitative evaluations for the DBEST, as needed.
3. **Adhering to policies and procedures in MSHCP Section 6.1.2 (Riparian/Riverine/Vernal Pool Policy) and Section 6.3.2 (Additional Survey Needs and Procedures for Criteria Area Species).**
4. Proposing and implementing mitigation measures developed in consultation with and approved by the Wildlife Agencies and the RCA to reduce impacts on special status wildlife species to a less than significant level and as consistent with provisions set forth in the MSHCP.

**MM BIO-5: Protection of Quino Checkerspot Butterfly.** In addition to PDF BIO-1 and PDF BIO-3, the Quino checkerspot butterfly will be further protected from potential project impacts by the following:

- The applicant will conduct pre-construction ~~botanical~~ surveys that will include ~~observation~~ **assessment** for and identification of primary host plants for the Quino checkerspot butterfly. ~~These plants include plantain and white snapdragon, and may occur~~ **according to USFWS protocols (USFWS 2002). Particular attention will be paid to identification of plant habitat complexes** in association with coastal sage scrub and annual grasslands.
- The applicant will flag and avoid all project activities in any areas where potential host plant populations are found during pre-construction surveys.

**MM BIO-6: Burrowing Owl Mitigation and Compensation.** This mitigation measure enhances and clarifies measures the applicant will implement under PDF BIO-7. If impacts on the burrowing owl and/or their habitat (i.e., occupied burrows) are unavoidable, the applicant shall develop and implement a Burrowing Owl Compensation Plan, as approved by the Wildlife Agencies, that is consistent with mitigation guidelines as outlined in the *California Burrowing Owl Consortium Protocol*.

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The plan shall describe the compensatory measures that will be undertaken to address the loss of burrowing owl burrows within the project area. This will include preservation of 6.5 acres of foraging habitat contiguous with occupied burrow sites per breeding pair or single bird, **unless otherwise determined in consultation with the Wildlife Agencies**. If avoidance of burrows cannot be maintained, onsite passive relocation of owls will be preferred over active relocation. To compensate for loss of burrows, the applicant will provide one alternate natural (enlarged or cleared of debris) or artificial burrow in nearby contiguous foraging habitat for each **occupied** collapsed burrow within the project area. Prior to collapsing burrows vacated through passive relocation, the applicant's biological monitor will conduct daily monitoring for up to a 1-week period to confirm that the alternate burrows provided are being used by the owls. The applicant will not conduct active relocation unless the attempt at passive relocation has failed after 1 week. The applicant will obtain approval from the Wildlife Agencies before initiating any activities that have the potential to adversely impact burrowing owls.

**MM BIO-7: Prevent the entrapment of wildlife.** At the end of each workday during construction, the applicant will cover all open trenches or excavations, **or provide escape ramps**, to prevent the entrapment of wildlife (e.g., reptiles and small mammals). The applicant will maintain fencing around the covered excavations at night. The applicant's biological monitor will clear open trenches for wildlife at the end of each day, and again prior to resuming work on the trench.

**MM BIO-8: Construction Work Will be Performed Outside the Bed, Banks, and Riparian Zones of Drainages, Wetlands or Water Bodies.** The applicant's construction crews will not cross non-culverted drainages with vehicles, nor conduct construction activities or placement of equipment or supplies within the bed, bank or riparian zone of any drainage, wetland or water body. If construction activities require non-culverted drainages to be crossed, crews will traverse them by foot only, and use pre-existing, established access roads that circumvent non-culverted drainages for vehicle travel.

## **Cultural Resources**

**MM CUL-1: Unanticipated Discovery.** If unanticipated resources are discovered during construction monitoring that are identified as potential historical or archaeological sites, the qualified archaeological monitor will suspend all construction activities in the vicinity of the find to evaluate the resource. The evaluation may require a subsurface testing and evaluation program for cultural resources. If remains prove to be significant and site avoidance cannot be implemented through project redesign, the applicant will implement a data recovery program to mitigate impacts.

If potential paleontological resources are discovered during construction, the qualified paleontological monitor will suspend all construction activities in the vicinity of the potential resource to examine the resource and determine the proper method to avoid adverse effects on the resource. At the paleontological monitor's discretion, the area in the vicinity of the potential resource may be flagged for avoidance or the potential resource may be removed from the site by plaster jacketing, taking a sample of the potentially fossiliferous formation, or, if necessary, excavation. Recovered specimens that are determined to be important paleontological resources will be prepared to the point of curation, including the washing of sediments to recover small invertebrates or vertebrates, and stabilized to mitigate impacts. In the event that recovered specimens are determined to be important paleontological resources, the applicant will prepare and execute a written repository agreement with an established, accredited museum repository, and all important paleontological specimens will be curated. To document that adverse impacts on paleontological resources were mitigated, the applicant will prepare a report of findings with an itemized inventory of specimens and submit the report to the CPUC along with confirmation of the curation of recovered specimens into an established, accredited museum repository.

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## Geology and Soils

**MM GEO-1: Disposal of Excess Excavated Materials.** Excess excavation materials that are not used to backfill excavated areas shall be transported and disposed of offsite at an approved facility or used as clean fill, as appropriate.

## Hazards and Hazardous Materials

**MM HAZ-1: Hazardous Materials Management Practices.** The applicant shall undertake the following measures:

1. Prepare and implement a hazardous substance management, handling, storage, disposal, and emergency response plan.
2. Train project personnel in appropriate work practices including spill prevention and response measures.
3. Contain all hazardous materials at work sites and properly dispose of all such materials.
  - a. Hazardous materials shall be stored on pallets within fenced and secured areas and protected from exposure to weather.
  - b. Fuels and lubricants shall be stored only at designated staging areas at least 100 feet from the edge of water bodies.
4. Restrict equipment refueling and lubrication to areas at least 100 feet from stream channels and wetlands.
5. Maintain onsite hazardous material spill kits for small spills.
6. Store sorbent and barrier materials at construction staging areas, including staging areas used during activities for decommissioning of the Canine Substation. Sorbent and barrier materials shall also be used to contain runoff from contaminated areas.
7. During decommissioning of the Canine Substation, protective barriers or other measures will be used to ensure that runoff from an accidental release of oil or other potentially hazardous materials do not enter the storm drainage system.
8. Perform all routine equipment maintenance at a shop or at the staging area and recover and dispose of wastes in an appropriate manner. Remove any vehicles with chronic or continuous leaks from the construction site and repair before returning them to operation.
9. Store shovels and drums at the staging area. If small quantities of soil become contaminated, use shovels to collect the soil and store in drums before proper offsite disposal. Large quantities of contaminated soil may be collected using heavy equipment and stored in drums or other suitable containers prior to disposal. Should contamination occur adjacent to staging areas as a result of runoff, shovels and/or heavy equipment shall be used to collect the contaminated material. Contaminated soil shall be disposed of in accordance with federal and state regulations.

**MM HAZ-2: Contaminated Soil/Groundwater Contingency Plan.** The applicant shall develop and implement a plan to address the unanticipated unearthing or exposure of buried hazardous materials or contamination or contaminated groundwater. The plan shall detail the steps that the applicant or its contractor shall take to prevent the spread of contamination, the sampling that would be necessary if contamination is discovered, and the remedial action that would be taken.



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## Hydrology and Water Quality

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## Land Use and Planning

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## Mineral Resources

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## Noise

**MM NOI-1: Low-noise Substation Equipment and Noise Barriers.** The applicant will ensure that substation operational noise levels will not exceed 45 dBA-10-minute Leq at the closest sensitive receptor. This will be achieved either through use of low-noise substation equipment or installation of noise barriers or both.

**MM NOI-2: Restricted Work Hours.** The applicant will ensure that project construction activities are restricted to daytime hours from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. to avoid community nuisances.

**MM NOI-3: Noise Reduction and Control Practices.** The applicant will employ the following noise reduction and control practices during construction:

- Construction activities will be phased so that all equipment is not operating simultaneously.
- Construction traffic will be routed away from residences and other sensitive receptors, as feasible.
- Noise from back-up alarms (alarms that signal vehicle travel in reverse) in construction vehicles and equipment will be reduced by providing a layout of construction sites that minimizes the need for back-up alarms and using flagmen to minimize time needed to back up vehicles. As feasible, and in compliance with the applicant's safety practices and public and worker safety provisions required in the Occupational Safety and Health Standards for the Construction Industry (29 CFR Part 1926), the applicant may also use self-adjusting, manually adjustable, or broadband back-up alarms to reduce construction noise.

## Population and Housing

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## Public Services

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## Recreation

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

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## **Transportation and Traffic**

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## **Utilities and Service Systems**

No mitigation measures were identified in the IS for this resource area.

## **Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance**

A Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting, and Compliance Plan has been prepared to ensure that the mitigation measures presented above and PDFs listed in Table 1.8-3 of the IS are properly implemented. The plan is presented in Chapter 5 of the IS.