

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



June 27, 2023

Thomas Diaz - Infrastructure Projects & Programs
Southern California Edison Company
2244 Walnut Grove Avenue
Rosemead, California 91770

Re: Deficiency Report #2 - Southern California Edison Company's Eldorado-Pisgah-Lugo 220 kV Project (A.23-04-009) Proponent's Environmental Assessment and Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Application

Dear Mr. Diaz:

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Energy Division CEQA Unit has completed its review of Southern California Edison's (SCE) Application (A.23-04-009) and related Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for the Proposed Eldorado-Pisgah-Lugo 220 kV (EPL) Project (proposed project). Section 15100 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires the agency responsible for the certification of a proposed project to assess the completeness of the project proponent's application. The Energy Division uses *CPUC's Guidelines for Energy Project Applications Requiring CEQA Compliance: Pre-filing and Proponent's Environmental Assessments* (November 2019) as the guide for determining the adequacy of project applications.

After review of SCE's application for the proposed project, the Energy Division finds that the information contained in the Application and PEA is incomplete. While it is thorough in many sections, there are information gaps in critical areas that would prevent preparation of an adequate CEQA environmental compliance document in a timely manner. The attached report identifies additional portions of the application found to be deficient. Information provided by SCE in response to the Energy Division's finding of deficiency should be filed as supplements to Application A.23-04-009 referencing the applicable deficiency item number.

One set of responses should be sent to the Energy Division and one to our consultant Panorama Environmental, Inc. in electronic format. We request that SCE respond to this report no later than July 27, 2023. Upon receipt of this information, we will review it within 30 days and determine if it is adequate to accept the PEA and application as complete, in combination with responses to Deficiency Report #1. We are available to meet with you at your convenience to discuss these items. The Energy Division reserves the right to request additional information at any point in the application proceeding and during subsequent construction of the project should SCE's CPCN be approved.

Please direct questions related to this application to me at Eric.Chiang@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Eric Chiang

Project Manager, Energy Division

Attachment A: Deficiency Report #2

cc: Case Administration, Southern California Edison
Susanne Heim and Jessica Koteen, Panorama Environmental, Inc.

Proponent's Environmental Assessment Review Form



Submittal

Document Title: Proponent's Environmental Assessment for Southern California Edison Company's TLRR EPL Project

Review Form No. No. 2

Description: **PEA Review**

From: Panorama Environmental Inc.

To: Southern California Edison

Date Submitted: June 27, 2023

Determination

- Meets CPUC Requirements, No Additional Information Needed
- Does not Meet CPUC Requirements (see Deficiencies below)
- Additional Data Needed (see Data Requests below)

PEA Deficiencies

PEA Section or Page #	Comment Code	Deficiency
Section 3:		
Figures 3-1.1b (pg. 7-10 of 13)	DD-PD1	<p>Issue: A portion of the Project's work will be conducted within the Mojave National Preserve, managed by the National Park Service. Additional protections measures, operating procedures or conditions of approval will be required for work activities in the Preserve, but these items are not yet provided in these documents. Additionally, there may be a standard operating agreement or similar document for SCE's work in the preserve.</p> <p>How to Address: Please provide documentation for the protection measures, operating procedures, or conditions of approval that apply to work activities in the Mojave National Preserve. If there is a standard operating agreement or similar agreement between SCE and Mojave National Preserve, please provide that documentation.</p>
Section 3.3.5.1.2 Aviation Lighting and/or Marking	DD-PD2	<p>Issue: Per Appendix V, one catenary span, the new conductor and overhead groundwire to be installed under the Project would exceed a height of 200 feet above ground level. This span is located in the Mojave National Preserve. In addition, a single new transmission structure (M193-H1A) is proposed to be installed within 20,000 feet of Hesperia Airport; The height of the proposed structure is 70 feet above ground level and is located 2,290 feet from the nearest point of the nearest runway of Hesperia Airport. Proposed structure M193-H1A exceeds the imaginary surface extending outward and upward as described in 14 CFR § 77.9(b).</p> <p>How to Address: There is no analysis of any marker balls or lighting that would need to be installed as part of this project. Please verify from the information and analysis above whether any new marker balls or lighting would be required as a result of the project. If the span that exceeds 200 feet currently has marker balls, please provide a photo documenting the existing marker balls that would be replaced. Is there any lighting on structure M193-H1 A? Please verify whether the project changes could trigger any new lighting requirements if there is no</p>

SUBMITTAL CONTROL FORM

PEA Section or Page #	Comment Code	Deficiency
		existing lighting. If the structure is currently lit, please explain whether the lighting could be modified.
3.5.3.1.2.11 Construction Work Areas: Temporary Lighting	DD-PD3	<p>Issue: The PEA mentions the possible need for nighttime lighting when work may occur at night. However, the PEA does not include what activities may occur at night and where these activities would take place.</p> <p>How to Address: Provide a list of activities and locations that nighttime work may occur. Would nighttime construction be conducted in summer months to avoid the heat of the day or are nighttime construction activities limited to minor activities such as cutovers?</p>
Table 3.5-4. Work Area Disturbance Areas	DD-PD4	<p>Issue: In some places in the PEA it states that the overland access routes would be 14 feet wide. In Table 3.5-4 overland access roads are listed as 18 feet wide.</p> <p>How to Address: Please confirm the width of overland access routes.</p>
Section 5: Environmental Analysis		
5.4 Biological Resources		
Section 5.4, page 5-5 and Figures 5.4-2 to 5.4-5.	DD-BIO2	<p>Issue: Table 5.4-1 provides a summary of biological surveys conducted for the project. The table separates the general focus of each survey but does not define which surveys were reconnaissance level, protocol level, or which specific taxa each survey targeted. In addition, the survey maps in Figures 5.4-2 to 5.4-5 show a biological combined survey area for all types of surveys.</p> <p>How to Address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an updated Table 5.4-1 that defines the specific type of survey conducted (reconnaissance, protocol, or other). Define the focus of each survey according to taxa. If a protocol or focused survey was conducted, define which protocol was utilized. 2. Provide updated GIS files that separate geodata features for types of survey with timing of survey conducted. Include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Reconnaissance wildlife surveys b. Plant Surveys <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. CDFW/CNPS Protocol rare plant surveys ii. Vegetation Mapping and Classification iii. Reference Site Visits c. Protocol wildlife surveys with type of protocol, if conducted: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Desert tortoise ii. Burrowing owl iii. Mohave ground squirrel d. Jurisdictional delineation survey
Section 5.4.4	DD-BIO3	<p>Issue: The 2017 surveys for special-status species were conducted during “abnormally dry” conditions after an extended extreme to severe drought period from 2012-2016 (NIDIS 2023), and it is unlikely that standing water would have been present at the time of the surveys. The analysis for arroyo toad is based largely on these 2017 surveys. The PEA concludes that the arroyo toad does not occur within the EPL Project alignment based on lack of suitable habitat.</p>

SUBMITTAL CONTROL FORM

PEA Section or Page #	Comment Code	Deficiency
		<p>The PEA lacks sufficient analysis of whether or not the arroyo toad may be present in the project area, and if so, potential impacts to the species.</p> <p>How to Address: Perform protocol species survey using USFWS 1999 Survey Protocol for Arroyo Toad. Based on survey results, re-analyze potential impact to species from Project activities.</p>
Table 5.4-7 (page 5-76)	DD-BIO4	<p>Issue: Crotch bumble bee is a CA Endangered Species List Candidate Endangered Species but is not listed as such on this table. Additionally, the PEA states that the species “The Crotch’s bumblebee is unlikely to occur within the EPL Project alignment near the Lugo Substation and does not occur elsewhere within the alignment”.</p> <p>However, the Project is within the range of the species and suitable habitat is present within Project alignment. The current analysis is insufficient to determine potential impacts to this CESA candidate species.</p> <p>How to Address: Perform formal habitat assessment for species according to June 2023 CDFW Survey Considerations for California Endangered Species Act (CESA) Candidate Bumble Bee Species. If habitat assessment determines suitable habitat is present, perform formal focused species survey using June 2023 CDFW Survey guidelines. Based on survey results, re-analyze potential impact to species from Project activities.</p>
Section 3.3.4.5 and Section 5.4.4.1.3.1	DD-BIO5	<p>Issue: The PEA states that twelve new permanent spur roads, with a total length of approximately 1,000 feet, would be constructed under the EPL Project.</p> <p>Section 5.4 states that permanent impacts on jurisdictional features would occur from the installation of inter-set structures and their associated spur roads that are located in or adjacent to jurisdictional waters (Tables 5.4-9, 5.4-10, and 5.4-11).</p> <p>The PEA is unclear on what type of other biological resource surveys were conducted at these spur road locations. The Biological Resources Technical Reports do not discuss potential impacts from spur roads and the PEA only discusses potential impacts to aquatic resources and riparian vegetation from spur road construction.</p> <p>How to Address: Include GIS data and figures showing locations of spur roads and potential impacts to aquatic resources.</p> <p>Define date, level of effort, survey methods, and purpose of survey for biological resource surveys that were conducted for proposed spur roads.</p> <p>Define vegetation communities, potential for presence/absence of suitable habitat for sensitive species and communities, and potential impacts to biological resources during spur road construction.</p>
Table 5.4-7: Page 5-75	DD-BIO6	<p>Issue: The PEA states that the pallid San Diego pocket mouse has no potential to occur due to the lack of observations in the past 25 years, even though suitable habitat is present for the species. It is unclear whether there has been sufficient survey efforts and habitat assessments to support this conclusion. Lack of recent occurrences</p>

SUBMITTAL CONTROL FORM

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		<p>alone does not indicate "no potential to occur." The current analysis is insufficient to determine potential impacts to this species.</p> <p>How to Address: Perform protocol live-trapping survey study for pallid San Diego pocket mouse, in consultation with CDFW. There is not a defined standard protocol survey for pallid San Diego pocket mouse. The pallid San Diego pocket mouse study should be designed in consultation with CDFW and based on American Society of Mammologists guidelines regarding use of wild mammals in research (Sikes 2016) and Laabs et. al. 2022, Distribution, morphology, and karyotype of San Joaquin pocket mice from the western Mojave Desert. Based on survey results, re-analyze potential impact to species from Project activities.</p>
Section 5.4, Page 5-99	DD-BIO7	<p>Issue: The EPL Project alignment from the Lugo Substation east to the western Lucerne Valley in Segments 1 and 2 lies within the historical range of the Mohave ground squirrel and suitable habitat is present in these areas. The PEA and supporting technical reports include information about reconnaissance survey and camera surveys for Mohave ground squirrel. In addition, information is provided about recent observations, historic range, and suitable habitat to determine that the "species is no longer present" in the Project Area. The current analysis lacks CDFW protocol surveys results for the species in historic range with suitable habitat, which would be required to determine presence/absence of the species and potential project impacts. The current analysis is insufficient to determine potential impacts to this species.</p> <p>How to Address: Conduct protocol Mohave Ground Squirrel surveys along Segments 1 and 2 using CDFW Mohave Ground Squirrel Survey Guidelines (2010) and CDFW Mohave ground squirrel Conservation Strategy (2019). Reanalyze potential effects to Mohave Ground Squirrel based on survey results, if applicable.</p>
Section 3.5.1.1.2	DD-BIO8	<p>Issue: The PEA states that approximately 1,200 linear feet of existing access road has been identified for more extensive rehabilitation; this section of existing access road will be widened from the current width of approximately 10 feet to meet the SCE standard 18 foot-wide access road. The PEA does not state the location of this work.</p> <p>The PEA is unclear on what type of biological resource surveys were conducted at these locations. The PEA does not discuss potential impacts from this road widening.</p> <p>How to Address: Include GIS data and figures showing locations of road widening and potential impacts to biological resources. Define date, level of effort, survey methods, and purpose of survey for biological resource surveys that were conducted for proposed road widening.</p> <p>Define vegetation communities, potential for presence/absence of suitable habitat for sensitive species and communities, and potential impacts to biological resources during road widening.</p>
PEA Appendix C (Sensitive)	DD-BIO9	<p>Issue: There is one new construction material yard (Nipton Backup) that was not surveyed.</p>

SUBMITTAL CONTROL FORM

PEA Section or Page #	Comment Code	Deficiency
Species and Habitat Report)		How to Address: Please confirm why this area was not surveyed. If necessary, provide survey data for this area.
5.7 Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources		
Section 4.7.4.1.6.1, page 5-198; Section 5.7.4.3, page 5-199	DD-Paleo4	<p>Issue: CPUC's CEQA Pre-Filing Guidelines require discussion of "potential to disturb paleontological resources based on the depth of proposed excavation and paleontological sensitivity of geologic units within the project area". Obviously, location of disturbance is also critical. Text in both referenced sections acknowledges the paleontological sensitivity of geologic units within the project APE and the potential for ground disturbance to result in significant impacts on paleontological resources but does not reference the location or depth of disturbance. The Project Description provides information—e.g., locations of staging areas requiring new ground disturbance—that could/should be used to develop a more specific discussion of where impacts are (and aren't) anticipated.</p> <p>How to Address: Include a summary of the depth of ground disturbance and locations where excavation or other activities have the potential to encounter buried paleontological resources.</p>
Appendix D	DD-Paleo5	<p>Issue: Unless the geologic mapping in Appendix D is <u>entirely new and reflects only the work of the project team</u>, the source of the original mapping should be cited on each map (e.g., "modified from xxx"). Text on pages 18 – 19 identifies that the field surveys included field-checking and adjusting/updating existing published maps but doesn't indicate that the entire study area was re-mapped from scratch. Either approach is valid, but this needs to be clarified.</p> <p>How to Address: Please add original sources to Appendix D geologic maps and indicated "modified from" or similar. If there are areas of entirely new mapping, these should also be indicated.</p>
Appendix D, Page 31, under <i>Previously Recorded Fossil Resources – Museum Records Search Results</i>	DD-Paleo7	<p>Issue: The paragraph at the top of page 31 indicates that records searches were requested from the San Bernardino County Museum and the Las Vegas Natural History Museum. We agree that these are important repositories for the project area, and appreciate the recognition of smaller museums that have done important work in Mojave Desert paleontology! However, it seems odd that the University of California Museum of Paleontology (UCMP) and Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County weren't also consulted—UCMP is one of the state's premier repositories, and the LA County Museum is an important source for southern California in particular. We also note that UCMP is cited for fossil content in the Manix and Crowder Formations (e.g., pages 22, 44); it's not clear why a more comprehensive search wasn't conducted there, especially as it's possible to search online by unit age and geography, so results from unnamed Quaternary units can be obtained easily.</p> <p>How to Address: Please conduct comprehensive searches at the UCMP and LA County Natural History Museum—including unnamed Quaternary units—and incorporate the results of the additional search.</p>
Appendix D, Page 31, under <i>Previously Recorded Fossil Resources –</i>	DD-Paleo8	<p>Issue: The records search results are reported as negative, but the search results are not included, although they are cited. How to Address: Please provide the results of all record searches for paleontological resources.</p>

SUBMITTAL CONTROL FORM

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Museum Records Search Results		
Appendix D, Page 32, Section 4.1.4.1.1 Quaternary Sediments	DD-Paleo9	<p>Issue: The assessment of sensitivity uses the base of the Holocene as the cut-off for preservation of fossils <i>sensu stricto</i>, but SVP (2010) now considers materials as young as 5,000 years fossil remains. This could affect the assessment of sensitivity for the younger materials under CEQA.</p> <p>How to Address: Please include the unnamed younger Quaternary units in the records searches conducted at UCMP and the LA County Museum (see previous comment) to provide some basis other than age for a conclusion re: sensitivity of units inferred to fall between 10,000 and 5,000 years in age. We understand that for BLM purposes this is unnecessary and that discussion of the differing perspectives of the BLM protocol and SVP may be best addressed in a footnote rather than in the body of the report. However, including this information would provide stronger support for the CEQA analysis. If BLM does not want the younger Quaternary units discussed in the report, please provide a separate report to CPUC that addresses the units that fall between 10,000 and 5,000 years in age.</p>
Appendix D, Page 44, under Revised Paleontological Potential / Volcanic Flows	DD-Paleo10	<p>Issue: There is no mention of sedimentary interbeds on Page 44, but the description in Section 4.1.1.2.3 <i>Volcanic Flows</i> on page 29 indicates that they are locally present. If sedimentary interbeds occur in the volcanic sequences within the study area, their potential fossil content should be factored into the sensitivity assessment.</p> <p>How to Address: Please clarify whether sedimentary interbeds are present in volcanic sequences within the study area. If so, provide additional information on their nature and potential fossil content, and indicate how this is reflected in the PFYC classification. If sedimentary interbeds are not present in the study area, please clearly state this since this helps to more conclusively substantiate the PFYC 1 classification assigned to the volcanic sequences within the study area.</p>