

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Property Owners, and Interested Parties

From: Billie Blanchard, Environmental Project Manager

Subject: NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND SCOPING MEETING: San Diego Gas & Electric's Sycamore Peñasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project (A.14-04-011)

Date: August 11, 2014

A. Introduction

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) has filed an application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for its proposed Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project, also referred to as the Proposed Project. The CPUC, as lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to analyze the effects of the Proposed Project to comply with CEQA.

What is the NOP?

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation (NOP) is to inform recipients that the CPUC is beginning preparation of an EIR for the Proposed Project and to solicit information that will be helpful in determining the scope of the environmental review of the Proposed Project. As required by CEQA, this NOP is being sent to interested agencies and members of the public. This notice includes:

- A description of the project that SDG&E proposes to construct and operate
- A summary of anticipated potential project impacts
- The times and locations of three public scoping meetings
- Information on how to provide comments on the scope of the EIR.

What is Scoping?

Scoping is the process of soliciting public and government agency input regarding the scope and content of the EIR. Three public scoping meetings for the Proposed Project will be held during the CPUC scoping period (see detail in Section E). The CPUC's scoping period will begin August 18 and end on September 16, 2014.

A Scoping Report will be prepared to summarize comments made to the CPUC. This NOP and the future Scoping Report will be available on the project web site at the following link:

http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos/index.html

B. Project Description

The Proposed Project would be located within the Cities of San Diego and Poway in existing SDG&E right of way or franchise as illustrated in **Figure 1** (Project Overview; attached to this NOP). A portion of

the Proposed Project would be located on the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar east of Interstate 15 (I-15). The Sycamore-Peñasquitos corridor traverses residential, open space, military (MCAS Miramar), vacant land, urban, commercial/shopping, industrial/energy facility, park, transportation, and light industrial/business park uses.

The Proposed Project includes construction and operation of a new 230-kV transmission line between the existing Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations. The project elements are shown on **Figures 2 through 4**. Cross-sections of existing and proposed conditions along Segments A, C, and D are shown in **Figure 5**. The SDG&E Proposed Project includes four transmission line segments and minor modifications to four existing substations:

- **Segment A: Sycamore Canyon Substation to Carmel Valley Road.** SDG&E would construct an approximately 8.31-mile long 230-kV transmission line on 36 new double-circuit 230-kV and two 138-kV tubular steel poles (120-foot and 75-foot average height, respectively) from the Sycamore Canyon Substation to Carmel Valley Road. Two existing transmission lines (TL 13820 and TL 13825, which both terminate at Chicarita Substation) would be relocated to the new tubular steel poles, and approximately 42 wood H-frame structures, two tubular steel poles, one double-circuit cable pole, and two single-circuit wood mono poles associated with the two existing transmission lines would be removed. A portion of TL 13820 would be undergrounded as it enters the Sycamore Canyon Substation. Existing transmission line TL 23041 would be relocated to two new 230-kV structures within and immediately adjacent to the Sycamore Canyon Substation to make room for the new 230-kV connection at the substation.
- **Segment B: Underground Carmel Valley Road.** SDG&E would construct an approximately 2.84-mile long 230-kV underground transmission line in Carmel Valley Road. Two cable pole structures (160-foot average height) for underground/overhead transmission conversion would be placed at the ends of the undergrounded segment. One double-circuit steel lattice tower would be removed at the western reach of the segment. Also, one 138-kV single circuit wood H-frame structure would be removed.
- **Segment C: Carmel Valley Road to Peñasquitos Junction.** SDG&E would install approximately 2.19 miles of 230-kV conductor on existing steel lattice structures and one new tubular steel pole between Carmel Valley Road and Peñasquitos Junction. One steel lattice tower would be removed at the Peñasquitos Junction. Two existing transmission lines (TL 23001 and TL 23004) would be reconducted and bundled on the existing structures and re-designated as TL 23004. Existing shield wire on top of existing 230-kV steel lattice towers would be replaced with new optical ground wire.
- **Segment D: Peñasquitos Junction to Peñasquitos Substation.** SDG&E would install approximately 3.34 miles of 230-kV conductor on existing double-circuit lattice towers and a tubular steel pole between the Peñasquitos Junction and the Peñasquitos Substation. SDG&E would also consolidate two existing 69-kV power lines (TL 675 and TL 6906) onto 17 new 69-kV tubular steel poles (95-foot average height) that would replace 16 existing 69 kV wood H-frame structures and five wood monopoles. Two tubular steel poles would replace two existing wood cable poles outside the Peñasquitos Substation. Existing shield wire on top of existing 230-kV steel lattice towers would be replaced with new optical ground wire.
- **Sycamore Canyon Substation.** SDG&E would modify Sycamore Canyon Substation to facilitate the new 230-kV transmission line connection. Modifications would include transferring five existing transmission lines from existing bay positions to new bay positions, and adding a new circuit breaker.
- **Peñasquitos Substation.** SDG&E would modify Peñasquitos Substation to facilitate the new 230-kV transmission line connection. Modifications would include adding two circuit breakers and four disconnects.
- **San Luis Rey and Mission Substations.** Minor alterations may be made to these substations, including adjusting relays and upgrading protection on remaining lines.

- **Temporary Staging Yards.** The Proposed Project would utilize approximately 25 acres of temporary construction staging yards for vehicles equipment refueling, pole assemblage, open storage of material and equipment, construction trailers, portable restrooms, parking, lighting, possibly generator use for temporary power in construction trailers, and incidental landing areas for helicopters. Four staging yards have been identified by SDG&E at this time, including the Stonebridge Parkway, Stowe, Torrey Santa Fe, and Carmel Valley Road Staging Yards. Refer to **Figures 2 through 4** for staging yard locations. A potential fifth staging yard at Carmel Mountain Road has been dropped from the Proposed Project due to site development. Additional staging yards may be proposed by SDG&E.
- **Access Roads.** Construction would primarily take place within the existing SDG&E ROW easements and access roads and public roadways. Most work areas would be accessible by vehicle on unpaved SDG&E-maintained access roads or by overland travel. Access roads would be used for vehicle parking and turn-around, and specific construction site staging.

Project Purpose. SDG&E has stated that the Project objective is to meet the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) 2012–2013 Transmission Plan Functional Specifications for a new 230-kV transmission line between the Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations by:

- (1) Ensuring the SDG&E bulk electric system continues to meet North American Electric Reliability Corporation, Western Electricity Coordinating Council, and CAISO reliability criteria
- (2) Promoting compliance with State of California policy goals related to renewable integration and Once-Through Cooling retirement
- (3) Economically and reliably meeting the San Diego metropolitan area’s forecasted load growth
- (4) Delivering energy more efficiently to the load center in San Diego

SDG&E has also stated that an objective of the Proposed Project is locating the Proposed Project’s facilities in existing transmission and power line corridors, SDG&E ROW, SDG&E-owned property, and San Diego franchise rights of way is an objective of the Proposed Project.

SDG&E’s objectives will focus the formulation of alternatives to the Proposed Project in the EIR. CEQA does not, however, require that alternatives meet each and every objective; the stated objectives therefore do not absolutely constrain development of alternatives to the Proposed Project.

C. Project Background

C.1 Prior CPUC Applications Related to Sycamore-Peñasquitos

SDG&E originally filed an application (A.05-12-014) and then refiled an application (A.06-08-010) with the CPUC for a CPCN to construct the Sunrise Powerlink Project. The Coastal Link was one segment of the Sunrise Powerlink Project. The Coastal Link consisted of proposed 13.6 miles of 230-kV line with new towers between Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations. The Coastal Link would have required upgrades to the Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations.

The CPUC approved the Sunrise Powerlink Project in December 2008 in Decision 08-12-058, but the Commission did not approve the Coastal Link portion and instead adopted the Rancho Peñasquitos Coastal Link Alternative. The Coastal Link Alternative made the proposed Coastal Link transmission line segment unnecessary and instead identified transformer and reconductoring projects that would reduce costs and minimize impacts.

C.2 Current Sycamore-Peñasquitos Project

SDG&E has indicated that its ability to operate its bulk electric transmission system has become constrained by the unanticipated early retirement of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station and future retirement of coastal Once-Through Cooling generation. These constraints were not anticipated when the

Sunrise Powerlink Project was approved. In its 2012/2013 Transmission Plan the CAISO identified this line as a reliability-driven project eligible for competitive solicitation due to policy benefits. On March 4, 2014 the CAISO selected SDG&E in conjunction with Citizens Energy Corporation to develop the project.

A portion of Segment A and Segment D follow the same alignment of the Coastal Link portion of the Sunrise Powerlink Project. The remaining segments of the Proposed Project differ from the old Sunrise Coastal Link. Segment A extends further north to Carmel Valley Road, Segment B is located north of SR-56 within Carmel Valley Road, and Segment C connects Segment D to Carmel Valley Road. The central portion of the Coastal Link project was located underground south of SR-56 and connected directly to Segment D of the Proposed Project. A comparison map is provided in **Figure 6**.

SDG&E filed a CPCN application and a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the Proposed Project on April 7, 2014. Since SDG&E's filing, the CPUC has conducted a 30-day completeness/deficiency review. Based on this review, the CPUC sent a deficiency letter to SDG&E on May 7, 2014. SDG&E submitted information in response to the deficiency letter in several parts in June and July, 2014. The CPUC deemed the application complete on July 24, 2014.

D. Analysis of Potential Environmental Effects

In accordance with CEQA, the CPUC intends to prepare an EIR to evaluate potential environmental effects of the Proposed Project, and to propose mitigation measures to reduce any significant effects identified. The EIR will also study the environmental impacts of the alternatives to the Proposed Project and will contain mitigation to reduce these effects if they are determined to be significant.

Based on preliminary analysis of the Proposed Project and review of documents submitted by SDG&E and other parties to the CPUC's CPCN proceeding, completion of the Proposed Project may have a number of potentially significant environmental effects as listed in Attachment 1. The CPUC has not yet made a determination as to the significance of these potential impacts; the CPUC will make significance determinations in the EIR after their full and thorough consideration. The EIR will also present an evaluation of other issues identified in the scoping process and the project's cumulative impacts combined with other present and planned projects in the area.

Mitigation Measures. SDG&E has proposed measures (Applicant Proposed Measures) that could reduce or eliminate potential impacts of the Proposed Project. The EIR will contain an evaluation of the effectiveness of these measures. The CPUC will develop mitigation measures to reduce impacts, if required. The CPUC would define measures to be implemented as a condition of project approval (if the project is approved) when the CPUC makes its final decision on the Proposed Project. The CPUC would require implementation of a mitigation monitoring program if the project or some alternative is approved.

Alternatives. The EIR will contain an evaluation of a reasonable range of alternatives to the Proposed Project that could potentially reduce, eliminate, or avoid impacts of the Proposed Project, in compliance with CEQA. Alternatives may include system alternatives, minor reroutes and different structure designs within the ROW, different routes for the transmission lines (in other corridors), and new transmission and substation facilities and/or equipment that could meet the Proposed Project objectives. The EIR will contain an evaluation of the comparative environmental impacts of the alternatives.

The EIR will also contain an evaluation of the No Project Alternative. The No Project Alternative will describe the situation that would likely occur in the absence of implementation of the Proposed Project or its alternatives.

In the PEA for the Proposed Project, SDG&E analyzed seven alternative alignments that could potentially meet the objectives and reduce impacts. The PEA also contained an analysis of cable structure alternate options for the two termini of the underground portion of the Project (Segment B). The CPUC will evaluate the feasibility of the PEA alternatives and determine if they meet CEQA requirements to be an alternative to the Proposed Project. The CPUC will likely develop other alternatives for evaluation in the

EIR. Scoping period input may influence alternatives considered in the EIR. Other alternatives may be based on the impacts of the Proposed Project.

E. Public Scoping Meetings

The CPUC will conduct three public Scoping Meetings in the Project area, as shown in Table 1. The purpose of the scoping meetings is to present information about the Proposed Project and the CPUC's decision-making processes, and to listen to the views of the public on the range of issues relevant to the scope and content of the EIR. A court reporter will be present to record all verbal comments made at the scoping meetings.

Table 1: Public Scoping Meetings		
Location/Address	Double Tree Golf Resort 14455 Peñasquitos Drive San Diego, CA 92129	
Date & Times	Monday <u>August 25, 2014</u> Open House Session: 6:30 p.m. Brief Presentation: 7:15 p.m. Verbal comments: 7:30 p.m.	Tuesday <u>August 26, 2014</u> Open House Session: 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Brief Presentation: 2:45 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. Verbal comments: 3:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

F. Scoping Comments

CPUC Scoping for CEQA

At this time, the CPUC is soliciting information regarding the topics and alternatives that should be included in the EIR. Suggestions for submitting scoping comments are presented at the end of this section. **All comments for the CPUC's CEQA scoping period must be received by September 16, 2014. However, if more time is needed you may request an extension of time to submit your comments from the CPUC Project Manager.**

All Scoping Comments

You may submit comments in a variety of ways:

- (1) By U.S. mail;
- (2) By electronic mail;
- (3) By fax; or
- (4) By attending a Public Scoping Meeting (see times and locations in Table 1) and making a verbal statement or handing in a written comment at the scoping meetings.

Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. The CPUC will not consider anonymous comments. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

By U.S. Mail: If you send comments by U.S. mail, please use first-class mail and be sure to include your name and a return address. Please send written comments on the scope and content of the EIR to:

Billie Blanchard (CPUC Project Manager)
 California Public Utilities Commission
 c/o Panorama Environmental, Inc.
 One Embarcadero Center, Suite 740
 San Francisco, CA 94111

By Electronic Mail: Email communications are welcome; however, please remember to include your name and return address in the email message. Email messages should be sent to:

sycamorepenasquitos@panoramaenv.com

By Fax: You may fax your comment letter to our information line at (650) 373-1211. Please remember to include your name and return address in the fax and to write legibly.

A **Scoping Report** will be prepared to summarize all comments received (including oral comments made at the Scoping Meetings). This report will be posted on the project website at:

http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos/index.html

Copies of the Scoping Report will be placed in local document repository sites listed in Table 2. A limited number of copies will be available from the CPUC upon request.

Table 2: Project Document Repository Sites

Libraries		
Carmel Mountain Ranch Library 12095 World Trade Drive San Diego, 92128 (858) 538-8181	Poway Branch, San Diego County Library 13137 Poway Road Poway, 92064 (858) 513-2900	Rancho Peñasquitos Library 13330 Salmon River Road San Diego, 92129 (858) 538-8159

Suggestions for Effective Participation in Scoping

Following are some suggestions for preparing and providing the most useful information for the EIR scoping process.

- (1) Review the description of the project (see Section C of this Notice of Preparation and the maps provided). Additional detail on the project description is available on the project website, where you can review SDG&E's PEA.
- (2) Attend the scoping meetings to get more information on the project and the environmental review process (see times in Table 1 above).
- (3) Submit written comments or attend the scoping meetings and make oral comments. Explain important issues that the EIR should cover.
- (4) Suggest mitigation measures that could reduce the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Project.
- (5) Suggest alternatives to the Proposed Project that could avoid or reduce the impacts of the Proposed Project.

G. For Additional Project Information

Internet Website – Information about this application and the environmental review process will be posted on the Internet at

http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos/index.html

This site will be used to post all public documents during the environmental review process and to announce upcoming public meetings. In addition, a copy of SDG&E's PEA may be found at this site, and the Draft EIR will be posted at the site after it is published.

Project Email – You may request project information by sending an email to:

sycamorepenasquitos@panoramaenv.com.

Document Repositories – Documents related to the Proposed Project and the EIR will be made available at the sites listed in Table 2.

H. Issuance of NOP

The California Public Utilities Commission hereby issues this Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.



Billie Blanchard, Project Manager

Energy Division

California Public Utilities Commission

Date: August 11, 2014

**ATTACHMENT A: SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ISSUES OR IMPACTS FOR THE
SYCAMORE-PEÑASQUITOS 230 KILOVOLT TRANSMISSION
LINE PROJECT**

AESTHETICS / VISUAL

- Visual impacts associated with addition of power line structures and changes to existing power line structures, including replacement of existing wood poles with larger tubular steel poles, addition and relocation of conductors, and modifications to the Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos substations.
 - Visual impacts from additional conductors and marker balls.
 - Glare from tubular steel poles and conductors.
 - Short-term visual impacts from project construction.
 - Short-term visual impacts from temporary security lighting.
 - Minor visual impacts from vegetation trimming.
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AIR QUALITY AND GREENHOUSE GAS

- Construction air pollutant emissions such as reactive organic gases (ROG), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur oxides (SO_x), particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), and greenhouse gas emissions.
 - Potential greenhouse gas emissions from the use of vehicles and/or equipment to construct, inspect, and maintain the facilities.
 - Potential impact during construction to sensitive receptors due to localized pollutant concentration.
 - Potential creation of diesel odors from heavy-duty equipment used during construction.
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BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Potential temporary and permanent impacts to sensitive vegetation communities, special-status plant species, special-status wildlife species, and their habitats from construction activities, including the installation of maintenance work pads, the creation of new access roads, material storage, staging yards, stringing sites, structure work areas, guard structures, and underground construction.
- Potential permanent and/or temporary impacts to the following special-status plant species: the coast barrel cactus, graceful tarplant, Nuttall's scrub oak, San Diego marsh-elder, spineshrub, summer-holly, and spiny rush.
- Potential temporary impacts to wetlands and other waters near temporary work areas.
- Potential temporary and permanent impacts to Preserve areas.
- Potential to impact special-status invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, avian, and mammal species during construction.
- Temporary disruption of local wildlife movement during construction.
- Potential impacts to wildlife, which may be injured or killed by construction equipment and vehicles.
- Potential disturbance or destruction of bird nests in structures, equipment, cacti, shrubs, trees, or on the ground in work areas.
- Potential impacts to nesting bird species from helicopter air turbulence, noise, dust, and vibrations.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historical Resources

- Potential impacts to known and unknown historical resources during construction.

Archaeological Resources

- Potential impacts to known and unknown archaeological resources during construction.

Human Remains

- Potential to inadvertently impact human remains during subsurface construction.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- Potential impacts to paleontological resources due to the drilling and placing poles in locations within sedimentary rock formations that could yield fossils.
- Potential to impact paleontological resources due to grading operations and excavations.

FIRE

- Increased risk of wildfire during construction from the presence of construction equipment, vehicles, and workers in the area, and from potential damage to energized power lines during line stringing.
- During project operation potential safety risks to fire crews fighting a fire near the line right-of-way.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

- Potential impact from seismic activity from active faults that occur outside of the project area. The towers along the alignment in this area would be subject to severe seismic shaking within the lifetime of the Proposed Project.
- Potential impact from seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction landslides, and mudslides during construction and maintenance of the facilities.
- Potential temporary impacts to soil from grading spur roads within the utility ROW and constructing permanent work pads and retaining walls.
- Potential risk of lateral spreading or issues related to collapsible soils during construction and maintenance.

HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- Potential impacts from the accidental release of hazardous materials, such as fuels, lubricating oils, and hydraulic fluids during construction and refueling.
- Potential temporary impact during construction from the handling, use, and transportation of hazardous materials within the vicinity of a school. The nearest school is Kids Bay Center, located 100 feet from the proposed project.
- Potential impacts to adopted emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans during construction and maintenance due to impeded traffic flow caused by construction and maintenance of the underground transmission line within Carmel Valley Road and the entrance to Black Mountain Ranch Community Park.
- Potential traffic hazards from lane closures and detours required to construct the power line in Carmel Valley Road.

HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

- Potential impact to surface water quality from construction debris or accidental release of hazardous materials, such as coatings, adhesives, and solvents. Potential impact to surface water quality during operation and maintenance activities due to the storage of hazardous materials, such as oil stored in substations.
- Possible impacts from changes to existing drainage patterns and increases in surface water runoff, erosion, siltation, and sedimentation during construction.
- Possible impacts to water quality from release of sediment in storm water runoff and other discharges.

NOISE

- Impacts from construction noise generated by equipment operation, including noise from helicopters.
- Potential to expose people to ground-borne vibrations during construction.
- Corona noise during operation.

POPULATION AND HOUSING

- Potential to bring construction workers into the area temporarily during construction.

PUBLIC SERVICES

- Possible impacts to fire and police protection during construction activities due to increased fire risk and lane closures for the construction of the underground segments.
- Possible noise, traffic, and air quality (dust) impacts to surrounding schools during construction. This includes potential impacts to traffic for schools located near work areas and schools that are accessed from Carmel Valley Road.

RECREATION

- Temporary and intermittent restricted access during project construction and maintenance for the following parks: Springs Canyon Neighborhood Park, Rancho Peñasquitos Skate Park, Black Mountain Open Space Park, Hilltop Community Park, Black Mountain Ranch Community Park, Cypress Canyon Neighborhood Park, Butterfly Gardens Mini Park, Del Mar Mesa Open Space, Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Torrey Del Mar Neighborhood Park, Torrey Hills Neighborhood Park, Torrey Hills Dog Park.
- Possible temporary closure of trails to keep the public a safe distance from the construction area.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC

- Temporary lane closures on Carmel Valley Road and potential detours for the construction of the underground transmission line segment.
- Potential traffic delays on Carmel Valley Road and adjacent roadways.
- Potential closure of a Class II Bike Lane during the construction of Segment B on Carmel Valley Road.
- Potential damage to area roadways from heavy equipment traffic and use.
- Temporary increase in daily traffic, during construction, where construction related trips would access work areas.
- Potential minor impact to traffic flow due to maintenance work for the underground transmission line segments.
- Potential impact to adequate emergency access during construction and operation & maintenance.
- Potential impact to air traffic due to use of helicopter during construction.

UTILITIES

- Potential to impact landfills due to surplus soil generated during construction activities.
- Potential to impact landfills by generating small amounts of hazardous or otherwise regulated waste.
- Potential to impact underground utilities located within or crossing the proposed transmission corridors.

OTHER ISSUES

- Cumulative Impacts.
 - Consideration of a reasonable range of alternatives.
 - Enforceable and effective mitigation measures.
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