CHAPTER 3

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

INTRODUCTION

SETTING

This chapter provides a description of the environmental setting for the proposed project, i.e., the baseline of physical environmental conditions existing at the time this analysis was prepared. The proposed project is the request for authorization of a new tariff service allowing Carriers to place fiber optic cable in conduit installed in SCG/SDG&E' active gas pipelines under new Schedule No. G-FIG. The new service would establish tariff rates, terms and conditions providing Carriers the option to request SCG/SDG&E to install conduit within its active gas pipelines using a proposed "fiber-in-gas" or "FIG" technology to then place fiber optic cable. FIG technologies are particularly well-suited to highly urbanized, developed areas where infrastructure already exists that can be utilized to provide relatively short connections to end users with a minimum of disruption. However, it can be installed wherever appropriate gas distribution pipelines are located. FIG technologies could potentially minimize environmental impacts, whether in an urban, suburban, or rural setting, by eliminating the need to disrupt large areas with open trenches and trenching equipment.

The intent of this chapter is to provide a useful description of the environment that may be affected by the component parts of this project. The chapter is divided into sections that correspond to the resource topics included in the amended CEQA Environmental Checklist Form (Appendix F in *CEQA Guidelines*).

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The discussion of impacts and mitigation measures in this chapter is organized by the resource topics that are included in the amended CEQA Environmental Checklist Form. The discussion of impacts and mitigation builds on the environmental setting information, which is also organized by checklist topic.

The relevant explanation of the analytic approach and the significance criteria used for evaluating impacts leads each resource discussion in this chapter. Each checklist criterion or standard has a corresponding impact discussion.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines (Section 15064), a project's effects on the environment can be characterized as having:

- No impact, if the proposed project would not result in an impact;
- Less than significant impact, if the proposed project would result in an impact, but at a level that is not considered significant;
- Potentially significant impact unless mitigation is incorporated, if the impact of the proposed project would be considered significant without mitigation measures or revision of the project; or
- Potentially significant impact, if there is substantial evidence that the impact of the proposed project would be significant and could not be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Each section includes a discussion of mechanisms that could cause impacts. Project effects fall into the following three categories: temporary, short-term, and long-term. These categories are defined as follows:

- A "temporary" effect would occur only during construction and/or subsequent restoration.
- A "short-term" effect would last from the time construction ceases to within three years following construction and/or subsequent restoration.
- A "long-term" effect would last longer than three years following construction and/or subsequent restoration and would typically be associated with operation and maintenance of the fiber optic cable system. In some cases, a long-term effect could be considered a "permanent" effect.

SCG/SDG&E's proposed project would incorporate all of the mitigation measures discussed in this chapter. Implementation of the mitigation measures would either avoid the impacts completely or reduce all temporary and short-term construction impacts, and any long-term operational impacts, to less-than-significant levels.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081.6, it is anticipated that the CPUC would adopt a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) at the time it adopts this environmental document in the form of a mitigated negative declaration. The purpose of the MMRP would be to ensure that the mitigation measures adopted as part of this project approval would be complied with upon implementation of the project. The MMRP would describe each of the mitigation measures and identify the party responsible for monitoring, the time frame for implementation, and the program for monitoring compliance.

Impacts are described using the following terminology:

- "Construction" applies to activities associated with installation of the conduit within active gas lines, and/or subsequent restoration.

- "Pre-project conditions" refer to conditions before FIG installation. It does not refer to conditions before construction of the existing facilities in a disturbed right-of-way (e.g., roadway, railroad, or other utility).

- A "cumulative" impact would be an impact of the proposed project that would be cumulatively considerable when compounded with impacts from other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects. A project's incremental effects are not "cumulatively considerable" solely because other projects would have a significant cumulative impact.