

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

Sierra Pacific Power Company (Sierra Pacific), in its California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) application (A.06-04-017), filed on April 19, 2006, seeks a Permit to Construct (PTC) approximately one half mile of 60 kilovolt (kV) single-circuit power line pursuant to CPUC General Order (GO) 131-D. The objective of the Proposed Project is to improve reliability by increasing transmission capacity in the area in order to continue safe and reliable electric service to customers in the area, and to meet contractual obligations.

## Document Organization

The Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) is organized as follows:

- This Executive Summary introduces the project, describes the method for reviewing and submittal of comments, describes the organization of the document, and provides a summary of the impacts and mitigation measures.
- The Project Description (Section 1) provides objectives and components of the proposed project and details of proposed construction activities.
- The Impacts Discussion (Section 2) includes all required California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) checklist items and a discussion of the impacts and their significance for the proposed project.
- The Environmental Determination (Section 3) includes a statement by the CPUC as to the type of environmental review that is required.
- The Summary of Preparers (Section 4) summarizes the names and affiliation of persons involved with development of this IS/MND.
- The Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance Program (MMRCP) (Section 5) summarize the program for ensuring effective implementation of the mitigation measures for the Proposed Project.

## Public Review Period and Comments

CEQA and the CPUC encourage public participation in the planning and environmental review processes. The public may present comments and concerns regarding the Proposed Project and the adequacy of the Draft IS/MND during a public review and comment period. Written public

comments may be submitted to the CPUC at any time during the 30-day public review and comment period, **February 16, 2007 through March 19, 2007**. Information regarding the IS/MND availability and process for submitting comments is as follows:

<b>How to Get a Copy of the IS/MND Study</b>	<b>How to Submit Comments</b>
<p>Review online or download from the website: www.sppc-hirschdale.com</p> <p>Request by telephone at (415) 962-8409 or email at hirschdale@essassoc.com</p> <p>Review at the following library branch:</p> <p>Truckee Branch Library 10031 Levon Avenue Truckee, CA 96161 (530) 582-7846</p>	<p><b>Mail to:</b> Mr. John Boccio Hirschdale Power Line Project c/o Environmental Science Associates 225 Bush Street, Suite 1700 San Francisco, CA 94104</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> hirschdale@esassoc.com <b>Fax:</b> (415) 896-0332 <b>Phone:</b> (415) 962-8409</p>

## Project Description

Sierra Pacific seeks to construct an approximately 3,500-foot long power line of new 60 kV circuit on an existing 12.5 kV distribution line in unincorporated Nevada County, near the town of Hirschdale. The Proposed Project would include the removal and installation of 19 poles, string of new conductor and relocated of existing distribution to the new poles. The entire proposed power line would be located on an existing Sierra Pacific distribution line easement on private property connecting two existing single-circuit 60 kV electric power lines (Line 621 and Line 608) that Sierra Pacific currently operates. Under GO 131-D, approval of the Proposed Project must comply with CEQA.

## Potential Environmental Impacts

The attached Draft IS/MND presents and analyzes potential environmental impacts that would result from construction and operation of the Proposed Project, and proposes mitigation measures, as appropriate. Based on the Draft IS/MND, approval of the application would have no impact or less than significant effects in the following areas:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture Resources
- Geology, Soils, and Seismicity
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use, Plans, and Policies
- Mineral Resources
- Population and Housing
- Recreation
- Utilities and Services

The Draft IS/MND indicates that approval of the application would result in less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated in the areas of:

- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Noise
- Public Services
- Transportation and Traffic

## Mitigation and Monitoring

Each of the identified impacts can be mitigated to avoid the impact or reduce it to a less than significant level. The mitigation measures presented in the Draft IS/MND have been agreed to by Sierra Pacific. Table ES-1 provides a complete, condensed presentation of the environmental impacts that require mitigation measures for the proposed Hirschdale Power Line Project. Full descriptions of the Mitigation Monitoring, Reporting and Compliance Plan are included in Section 5 of this Draft IS/MND to specify how all mitigation measures would be implemented.

**TABLE ES-1  
SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SIERRA PACIFIC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
Aesthetics		
No mitigation required.		
Agricultural Resources		
No mitigation required.		
Air Quality		
<p><b>2.3-1:</b> Construction activities would generate emissions of criteria pollutants, including suspended and inhalable particulate matter and equipment exhaust emissions. This would be a potentially significant impact.</p>	<p><b>2.3-1:</b> Sierra Pacific shall ensure that the skycrane helicopter (or any other heavy-duty helicopter designed to lift heavy loads) is not operated for more than four hours per day. In addition, only one other piece of heavy equipment (e.g., line truck) shall be permitted to operate for no more than four hours per day on the same days that the skycrane or other heavy-duty helicopter is operated, and no heavy-truck haul trips associated with the Proposed Project shall be permitted to occur on skycrane helicopter operation days.</p>	Less than Significant
<p><b>2.3-2:</b> Construction activities would generate emissions of criteria pollutants, including suspended and inhalable particulate matter and equipment exhaust emissions. These activities could expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.</p>	Implement Mitigation Measure 2.3-1.	Less than Significant
Biological Resources		
<p><b>2.4-1:</b> Construction activities could affect populations of <i>Plumas ivesia</i> should it be present within the Proposed Project corridor.</p>	<p><b>2.4-1:</b> Plant surveys shall be completed by a qualified botanist during the flowering season (May-July) prior to the beginning of any construction activities. If <i>Plumas ivesia</i> or any other sensitive species is found, the applicant shall avoid direct impacts where possible. If avoidance is not feasible, the project applicant shall work with the CDFG to transplant affected populations to a protected location off site.</p>	Less than Significant
<p><b>2.4-2:</b> Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project could disturb nesting raptors, including the northern goshawk, which is known to occur in the vicinity of the Proposed Project</p>	<p><b>2.4-2a:</b> To the extent feasible, vegetation removal shall occur outside the nesting and breeding season of March 1 through August 15 to avoid impacts to nesting birds and raptors.</p> <p><b>2.4-2b:</b> For any potential nest-disturbing activities that are to occur during the period from March 1 through August 15, Sierra Pacific shall contract with a qualified biologist who shall conduct a pre-construction survey for nesting birds. The survey shall be conducted no more than one week prior to the start of work activities and would cover all affected areas including the power line route, staging area, pull and tension sites, and access roads areas where substantial ground disturbance or vegetation clearing is required.</p>	Less than Significant

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
<p><b>2.4-3:</b> Construction activities could potentially spread noxious or invasive weeds within the Proposed Project area where weeds do not currently exist.</p>	<p>If any active nests are found, an appropriate nest protection zone shall be established by the qualified biologist. The guidelines for protection zones for active nest shall be as follows: for passerine birds, a 50 - 100-foot zone; for raptors, a 300-foot zone and for golden eagles a 500-foot zone. Once these zones are established, they may be modified on a site-specific basis as determined by the qualified biologist or in coordination with CDFG.</p> <p>During construction, active nests within the project area shall be monitored for signs of disturbance. If the biological monitor determines that a disturbance is occurring, construction shall be halted, and the appropriate regulatory agencies shall be contacted as to the measures that shall be implemented to reduce further disturbance.</p> <p><b>2.4-3:</b> Sierra Pacific shall develop and implement a Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Control Plan, consistent with standard Best Management Practices (see for example: Department of Transportation, State of California (2003); Storm Water Quality Handbooks; and Project Planning and Design Guide Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual). The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the CPUC and shall at a minimum address any required cleaning of construction vehicles to minimize spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants.</p>	Less than Significant
<p>Cultural Resources</p>	<p><b>2.5-1:</b> In the event that any prehistoric or historic subsurface cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, all work within 50 feet of the resources shall be halted and Sierra Pacific and/or the CPUC shall consult with a qualified archaeologist to assess the significance of the find. If any find is determined to be significant, representatives of Sierra Pacific and/or the CPUC and a Specialist shall meet to determine the appropriate avoidance measures or other appropriate mitigation, with the ultimate determination to be made by the CPUC. All significant cultural materials recovered shall be, as necessary, subject to scientific analysis, professional museum curation, and a report prepared by a Specialist according to current professional standards. A Specialist for purposes of this mitigation measure is defined as one who meets the Secretary of the Interior's 1983 Historic Preservation Qualification Standards listed in the Federal Register (48 FR 44716-01) and the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 61.3).</p>	Less than Significant

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)  
SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
<p><b>2.5-2:</b> Construction activities may result in an adverse impact to an unknown paleontological resource.</p>	<p>In considering any suggested mitigation proposed by the consulting archaeologist in order to mitigate impacts to historical resources or unique archaeological resources, the CPUC shall determine whether avoidance is necessary and feasible in light of factors such as the nature of the find, project design, costs, and other considerations. If avoidance is infeasible, other appropriate measures (e.g., data recovery) shall be instituted. Work may proceed on other parts of the project site while mitigation for historical resources or unique archaeological resources is carried out.</p> <p><b>2.5-2:</b> In the event a fossil is discovered during construction, excavations within 50 feet of the find shall be temporarily halted or diverted until the discovery is examined by a qualified paleontologist, in accordance with Society of Vertebrate Paleontology standards (SVP, 1995). The discovery shall be documented as needed, the potential resource evaluated, and the significance of the find shall be assessed under the criteria set forth in Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. The paleontologist shall notify the CPUC to determine procedures to be followed before construction is allowed to resume at the location of the find. If the CPUC determines that avoidance is not feasible, the paleontologist shall prepare an excavation plan for mitigating the effect of the project on the qualities that make the resource important, and the plan shall be implemented. The plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval.</p>	<p>Less than Significant</p>
<p><b>2.5-3:</b> Project construction could result in damage to previously unidentified human remains.</p>	<p><b>2.5-3:</b> In the event that human skeletal remains are uncovered during construction activities for the Proposed Project, Sierra Pacific shall immediately halt work, contact the Nevada County Coroner to evaluate the remains, and follow the procedures and protocols pursuant to Section 15064.5 (e)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines. If the County Coroner determines that the remains are Native American, Sierra Pacific shall contact the California Native American Heritage Commission, pursuant to subdivision (c) of Section 7050.5 of the Health and Safety Code, and all excavation and site preparation activities shall cease until appropriate arrangements are made.</p>	<p>Less than Significant</p>
<p>Geology, Soils, and Seismicity No mitigation required.</p>		

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
<p><b>2.7-1:</b> Construction activities associated with the Proposed Project would require the use of certain materials such as fuels, oils, solvents, and other chemical products that, in large quantities, could pose a potential hazard to the public or the environment if improperly used or inadvertently released.</p>	<p><b>2.7-1a:</b> Sierra Pacific and/or its contractor(s) shall implement construction best management practices including but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow manufacturer's recommendations on use, storage, and disposal of chemical products used in construction;</li> <li>• Avoid overtopping construction equipment fuel tanks;</li> <li>• During routine maintenance of construction equipment, properly contain and remove grease and oils; and</li> <li>• Properly dispose of discarded containers of fuels and other chemicals.</li> </ul> <p><b>2.7-1b:</b> <i>Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan</i> – Sierra Pacific shall prepare a Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan (the Plan) for the Proposed Project and implement it during construction to ensure compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local laws and guidelines regarding the handling of hazardous materials. The Plan shall prescribe hazardous material handling procedures to reduce the potential for a spill during construction, or exposure of the workers or public to hazardous materials. The Plan shall also include a discussion of appropriate response actions in the event that hazardous materials are released or encountered during excavation activities. The Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to the commencement of construction activities.</p> <p><b>2.7-1c:</b> <i>Health and Safety Plan</i> – Sierra Pacific shall prepare and implement a Health and Safety Plan to ensure the health and safety of construction workers and the public during construction. The plan shall include information on the appropriate personal protective equipment to be used during construction. The Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to the commencement of construction activities.</p>	Less than Significant

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
<p><b>2.7-2:</b> Construction activities could release previously unidentified hazardous materials into the environment.</p>	<p><b>2.7-1d:</b> <i>Worker Environmental Awareness Program (WEAP)</i> – Sierra Pacific shall ensure that an environmental training program is established and delivered to communicate environmental concerns and appropriate work practices to all construction field personnel. The training program shall emphasize site-specific physical conditions to improve hazard prevention, and shall include a review of the Health and Safety Plan and the Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan. Sierra Pacific shall submit documentation to the CPUC mitigation monitor prior to the commencement of construction activities that each worker on the project has undergone this training program.</p> <p><b>2.7-1e:</b> <i>Emergency Spill Supplies and Equipment</i> – Sierra Pacific shall ensure that oil-absorbent material, tarps, and storage drums shall be used to contain and control any minor releases. Emergency spill supplies and equipment shall be kept adjacent to all areas of work, and shall be clearly marked. Detailed information for responding to accidental spills and for handling any resulting hazardous materials shall be provided in the Proposed Project's Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan (see Mitigation Measure 2.7-1b), which shall be implemented during construction.</p> <p><b>2.7-2:</b> Sierra Pacific's Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan shall include provisions that would be implemented if any subsurface hazardous materials are encountered during construction. Provisions outlined in the Plan shall include immediately stopping work in the contaminated area and contacting appropriate resource agencies, including the CPUC designated monitor, upon discovery of subsurface hazardous materials. The plan shall include the phone numbers of County and State agencies and primary, secondary, and final cleanup procedures. The Hazardous Substance Control and Emergency Response Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to the commencement of construction activities.</p>	Less than Significant
<p><b>2.7-3:</b> Proposed Project construction activities could ignite dry vegetation and start a fire.</p>	<p><b>2.7-3:</b> Water tanks shall be sited in the Proposed Project area and be available for fire protection. All construction vehicles shall have fire suppression equipment and construction personnel shall be required to park vehicles away from dry vegetation. Sierra Pacific shall contact and coordinate with the California Department of Forestry and Truckee Fire Protection District to determine the minimum amounts of fire equipment to be carried on the vehicles and appropriate locations for the water tanks. Sierra Pacific shall submit verification of its consultation with CDF and the Truckee Fire Protection District to the CPUC.</p>	Less than Significant

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
Hydrology and Water Quality		
No mitigation required.		
Land Use, Plans, and Policies		
No mitigation required.		
Mineral Resources		
No mitigation required.		
Noise		
<b>2.11-1:</b> The Proposed Project could generate adverse noise levels during project construction.	<p><b>2.11-1a:</b> General construction activity shall be limited to the least noise-sensitive daytime hours between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. and blasting and helicopter activity shall be limited to between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with some exceptions (as approved by the CPUC and/or the Sheriff Department) as required for safety considerations or certain construction procedures that cannot be interrupted. Helicopter use shall be limited to Sierra Pacific's proposed four hours per day. No construction activity shall occur on a holiday.</p> <p><b>2.11-1b:</b> The following noise reduction and suppression techniques shall be employed during project construction to minimize the impact of temporary construction-related noise on nearby sensitive receptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comply with manufacturers' muffler requirements.</li> <li>• Notify residences in the community of Hirschdale of the construction schedule and how many days they may be affected. The notice shall provide specific information regarding the planned schedule for helicopter and blasting activities. The notice shall contain the phone number of the construction supervisor who would handle construction noise questions and complaints.</li> <li>• Minimize idling of engines; turn off engines when not in use, where applicable.</li> <li>• Shield compressors and other small stationary equipment with portable barriers when within 100 feet of residences.</li> <li>• Route truck traffic away from noise-sensitive areas where feasible.</li> </ul>	Less than Significant
Population and Housing		
No mitigation required.		

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
<b>Public Services</b>		
<b>2.13-1:</b> Proposed Project construction activities could temporarily increase the demand for fire protection services.	<p><b>2.13-1a:</b> Sierra Pacific shall implement Mitigation Measure 2.7-1c (see Section 2.7, <i>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</i>).</p> <p><b>2.13-1b:</b> Sierra Pacific shall implement Mitigation Measure 2.7-3 (see Section 2.7, <i>Hazards and Hazardous Materials</i>).</p>	Less than Significant
<b>2.13-2:</b> Proposed Project construction work in proximity to public roadways could potentially affect vehicle access and fire department response times.	<b>2.13-2:</b> Sierra Pacific shall coordinate with Nevada County emergency service providers prior to construction to ensure that construction activities and associated lane closures would not significantly affect emergency response vehicles. Sierra Pacific shall submit verification of its consultation with emergency service providers to the CPUC.	Less than Significant
<b>2.13-3:</b> Proposed Project construction activities could temporarily increase the demand for police services.	<p><b>2.13-3a:</b> Sierra Pacific shall implement standard precautionary measures, such as securing equipment when left unattended to minimize theft and vandalism.</p> <p><b>2.13-3b:</b> Sierra Pacific shall provide traffic control, if necessary, in coordination with the appropriate police agency.</p> <p><b>2.13-3c:</b> Sierra Pacific shall implement public safety measures, including covering and securing all open holes once activity at that location is stopped (after hours), and the placement of safety structures adjacent to roadways during overhead wire installation activity to protect vehicles and pedestrians.</p>	Less than Significant
<b>Recreation</b>		
No mitigation required		
<b>Transportation / Traffic</b>		
<b>2.15-1:</b> Project construction activities could adversely affect traffic and transportation conditions in the Proposed Project area.	<p><b>2.15-1a:</b> Sierra Pacific shall coordinate short-term construction activities at private road crossings with the applicable private property owners. Evidence of private property coordination shall be provided to the CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities.</p> <p><b>2.15-1b:</b> Sierra Pacific shall prepare and implement a Traffic Management Plan subject to approval by Nevada County. The approved Traffic Management Plan and documentation of agency approval shall be submitted to the CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities. The plan shall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;</li> </ul>	Less than Significant

**TABLE ES-1 (continued)**  
**SUMMARY OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPPC HIRSCHDALE POWER LINE PROJECT**

Environmental Impact	Mitigation Measures Proposed in this MND	Significance after Mitigation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;</li> <li>• Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include a mailing or door to door posting of notices to residents of Hirschdale and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways would be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints; and</li> <li>• Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area, consistent with Mitigation Measure 2.13-2 (see Section 2.13, Public Services). Emergency service providers would be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads would remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.15-2:</b> Project construction activities could increase potential traffic safety hazards for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians on public roadways.	Implement Mitigation Measure 2.15-1b.	Less than Significant
<b>2.15-3:</b> Project construction activities could result in delays for emergency vehicles on roadways in the Proposed Project area.	Implement Mitigation Measure 2.15-1b.	Less than Significant
<b>Utilities and Services</b>		
<b>2.16-1:</b> Construction activities could inadvertently contact underground utility lines and/or facilities during excavation and other ground disturbance, possibly leading to short-term utility service interruptions.	<b>2.16-1:</b> Sierra Pacific shall ensure that Underground Service Alert is notified at least 10 days prior to initiation of construction activities that require ground disturbance. Underground Service Alert verifies the location of all existing underground facilities and alerts the other utilities to mark their facilities in the area of anticipated construction activities.	Less than Significant
<b>Mandatory Findings of Significance</b>		
<b>2.17-1:</b> Proposed Project construction emissions of NO <sub>x</sub> could be cumulatively considerable if proposed skycrane helicopter activities occur on one or more of the same days as construction activities associated with the Line 621 Relocation Project.	<b>2.17-1:</b> Sierra Pacific shall ensure that the skycrane helicopter (or any other heavy-duty helicopter designed to lift heavy loads) would not operated on any of the same days that construction equipment associated with the Line 621 Relocation Project would be operated.	Less than Significant