

Final Initial Study and Negative Declaration for Crown Castle NG West Inc.

PREFACE

Introduction/Overview

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) distributed the Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the Crown Castle NG West (Crown Castle) San Mateo County Project (proposed project) for public review on March 20, 2014, with the public review period ending on April 21, 2014. During this time, four comment letters were received.

The Final IS/Negative Declaration (ND) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.) and in accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (14 CCR 15000 et seq.). The Final IS/ND will be used by the CPUC (as the lead state agency), in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, to act on Crown Castle application for an Authority to Construct and for Deviation from Public Utilities Code Section 320 for the proposed project. Under CEQA requirements, the CPUC will adopt this Final ND if, based on the whole record, including the IS and comments received, it determines that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment (14 CCR 15074(b)).

On March 20, 2014, the CPUC filed a Notice of Completion with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (State Clearinghouse), published a Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration, and released the Draft IS/MND for a 30-day public review period. The Draft IS/MND was distributed to federal, state, and local agency representatives, property owners within 300 feet of the proposed project, and other interested individuals. Additionally, in compliance with CEQA, a public notice was published in the general circulation newspaper announcing the availability of the Draft IS/MND for public review. In accordance with Section 15105(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, the public review and comment period began on March 20, 2014, and ended on April 21, 2014. The CPUC established a comment phone line 415.321.5319, fax line 415.321.5319, email address (CrownCastleSanMateoCountyProject@dudek.com), and website (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info//dudek/crowncastle/CrownCastleMain.htm>) to enable the public to ask questions, provide comments, and obtain additional information on the proposed project analyzed in the Draft IS/MND. Additionally, the CPUC held a public meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2014, at Native Sons Community Hall, 112 Stage Road, Pescadero, California, between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. No comments were made during this public meeting. Copies of all written comments received on the Draft IS/MND are contained in this Final IS/ND.

Final Initial Study and Negative Declaration for Crown Castle NG West Inc.

Contents of the Final IS/ND

This Final IS/ND has been prepared pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines,¹ which outline all aspects of the preparation of the Draft IS/MND and its review, as well as the subsequent steps to preparing a Notice of Decision. This document incorporates comments received during the public review period and contains responses by the Lead Agency (CPUC) to those comments (Attachment A).

Since publication of the Draft IS/MND, the Applicant has proposed to reroute portions of the alignment to avoid State Park lands based on State Park comments on the Draft IS/MND. The Applicant proposed to reroute three segments originally proposed within State Park land (e.g., one within Pigeon Point Light Station State Park and two within Año Nuevo State Park) to be installed underground using horizontal direction drilling methods within the seaward shoulder of Highway 1 (Hwy 1)/California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) right-of-way. The first section would avoid Pigeon Point Lighthouse by traversing for approximately 0.73 mile of Hwy 1 from the junction where Pigeon Point Road crosses Hwy 1 near the lighthouse entrance and rejoins Hwy 1 to the north. The second section would avoid the northern section of Año Nuevo State Park by extending the already described underground section from Gazo Creek by 0.36 mile south in the landward shoulder of Hwy 1. The third section would avoid the southern portion of Año Nuevo State Park by extending from approximately 800 feet north of the park entrance for 0.95 mile south to New Years Creek Road. These changes can be seen in the updated figures of the final project description.

Under the CEQA Guidelines, Section 15073.5 (c)(2), a lead agency is not required to recirculate a Negative Declaration if new project revisions are added in response to written or verbal comments on the project's effects identified in the proposed Negative Declaration that are not new avoidable significant effects. In this instance, the equipment being installed along the sections to be rerouted was originally slated for overhead installation. Subsequently, the applicant requested the segment be installed underground within the shoulder of Hwy 1. The changes to the proposed project would generally cause construction-related impacts to occur at the same intensity as disclosed but for a slightly longer duration (i.e., construction originally assumed to occur in less than 8 weeks now proposed for about 10 weeks). For operations and maintenance, impacts would be lessened because a larger portion of the proposed project would be undergrounded, therefore avoiding visual impacts and reducing tree-trimming maintenance needs. All these impacts related to undergrounding were disclosed within the Draft IS/MND; therefore, no new avoidable significant effects would occur due

¹ 14 CCR 15000–15387 and Appendices A–L. Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, as amended.

Final Initial Study and Negative Declaration for Crown Castle NG West Inc.

to the proposed revisions. See Attachment B, which includes the analysis to support the CPUC's decision to not recirculate this document, for more information.

Based on the Applicant's proposed change, impacts to native Monterey Pines susceptible to infection from pathogens from tree trimming associated with construction and maintenance activities would be avoided; therefore, Mitigation Measure BIO-1 is not required. Since this was the only mitigation measure proposed, the document is now appropriately a Negative Declaration.

Revisions were made to clarify information presented in the Draft IS/MND, and only minor technical changes or additions have been made. These changes and additions to the IS/ND do not raise new important issues related to significant effects on the environment. The Final IS/ND has been completely reprinted from the Draft IS/MND, and changes made since public review are signified as replacements, additions, or revisions to existing text. Revisions to existing text are signified by strikeout text (i.e., strikeout) where text is removed and by underlined text (i.e., underline) where text is added for clarification. For revisions to figures, both draft and final figures have been watermarked indicating their status as either Draft IS/MND or Final IS/ND figures. For further clarification, all revised figures occur in pairs; the first figure is the Draft IS/MND figure, indicated as a Figure X-X(a), while the revised figure is the Final IS/ND figure, indicated as Figure X-X(b).

The Final IS/ND is an informational document prepared by the CPUC to be used by decision makers before approving or denying a proposed project. The Final IS/ND consists of the following:

- An updated version of the IS/ND that incorporates text and figure changes to address the Applicant-requested reroute of the proposed project alignment and public comments
- A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies that commented on the Draft IS/MND (Attachment A)
- Comments and recommendations received on the Draft IS/MND either verbatim or in summary, and the responses to these comments(Attachment A)
- The Mitigation Monitoring Plan (Attachment A)
- Analysis to support the CPUC's decision to not recirculate this document (Attachment B)
- Figures relating to the responses to comments discussed in Attachment A

Public Review Process

On March 20, 2014, the CPUC mailed a notice to relevant agencies, organizations, and individuals residing in the proposed project area, announcing that the Draft IS/MND was

Final Initial Study and Negative Declaration for Crown Castle NG West Inc.

available for public review. The CPUC established a comment phone line 415.321.5319, fax line 415.321.5319, email address (CrownCastleSanMateoCountyProject@dudek.com), and website (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info//dudek/crowncastle/CrownCastleMain.htm>) to enable the public to ask questions, provide comments, and obtain additional information on the proposed project analyzed in the Draft IS/MND.

Additionally, the CPUC held a public meeting on Thursday, April 10, 2014, at Native Sons Community Hall, 112 Stage Road, Pescadero, California, between 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. No comments were made during this public meeting.

In accordance with Section 15105(b) of the CEQA Guidelines, the public review and comment period for the Draft IS/MND began on March 20, 2014, and ended on April 18, 2014. All comments received are presented and discussed in this document.