

## PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 VAN NESS AVENUE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-3298



April 3, 2012

Ms. Suzan Benz  
Environmental Project Manager  
Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Project  
6 Point Drive, 1st Floor  
Brea, CA 92821-6320

RE: SCE Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Transmission Line Project – Variance Request #29

Dear Ms. Benz,

On March 22, 2012, Southern California Edison (SCE) submitted a variance request to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) for several modifications to temporary disturbance areas for conductor stringing needed to support the Devers-Valley #1 (DV1) outage work transmission line for the Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 (DPV2) Transmission Project.

The CPUC voted on January 25, 2007 to approve the SCE DPV2 Transmission Line Project ([Decision D.07-01-040](#)). On May 14, 2008, SCE filed a Petition for Modification (PFM) of the existing Certificate for Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) approved per Decision D.07-01-040. SCE requested that the CPUC authorize SCE to construct DPV2 facilities in only the California portion of DPV2 and the Midpoint Substation (now called the Colorado River Substation) near Blythe, California. The CPUC approved SCE's PFM on November 20, 2009 in [Decision D.09-11-007](#).

After the CPUC's 2009 Decision regarding the PFM, several large solar power projects were proposed in the Blythe and Desert Center areas. SCE filed Permit to Construct applications addressing expansion of the Colorado River Substation and construction of a new Red Bluff Substation. These components were not covered in the original DPV2 Final EIR/EIS, because the solar power projects had not yet been proposed, and supplemental environmental review has been conducted. The Colorado River Substation Expansion and the Red Bluff Substation were both approved by the CPUC on July 14, 2011 in Decisions D.11-07-011 and D.11-07-020, respectively.

The BLM issued a Record of Decision approving the Project on July 19, 2011 and approved exclusionary fencing activities on August 23, 2011. The Project also crosses lands under jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service on the San Bernardino National Forest within an existing Forest Service-issued easement. The Forest Service will issue a revised easement signed by the Forest Supervisor. The area requested under this variance does not fall under Forest Service jurisdiction.

The CPUC also adopted a Mitigation, Monitoring, Compliance and Reporting Program (MMCRP) to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures imposed on the DPV2 Project during implementation. The MMCRP also acknowledges that temporary changes to the project are anticipated and common practice for construction efforts of this scale and that a Variance Request would be required for these activities. This letter documents the CPUC's thorough evaluation of all activities covered in this variance, and that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested variance activities.

Variance #29 for temporary disturbance area changes for conductor stringing along the DV1 transmission line is granted by CPUC for the proposed activities based on the factors described below.

**SCE Variance Request.** Due to final engineering, SCE has requested a variance for temporary changes to the areas of disturbance at tower sites along the DV1 transmission line. Excerpts from the SCE Variance Request, received March 22, 2012, are presented below (indented):

Subsequent to approval of the DV1 Minor Relocation NTPR (NTP #7 dated December 1, 2011 and the Devers to Valley Transmission Line (Excluding the San Bernardino National Forest Portion) NTPR (NTP #10 dated December 2, 2011) by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), constructability review was completed and several changes to temporary disturbance areas for conductor stringing are needed to support the DPV1 outage work planned for March-April, 2012.

SCE is requesting a variance for extensions to wire pulling/reel sites, expansions to guard structures, shifting and elimination of some temporary disturbance areas, and addition of potential snub installation locations at the DV1 Minor Relocation and adjacent Devers-Valley Transmission Line towers. A temporary power outage in this section of the project will occur from April 23, 2012 through May 14, 2012 to allow for installation of the required towers and power lines. SCE is requesting a variance for the following activities in association with the DPV2 project:

- Extension of REEL site (DPV1-REEL-R4) disturbance area; necessary for the logistics of wire stringing activities.
- Expansion and addition of guard pole structure disturbance areas necessary for constructability.
- Addition of four snub site disturbance areas necessary for the logistics of wire stringing activities.
  - Snub sites are areas used to anchor and hold conductor to the ground and allow for the logistics of wire stringing activities. A conductor snub consists of a set of steel loop anchors imbedded in a concrete block, 4-6 feet (wide) by 2 feet (long) by 4 feet (deep), buried to a depth of approximately 10 feet. One set of steel loops is buried in a one-foot-wide sloped trench that extends perpendicularly from the concrete block towards the tower the snubbed conductor is strung through, while another set extends upward. Conductors are anchored to the steel loops.
- Partial or complete removal of several pull sites (DV-SPL5, DV-REEL19ALT, DV-REEL18, DV-PULL21, DV-P20-ACCESS, DV-PULL20, DPV1-REEL-R2, DPV1-PULL-R3, DV-REEL23, DV-REEL22, DPV1-REEL-R3, DV-REEL25, DVPULL24)

The expansion and shifting of these temporary disturbance areas is necessary for wire stringing activities associated with the project, and will reduce the temporary disturbance areas at this location from 12.63 to 11.19 acres. The proposed changes to temporary disturbance areas included in this variance request are shown in Figures 1-1 and 1-2 (attached).

### **CPUC Evaluation of Variance Request**

In accordance with the MMCRP, the subject variance request was reviewed by CPUC to confirm that no new impacts or increase in impact severity would result from the requested variance activities. The following discussion summarizes this analysis for biological resources, cultural resources, paleontological resources, noise/sensitive receptors, and other issue areas. A list of mitigation compliance conditions is presented below to define additional information and clarifications regarding mitigation requirements.

**Biological Resources.** Based on field validation, previous biological surveys and SCE's biological memorandum, the disturbance area modifications would result in a net decrease in temporary impacts to vegetation (1.91 acres), a net decrease in temporary impacts to Coachella Valley milk-vetch habitat (1.63 acres), a net increase in temporary impacts to desert tortoise habitat (0.65 acres), and a net decrease in impacts to jurisdictional waters (1.74 acres). All of the modification sites fall within areas previously surveyed for the project; however, biological pre-construction surveys would still be required

prior to use of the proposed pullsites, snub sites, and guard structures, and results would be submitted to the CPUC's Environmental Monitors (EMs) for validation.

As described in the mitigation compliance conditions below, the Guard Structure location along the access road to 1062/R2 shall be clearly delineated and marked prior to any ground disturbance associated with the modified disturbance areas. All other areas have already been clearly flagged. Additionally, SCE shall provide updated maps showing the new disturbance limits to the CPUC EMs and all monitors in the field prior to construction in the revised areas at the affected tower sites.

All mitigation measures, APMs, and conditions of the Biological Opinion (BO) should be implemented at the sites. This includes, but is not limited to, providing a qualified USFWS, CPUC, and BLM approved tortoise biologist, pre-construction clearance sweeps, and maintaining speed limits. There are no other biological resources concerns noted under this variance.

**Cultural Resources.** The Final Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP) for the Devers-Palo Verde No. 2 Project was accepted on October 20, 2011. One cultural resources site was identified (P-33-017584; historical refuse scatter) adjacent to the snub site for Tower M14-T4 and Pull Site R1. Therefore, in accordance with the Final Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP), prior to ground-disturbing activities associated with the snub site for Tower M14-T4 and Pull Site R1, P-33-017584 will be fenced as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and monitored for avoidance.

In the event of an unanticipated discovery of cultural materials within the proposed disturbance areas and snub installation locations, the find shall be managed in compliance with the following procedures provided in Section 4.4 - Plan of Discovery of Cultural Resources of the approved HPMP as itemized below:

- All work within 200 feet of the discovery will be halted and the onsite Archaeological Field Monitor will evaluate the discovery.
- The Environmental Monitor will notify the Lead Archaeological Monitor, Consultant Project Manager (CPM), Work Package Archaeologist(s) (WPA), or SCE Archaeologist (in that order) immediately.
- Activities within 200 feet of the discovery will not resume until the discovery has been assessed by a member of the Cultural Resources Team.

**Paleontological Resources.** Based on the Paleontological Monitoring and Treatment Plan (Plan), submitted to the CPUC on April 20, 2011, the potential to encounter paleontological resources near the proposed disturbance areas and snub installation locations is low. Therefore, in accordance with the Plan, low sensitivity units must be monitored intermittently, to verify the low sensitivity classification, as determined by the Paleontological Resource Specialist.

**Noise/Sensitive Receptors.** The minor relocation is located near the intersection of Orange Street and Esperanza Avenue in the City of Cabazon. Although there are existing residences nearby, the modified disturbance areas would have similar noise-generating activities to those that will occur at the tower sites already and the movement of the disturbance area within the right-of-way would not change the level of noise. The overall scope and duration of construction activities has not changed as a result of the variance.

**Other Issue Areas.** No concerns noted under this variance.

**Mitigation Compliance Conditions of Variance Approval.**

The mitigation compliance conditions presented below shall be met by SCE and its contractors:

1. All applicable project mitigation measures, APMs, conditions of the Biological Opinion, compliance plans, permit conditions and NTP conditions shall be implemented. Some measures have on-going/time-sensitive requirements and shall be implemented prior to and during construction where applicable.
2. Copies of all relevant permits, compliance plans, and this Variance approval shall be available on site for the duration of construction activities.
3. Pre-construction surveys shall be conducted, as applicable, and all disturbance areas shall be clearly delineated and marked prior to any ground disturbance associated with the use of the proposed pullsites, snub sites, and guard structures and results would be submitted to the CPUC's EM for validation.
4. The guard structure location along the access road to 1062/R2 shall be clearly delineated and marked prior to any ground disturbance associated with the structure/site.
5. SCE shall provide updated maps showing the new disturbance limits to the CPUC EMs and all monitors in the field prior to construction in the revised areas at the affected tower sites. Updated maps can be provided prior to construction by tower location(s).
6. In accordance with the Final Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP), prior to ground-disturbing activities associated with the snub site for Tower M14-T4 and Pull Site R1, P-33-017584 will be fenced as an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and monitored for avoidance.
7. In the event of an unanticipated discovery of cultural materials within the proposed disturbance areas and snub installation locations, the find shall be managed in compliance with the following procedures provided in Section 4.4 - Plan of Discovery of Cultural Resources of the approved HPMP as itemized below:
  - All work within 200 feet of the discovery will be halted and the onsite Archaeological Field Monitor will evaluate the discovery.
  - The Environmental Monitor will notify the Lead Archaeological Monitor, Consultant Project Manager (CPM), Work Package Archaeologist(s) (WPA), or SCE Archaeologist (in that order) immediately.
  - Activities within 200 feet of the discovery will not resume until the discovery has been assessed by a member of the Cultural Resources Team.
8. In accordance with the Paleontological Monitoring and Treatment Plan, low sensitivity units shall be monitored intermittently, to verify the low sensitivity classification, as determined by the Paleontological Resource Specialist.
9. The CPUC EM shall be notified immediately of any unanticipated cultural, paleontological, or biological resource discoveries.
10. All crew members shall be Safe Worker and Environmental Awareness Program (SWEAP) trained prior to working on the project. A log shall be maintained on-site with the names of all crew personnel trained. For any crew members with limited English, a translator shall be on-site to ensure understanding of the training program. In place of a translator, the SWEAP training brochure can be provided in Spanish or other languages as appropriate. All participants will receive a hard-hat sticker for ease of compliance verification.

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Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Billie Blanchard*

Billie Blanchard  
CPUC Environmental Project Manager  
DPV2 Transmission Project

cc: Ryana Parker, Southern California Edison  
Patty Nevins, Southern California Edison  
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