

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Categorical Exclusion Checklist

PG&E Under-Build and Power Pole Replacement in Firebaugh

CEC-12-074

Prepared by:



Chuck Siek
Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/11/13

Concurred by:

See Attachment

Archaeologist/Architectural Historian
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: See Attachment

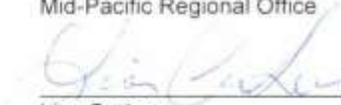
Concurred by:

See Attachment

Native American Affairs Specialist
Mid-Pacific Regional Office

Date: See Attachment

Concurred by:



Lisa Carlson
Wildlife Biologist
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 7/11/2013

Approved by:

for 

Michael Jackson
Area Manager
South-Central California Area Office

Date: 8/6/13



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
South-Central California Area Office

July, 2013

Background

The Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) company has a perpetual license for crossings of the Bureau of Reclamation’s (Reclamation) right of way. PG&E is requesting permission to replace two power poles on either side of Reclamation’s Delta-Mendota Canal in the Firebaugh area (Figure 1). PG&E is also requesting permission to add a new overhead line and under-build line between the power poles. An under-build refers to power lines installed below the overhead power lines.

Purpose and Need for Action

PG&E is improving the distribution circuit in the proposed project area. As part of that improvement, PG&E will need a new distribution line from the substation located off Russell Avenue.

Proposed Action

Reclamation’s action would be to amend the existing perpetual license to include the Proposed Action. Construction is anticipated to take about 1-month. Proposed Action specifics include:

- Removal of two existing 55-foot wood poles with replacement by two 60-foot wood poles placed immediately adjacent to the original poles. Pole removal would include removal of approximately 36 square feet of dirt.
- Installing an additional 12 kilovolt (kV) distribution overhead line on the replacement poles;
- Installing a new distribution under-build line on the replacement poles;

Environmental Commitments

Reclamation and PG&E would implement the following environmental commitments to avoid any environmental consequences associated with the Proposed Action (Table 1). Environmental consequences for resource areas assume the measures specified would be fully implemented.

Table 1 Environmental Commitments

Resource	Protection Measure
Biological Resources	If a burrowing owl is observed at the construction site at any time during construction, a temporary non-disturbance buffer of approximately 160 feet shall be observed to establish a safe area for the animal until it leaves the construction area at its own volition or until an appropriate buffer distance is established consistent with Reclamation’s guidance.
Biological Resources	To eliminate an attraction to predators, all food-related trash items such as wrappers, cans, bottles, and food scraps will be disposed of in closed containers and removed at least once every day from the project site.
Biological Resources	All equipment will be maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s directions so there will be no leaks of fluids such as gasoline, oils, or solvents.

Biological Resources	To the maximum extent possible, all equipment shall remain on existing pre-disturbed access roads and embankments.
Biological Resources	To prevent inadvertent entrapment of wildlife during construction, all excavated, steep-walled holes or trenches more than one foot deep will be covered at the close of each working day by plywood or similar materials, or provided with one or more escape ramps constructed of earth fill or wooden planks with a slope of 2:1. Before such holes or trenches are filled, they will be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals. If at any time wildlife is found trapped or injured, Reclamation must be contacted immediately.
Biological Resources	To avoid effects to San Joaquin kit foxes, areas in and within 250 feet of the project construction footprint shall be searched for burrows with openings greater than 4 inches in diameter. If burrows with openings greater than 4 inches in diameter are found, Reclamation shall be contacted for further guidance before the start of any ground-disturbing activities.
Biological Resources	Ground disturbing activities for the proposed action shall be conducted between May 1 and October 1. This is the active period for giant garter snakes, when they are expected to actively move and avoid danger. If work must occur outside of the giant garter snake active season, Reclamation biologists shall be contacted for further guidance prior to the start of work on the project.
Biological Resources	If any snakes are encountered during construction, a temporary non-disturbance buffer of approximately 160 feet shall be established around it to create a safe area for the animal until it leaves the construction area at its own volition.
Biological Resources	All observations of listed species or snakes in the action area shall be documented and submitted to Reclamation.
Cultural Resources	In the event that cultural resources or human remains are identified during the implementation of this project there may be additional considerations pursuant to Section 106 of the NHPA. If inadvertent discoveries of cultural resources or human remains occur during project implementation, work shall temporarily stop and Reclamation cultural resources staff shall be contacted immediately.

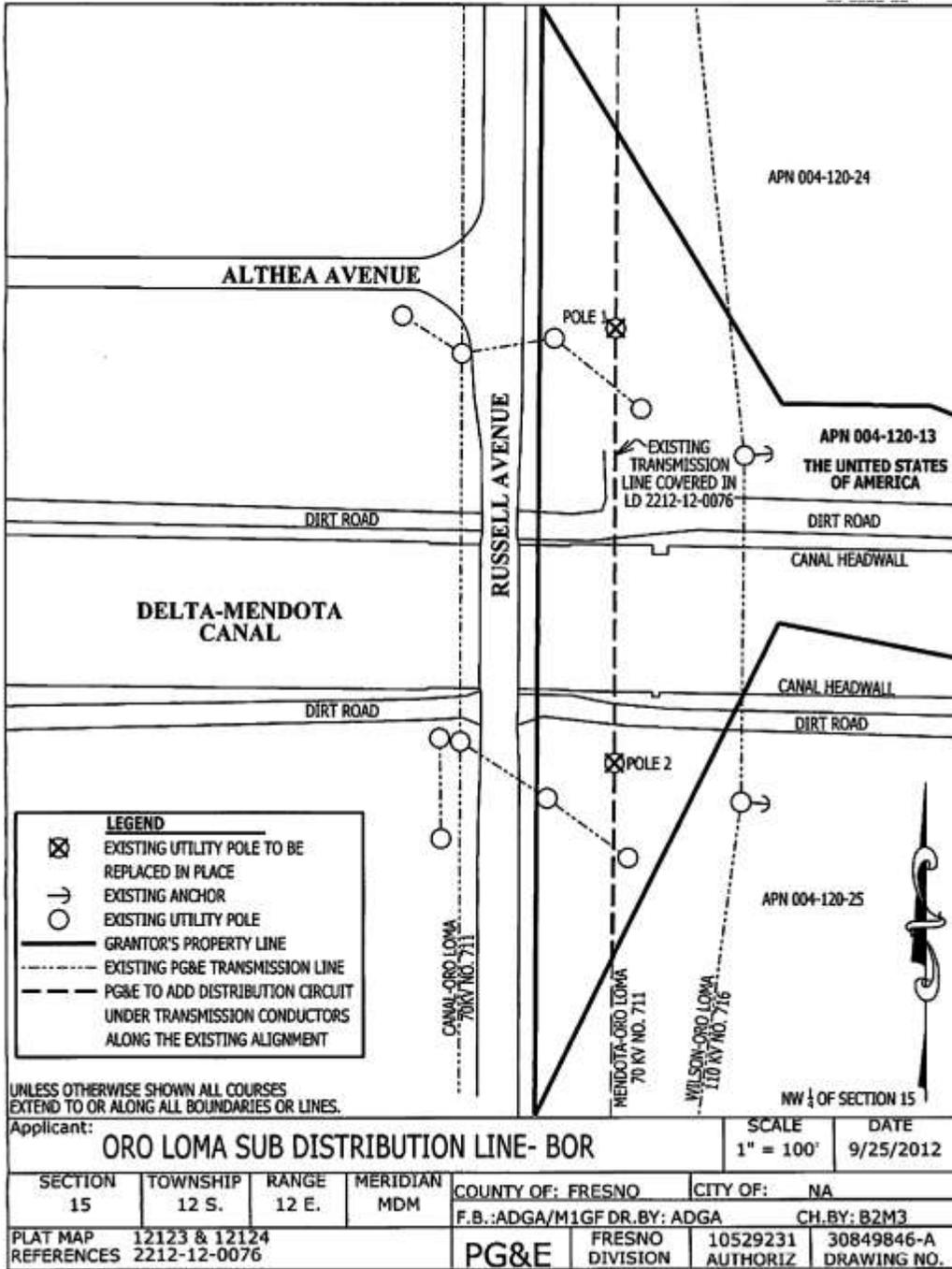
Exclusion Category

516 DM 14.5 Categorical Exclusions.

C. Project Implementation Activities. (3) Minor construction activities associated with authorized projects which correct unsatisfactory environmental conditions or which merely augment or supplement, or are enclosed within existing facilities.

D. Operation and Maintenance Activities. (10) Issuance of permits, licenses, easements, and crossing agreements which provide right-of-way over Bureau lands where the action does not allow for or lead to a major public or private action.

Figure 1 Location and Specifications



Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion:

- | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. This action would have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1502.3). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. This action would have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA Section 102(2)(E) and 43 CFR 46.215(c)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. This action would have significant impacts on public health or safety (43 CFR 46.215(a)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. This action would have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographical characteristics as historic or cultural resources; parks, recreation, and refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); flood plains (EO 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas (43 CFR 46.215 (b)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. This action would have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks (43 CFR 46.215(d)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. This action would establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (e)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. This action would have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects (43 CFR 46.215 (f)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. This action would have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by Reclamation (LND 02-01) (43 CFR 46.215 (g)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |

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|--|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 9. This action would have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species (43 CFR 46.215 (h)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. This action would violate a Federal, tribal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for protection of the environment (43 CFR 46.215 (i)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. This action would affect ITAs (512 DM 2, Policy Memorandum dated December 15, 1993). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. This action would have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898) (43 CFR 46.215 (j)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. This action would limit access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007, 43 CFR 46.215 (k), and 512 DM 3)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. This action would contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act, EO 13112, and 43 CFR 46.215 (l)). | No
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Uncertain
<input type="checkbox"/> | Yes
<input type="checkbox"/> |

Attachment A

Cultural Resources Determination

Brandee Bruce 12/12/12

CR-Resp 13-SCAO-004

Tracking: 13-SCAO-004

Project Name: PG&E Under Build and Power Pole Replacement Project in Firebaugh

The proposed action for Reclamation to permit Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to install a new overhead utility line over the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC) does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, should such properties be present, pursuant to the Section 106 implementing regulations codified at 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). PG&E will also replace two existing 55-foot power poles with new 60-foot power poles. Ground disturbance related to the replacement of the poles is confined to an area of previous disturbance, including the construction of the DMC, the construction of Russell Road, and the construction of two smaller adjacent canals. There are also two other aerial crossings within the area, adding to the disturbed context of the location.

After reviewing Categorical Exclusion Checklist 12-074, I concur with item 8 that this undertaking would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. This email is intended to convey the conclusion of the Section 106 process for this undertaking. Please place a copy of this memo in the administrative record for this NEPA action.

Note that additional Section 106 review and consultation with the SHPO may be necessary if there are changes in project design. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

BranDee

Attachment B

Indian Trust Assets Determination

Rivera, Patricia L <PRivera@usbr.gov>

12/4/12

to me

Chuck,

I reviewed the proposed action to approve PG&E's request to add a new distribution under-build to an existing electrical transmission line off of Russell Avenue and Althea Avenue in the Firebaugh area. New distribution line will span 649-feet across Reclamation's right of way for the Delta-Mendota Canal. PG&E has an existing perpetual license for the existing transmission line. Project will include adding a 12kV distribution overhead line to the existing transmission alignment; a new distribution under-build to run with a 12kV 3-wire 715 aluminum conductor under an existing 70kV conductor; 2 existing 55' wood poles will be replaced with 60' wood poles. Aerial crossing only. Ground disturbance to include removal of 2 existing wood poles and replacement (in same holes) with taller poles. Pole removal to include removal of approx. 36 square feet of dirt. Construction is expected to take one month.

The proposed action does not have a potential to affect Indian Trust Assets. The nearest ITA is a Public Domain Allotment approximately 56 miles NE of the project location.