

Appendix A

NOP and Scoping Comments



NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF SCOPING MEETING

Date: March 7, 2022

To: Agencies and interested parties

Lead agency: SMUD
6201 S Street, MS B203
Sacramento, CA 95817-1899
Contact: Rob Ferrera at (916) 732-6676

Subject: Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project Environmental Impact Report

Review period: March 7, 2022 to April 6, 2022

SMUD replaces aging electrical infrastructure as part of its routine maintenance and upgrade protocols. Accordingly, SMUD proposes to install approximately 0.6 miles of 12 kilovolt (kV) underground cable, approximately 2.12 miles of 69kV underground cable and up to 13 new utility vaults in the City of Rancho Cordova, near the location of existing 12kV and 69kV underground cables that are approaching the end of their operational lives. Installation of the new cable, conduit and utility vaults would be done by open trenching. Where possible, the new conduit will be installed to align with the existing cable, which would be abandoned in place.

As the lead agency for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance, SMUD is responsible for considering whether to certify the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and determining if the project should be approved. SMUD will prepare an EIR to satisfy the requirements of the CEQA Public Resources Code (PRC) (Section 21000 et seq.)

Purpose of notice: In accordance with CEQA, SMUD is distributing this notice of preparation (NOP) to solicit comments on the scope of the EIR that is being prepared for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project.

This NOP has been prepared pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, 14 California Code of Regulations Sections 15082 and 15083. The release of this NOP starts a 30-day public scoping period that begins on March 7, 2022 and ends on April 6, 2022. The purpose of the NOP is to provide sufficient information describing the proposed project and its potential environmental effects to allow agencies and interested parties the opportunity to

provide a meaningful response regarding the scope and content of the EIR, including possible environmental impacts, mitigation measures and alternatives.

Project location: The project is in the City of Rancho Cordova (see Figure 1). The proposed 12kV path begins at SMUD's Cordova Park Substation located near the intersection of Ambassador Drive and Trails Court. The 12kV path travels to Ambassador Drive where it follows the road for approximately 0.6 miles until it connects to existing riser poles just east of Ellison Drive.

The proposed 69kV path begins on the northwest side of Coloma Road, approximately 200 feet southeast of Sierra Madre Court. The 69kV path heads northwest from Coloma Road, crossing through the property of Mills Middle School and Cordova High School, until it connects to SMUD's Cordova Park Substation. From the substation, the 69kV path heads northeast nearly adjacent to, but outside, the backyards of homes facing Ambassador Drive until it reaches Rossmoor Drive. At Rossmoor Drive, the 69kV path turns and heads north towards the American River. The 69kV path stays along Rossmoor Drive until its termination near the American River, when the 69kV path connects to existing riser poles located between the boundaries of Rossmoor Drive and the American River. The proposed 69kV path is approximately 2.12 miles in length.

The existing 12kV and 69kV lines that run through the American River Parkway would be abandoned in place, and new conduit containing the new lines would be installed in separate trenches within the paths described above. The proposed 12kV and 69kV paths are highly disturbed due to vehicle traffic, including areas of pavement and dirt. There are residences adjacent to portions of the proposed 12kV and 69kV paths. Along Ambassador Drive, the 12kV circuit would be installed beneath existing roadways, sidewalks, or curbs and gutters. Along Rossmoor Drive, the 69kV circuit would be installed beneath existing pavement or within an existing fuel break adjacent to the pavement.

Project objectives: SMUD's objectives for the proposed project are to:

- Provide safe and reliable electrical service to existing and proposed development in the Rancho Cordova area.
- Facilitate efficient maintenance of underground cables and infrastructure.
- Maximize the use of available SMUD property and resources.
- Minimize impacts to nearby sensitive receptors.
- Minimize potential conflicts with existing planning efforts within the City of Rancho Cordova.

Figure 1: Project location

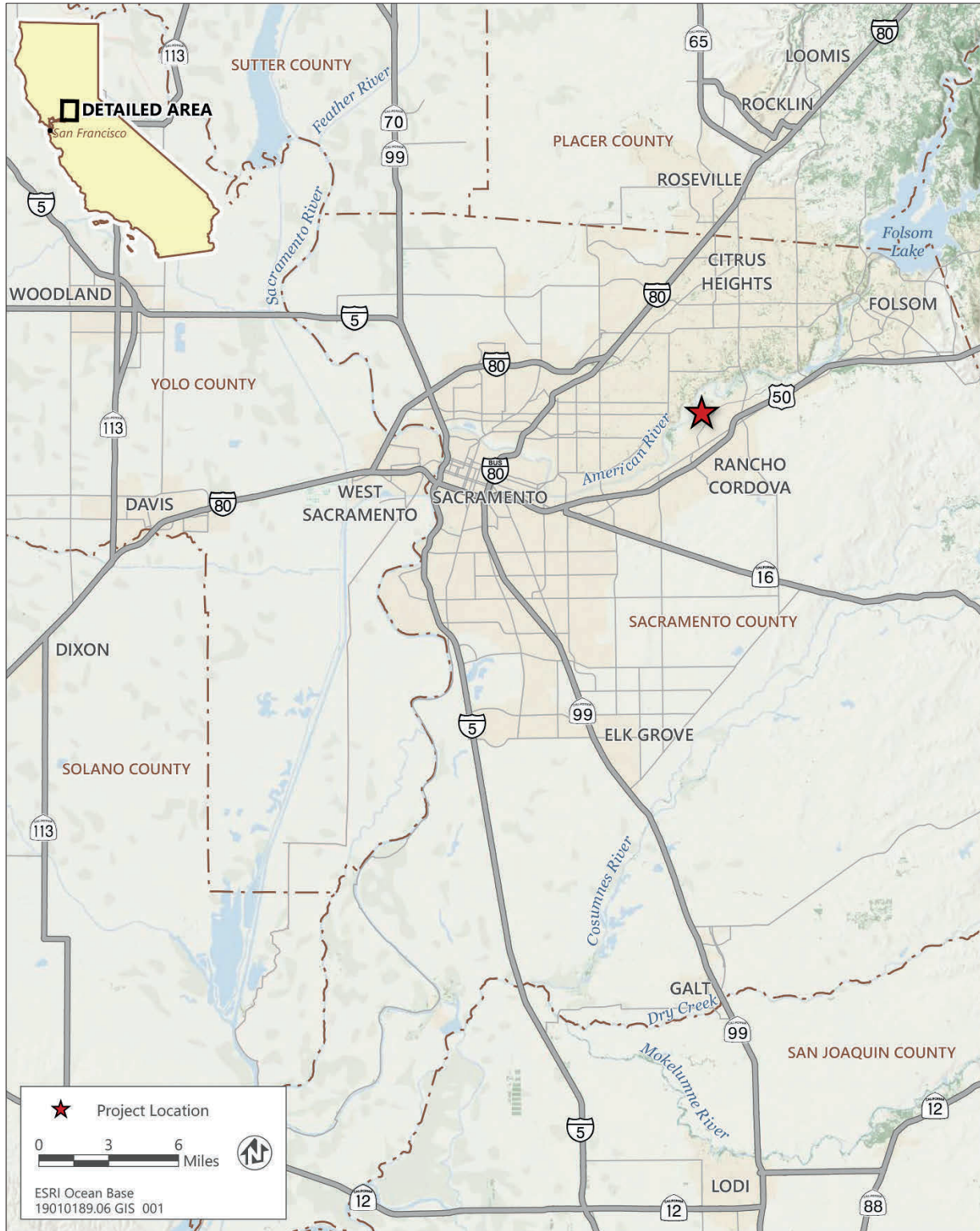


Figure 2: Project paths



Proposed project: The project involves the installation of approximately 0.6 miles of new underground 12kV electrical lines (cable) and approximately 2.12 miles of new underground 69kV cable to replace existing underground 12kV and 69kV cable buried directly in the ground (direct-buried) that was installed in the 1970s. The new 12kV cable also would be direct-buried while the new 69kV cable would be installed in conduits housed in concrete-encased duct banks to provide pathways and adequate spacing. The proposed project also involves installation of up to 13 new utility vaults along the 69kV path to allow access for electric cable pulling, splicing and maintenance.

The existing direct-buried 12kV cable begins at SMUD's Cordova Park Substation and extends approximately 0.6 miles east, where it connects to existing riser poles.

The existing direct-buried 69kV cable begins on the northwest side of Coloma Road, approximately 200 feet southeast of Sierra Madre Court, and extends north across the eastern property lines of Mills Middle School, Cordova High School and Hagen Park until it enters SMUD's Cordova Park Substation located near the intersection of Ambassador Drive and Trails Court (approximately 0.45 miles). From SMUD's substation, the existing 69kV cable extends east beneath a dirt path for approximately 0.70 miles when it turns north and cuts across the American River Parkway towards the American River for approximately 0.75 miles. Note that the total existing 69kV path is approximately 1.9 miles and the proposed 69kV path is approximately 2.12 miles. The extra mileage is due to deviating from the existing route to align with Rossmoor Drive.

Since installation of the existing 12kV and 69kV cable in the 1970s, native trees have established within the existing path along the Parkway. SMUD has coordinated with Sacramento County to install the new conduit outside of the existing path to avoid potential impacts to these trees and other biological resources within the American River Parkway and to facilitate easier access for future maintenance.

Accordingly, SMUD proposes to direct-bury the new 12kV cable beneath the pavement, sidewalks, or curbs and gutters of Ambassador Drive. The proposed 69kV path would deviate from the existing path by continuing east until it heads north at Rossmoor Drive. While the exact location of the 69kV path along Rossmoor Drive is not yet known and would be determined once existing utilities beneath the pavement are identified, the 69kV path would generally be within Rossmoor Drive or the fuel break immediately west of the pavement. The 69kV path would continue along Rossmoor Drive as it intersects with the American River Parkway bike trail and continue beyond the edge of pavement at the end of Rossmoor Drive. The 69kV path would connect to existing riser poles located between the boundaries of Rossmoor Drive and the edge of the American River. Within the American River Parkway, the existing direct-buried 69kV cable would be abandoned in place.

The project would include up to 13 utility vaults to be installed at various points along the 69kV path. The proposed utility vaults would consist of pre-cast concrete, measuring 8 feet x 14 feet x 8 feet inside, requiring an excavation area of approximately 15 feet x 20 feet x 15 feet, and would generally be spaced evenly throughout the path to allow for cable pulling, splicing and maintenance.

Construction activities would occur in two phases. Phase 1 would include the 12kV path, while Phase 2 would include the 69kV path and utility vaults. Construction for Phase 1 is anticipated take up to 3 months and would begin in the summer of 2022. Phase 2 construction would take approximately 12 months once initiated and is anticipated to begin in the next 5 to 7 years. Construction activities would occur during hours identified in City of Rancho Cordova Zoning Code Section 6.68.090(E). If there is a need for work

to occur outside of these hours, SMUD will provide additional notification to customers adjacent to the project boundary.

Most construction would include open trenching to a maximum depth of 7 feet, though some deeper excavation may be necessary to avoid conflicts with existing utility lines. Removing water from the construction area (dewatering) may be necessary due to the high water-table of the area. SMUD would use Baker tanks and/or filtration bags, if needed, to treat water prior to discharge into the existing storm drain system in a manner consistent with regulatory requirements. For the 12kV path, the 12kV cable would be direct-buried in the trenches. The 69kV electrical cable would be placed in a duct bank, which is a series of conduits encased in concrete. The trenches would then be backfilled with a cement-like slurry mixture or compacted aggregate base to the roadway subgrade elevation followed by replacement of the appropriate cover (e.g., pavement or dirt). Construction activities would generally be conducted in existing pathways or along the roadway and would include the temporary closure of footpaths and roads. Alternative routes of travel will be provided where feasible. Following construction activities each day, the open trenches would be covered, and equipment removed to allow safe use of footpaths and roadways.

Potential approvals and permits required: Elements of the project could be subject to permitting and/or approval authority of other agencies. Potential permits required from other agencies could include:

State

- **California Department of Transportation:** Permits for movement of oversized or excessive loads on state highways.

Local

- **Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (SMAQMD):** Authority to Construct/Permit to Operate pursuant to SMAQMD Regulation 2 (Rule 201 et seq.).
- **City of Rancho Cordova:**
 - Tree removal permit.
 - Encroachment permit.
- **County of Sacramento:** Encroachment permit.

Probable environmental effects: The EIR will describe the significant direct and indirect potential environmental impacts of the project. It also will evaluate the potential cumulative impacts of the project, defined as impacts that could be created as a result of the combination of the proposed project with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects causing related impacts. While not required by CEQA, the EIR will present a discussion of environmental justice issues related to the proposed project. SMUD anticipates that the project could result in the following potentially

significant environmental effects, which will be assessed and discussed in detail in the EIR. Feasible and practicable mitigation measures will be recommended to reduce any identified significant impacts.

- **Tribal Cultural Resources:** Potential disturbance of tribal cultural resources. This issue will be addressed in the EIR.
- **Cultural Resources:** Potential disturbances of known and unknown historic and/or archaeological resources. This issue will be addressed in the EIR.

SMUD anticipates that the project would not result in significant environmental impacts in the following resource areas, which therefore will not be discussed in detail in the EIR. Evaluation of impacts to the following resources will be presented in an Initial Study, which will be appended to the EIR.

- **Aesthetics:** Where there are views of the American River and the adjacent American River Parkway, the proposed project would not change or degrade the existing visual character or introduce a new source of light or glare.
- **Agriculture and Forestry Resources:** The project would not result in any change in use or other physical environmental change to agricultural resources in the project area.
- **Air Quality:** Construction activities could result in emissions of criteria air pollutants and toxic air contaminants. SMUD will evaluate the anticipated construction emissions associated with the proposed project and adopt mitigation measures as necessary to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Biological Resources:** Construction activities could impact biological resources within the project paths. SMUD will evaluate the potential for effects on biological resources and adopt mitigation measures as necessary to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Energy:** The project would help SMUD provide safe and reliable electrical service to its customers, without creating new or increased energy demand or wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary energy consumption.
- **Geology and Soils:** Construction activities would disturb soil, possibly resulting in erosion or loss of topsoil. While effects related to seismicity may be possible, the project paths are in the Sacramento Valley, which has historically experienced a low level of seismic ground-shaking. Given the project's close proximity to the American River, it is possible that previously undiscovered paleontological resources could be discovered. SMUD will evaluate potential effects and adopt mitigation measures as necessary to reduce impacts.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Construction activities would result in the generation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the use of heavy-duty off-road construction equipment and vehicle use during worker commutes. SMUD will evaluate the

potential for generation of GHG emissions and adopt mitigation measures as necessary to reduce GHG impacts to a less-than-significant level.

- **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** Construction activities would involve the use of hazardous materials, such as fuels, solvents, gasoline, asphalt and oil. SMUD will evaluate the potential for effects related to hazards and hazardous materials and adopt mitigation measures if needed to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Hydrology and Water Quality:** Project construction would involve earth-moving activities that could result in effects related to hydrology and water quality. Following construction, the project path would be returned to its pre-project condition.
- **Land Use and Planning:** The project would not physically divide and established community, nor would it conflict with land use plans, policies or regulations.
- **Mineral Resources:** The City of Rancho Cordova includes areas of identified mineral deposits. SMUD will evaluate whether the project would result in impacts related to mineral resources and would adopt mitigation measures if needed to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Noise and Vibration:** There would be temporary noise and vibration impacts related to construction equipment. Following construction, the project path would be returned to its pre-project conditions and would not include new sources of noise or vibration. SMUD will evaluate the potential for impacts related to noise and vibration that would occur during project construction and would adopt mitigation measures if needed to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Population and Housing:** The project would not generate any new residents in the area nor provide any new jobs within the Sacramento region.
- **Public Services:** The project would not generate any new residents to the area, so there would not be any effects related to fire protection, law enforcement, schools or other public services.
- **Recreation:** The project would not generate any new residents or recreational users in the area. Project construction activities could require temporary detours of local trails, but any detours would be removed following project construction. SMUD will evaluate the potential for impacts related to recreation that would occur during project construction and would adopt mitigation measures if needed to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.
- **Traffic and Transportation:** The project would generate new vehicle trips during construction activities and could cause temporary disruptions to the local roadway network. SMUD will evaluate potential impacts related to traffic and transportation and will adopt mitigation measures as necessary to ensure that impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

- **Utilities:** The project would install new conduit duct banks and manholes throughout the cable paths. The project would not require potable water, disposal of wastewater, or other utility use following project construction.
- **Wildfire:** While the project paths include areas of trees and brush, the project involves the underground installation of conduit duct banks and would not increase wildfire risk in the area.

Comment period: Written comments on the NOP can be sent anytime during the NOP review period, which begins March 7, 2022 and ends on April 6, 2022. Emailed comments must be received by 5 p.m. on April 6, 2022. Written comments must be postmarked no later than April 6, 2022. Please send your written or electronic (email) responses to the following address:

Rob Ferrera
Sacramento Municipal Utility District
Environmental Management
P.O. Box 15830 MS B203
Sacramento, CA 95852-1830
rob.ferrera@smud.org

Digital copies of the NOP are available at: **smud.org/CordovaParkCableReplacement**.
Hard copies of the NOP are available for public review at the following locations:

Sacramento Municipal Utility District
Customer Service Center
6301 S Street
Sacramento, CA 95817

Sacramento Municipal Utility District
East Campus Operations Center
4401 Bradshaw Road
Sacramento, CA 95827

Scoping meeting: Comments on the NOP may also be provided during the virtual open house scoping meeting to be held **Thursday, March 24, 2022** at 5:30 p.m. During the scoping meeting, information on the proposed project and CEQA review process will be provided by SMUD. If you have questions regarding the NOP or the scoping meeting, please contact Rob Ferrera at the email address shown above. A link to access the scoping meeting is available at **smud.org/CordovaParkCableReplacement**.

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION

March 7, 2022

Rob Ferrera
 Sacramento Municipal Utility District
 6201 S Street
 Sacramento, CA 95817

Re: 2022030186, Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project, Sacramento County

Dear Mr. Ferrera:

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) has received the Notice of Preparation (NOP), Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) or Early Consultation for the project referenced above. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Pub. Resources Code §21000 et seq.), specifically Public Resources Code §21084.1, states that a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. (Pub. Resources Code § 21084.1; Cal. Code Regs., tit.14, §15064.5 (b) (CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 (b)). If there is substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before a lead agency, that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) shall be prepared. (Pub. Resources Code §21080 (d); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 5064 subd.(a)(1) (CEQA Guidelines §15064 (a)(1)). In order to determine whether a project will cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, a lead agency will need to determine whether there are historical resources within the area of potential effect (APE).

CEQA was amended significantly in 2014. Assembly Bill 52 (Gatto, Chapter 532, Statutes of 2014) (AB 52) amended CEQA to create a separate category of cultural resources, "tribal cultural resources" (Pub. Resources Code §21074) and provides that a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment. (Pub. Resources Code §21084.2). Public agencies shall, when feasible, avoid damaging effects to any tribal cultural resource. (Pub. Resources Code §21084.3 (a)). **AB 52 applies to any project for which a notice of preparation, a notice of negative declaration, or a mitigated negative declaration is filed on or after July 1, 2015.** If your project involves the adoption of or amendment to a general plan or a specific plan, or the designation or proposed designation of open space, on or after March 1, 2005, it may also be subject to Senate Bill 18 (Burton, Chapter 905, Statutes of 2004) (SB 18). **Both SB 18 and AB 52 have tribal consultation requirements.** If your project is also subject to the federal National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq.) (NEPA), the tribal consultation requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (154 U.S.C. 300101, 36 C.F.R. §800 et seq.) may also apply.

The NAHC recommends consultation with California Native American tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of your proposed project as early as possible in order to avoid inadvertent discoveries of Native American human remains and best protect tribal cultural resources. Below is a brief summary of portions of AB 52 and SB 18 as well as the NAHC's recommendations for conducting cultural resources assessments.

Consult your legal counsel about compliance with AB 52 and SB 18 as well as compliance with any other applicable laws.



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AB 52 has added to CEQA the additional requirements listed below, along with many other requirements:

- 1. Fourteen Day Period to Provide Notice of Completion of an Application/Decision to Undertake a Project:** Within fourteen (14) days of determining that an application for a project is complete or of a decision by a public agency to undertake a project, a lead agency shall provide formal notification to a designated contact of, or tribal representative of, traditionally and culturally affiliated California Native American tribes that have requested notice, to be accomplished by at least one written notice that includes:
 - a.** A brief description of the project.
 - b.** The lead agency contact information.
 - c.** Notification that the California Native American tribe has 30 days to request consultation. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1 (d)).
 - d.** A "California Native American tribe" is defined as a Native American tribe located in California that is on the contact list maintained by the NAHC for the purposes of Chapter 905 of Statutes of 2004 (SB 18). (Pub. Resources Code §21073).

- 2. Begin Consultation Within 30 Days of Receiving a Tribe's Request for Consultation and Before Releasing a Negative Declaration, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report:** A lead agency shall begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving a request for consultation from a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1, subs. (d) and (e)) and prior to the release of a negative declaration, mitigated negative declaration or Environmental Impact Report. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1 (b)).
 - a.** For purposes of AB 52, "consultation shall have the same meaning as provided in Gov. Code §65352.4 (SB 18). (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.1 (b)).

- 3. Mandatory Topics of Consultation If Requested by a Tribe:** The following topics of consultation, if a tribe requests to discuss them, are mandatory topics of consultation:
 - a.** Alternatives to the project.
 - b.** Recommended mitigation measures.
 - c.** Significant effects. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (a)).

- 4. Discretionary Topics of Consultation:** The following topics are discretionary topics of consultation:
 - a.** Type of environmental review necessary.
 - b.** Significance of the tribal cultural resources.
 - c.** Significance of the project's impacts on tribal cultural resources.
 - d.** If necessary, project alternatives or appropriate measures for preservation or mitigation that the tribe may recommend to the lead agency. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (a)).

- 5. Confidentiality of Information Submitted by a Tribe During the Environmental Review Process:** With some exceptions, any information, including but not limited to, the location, description, and use of tribal cultural resources submitted by a California Native American tribe during the environmental review process shall not be included in the environmental document or otherwise disclosed by the lead agency or any other public agency to the public, consistent with Government Code §6254 (r) and §6254.10. Any information submitted by a California Native American tribe during the consultation or environmental review process shall be published in a confidential appendix to the environmental document unless the tribe that provided the information consents, in writing, to the disclosure of some or all of the information to the public. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (c)(1)).

- 6. Discussion of Impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources in the Environmental Document:** If a project may have a significant impact on a tribal cultural resource, the lead agency's environmental document shall discuss both of the following:
 - a.** Whether the proposed project has a significant impact on an identified tribal cultural resource.
 - b.** Whether feasible alternatives or mitigation measures, including those measures that may be agreed to pursuant to Public Resources Code §21082.3, subdivision (a), avoid or substantially lessen the impact on the identified tribal cultural resource. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (b)).

- 7. Conclusion of Consultation:** Consultation with a tribe shall be considered concluded when either of the following occurs:
- a.** The parties agree to measures to mitigate or avoid a significant effect, if a significant effect exists, on a tribal cultural resource; or
 - b.** A party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached. (Pub. Resources Code §21080.3.2 (b)).
- 8. Recommending Mitigation Measures Agreed Upon in Consultation in the Environmental Document:** Any mitigation measures agreed upon in the consultation conducted pursuant to Public Resources Code §21080.3.2 shall be recommended for inclusion in the environmental document and in an adopted mitigation monitoring and reporting program, if determined to avoid or lessen the impact pursuant to Public Resources Code §21082.3, subdivision (b), paragraph 2, and shall be fully enforceable. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (a)).
- 9. Required Consideration of Feasible Mitigation:** If mitigation measures recommended by the staff of the lead agency as a result of the consultation process are not included in the environmental document or if there are no agreed upon mitigation measures at the conclusion of consultation, or if consultation does not occur, and if substantial evidence demonstrates that a project will cause a significant effect to a tribal cultural resource, the lead agency shall consider feasible mitigation pursuant to Public Resources Code §21084.3 (b). (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (e)).
- 10. Examples of Mitigation Measures That, If Feasible, May Be Considered to Avoid or Minimize Significant Adverse Impacts to Tribal Cultural Resources:**
- a.** Avoidance and preservation of the resources in place, including, but not limited to:
 - i.** Planning and construction to avoid the resources and protect the cultural and natural context.
 - ii.** Planning greenspace, parks, or other open space, to incorporate the resources with culturally appropriate protection and management criteria.
 - b.** Treating the resource with culturally appropriate dignity, taking into account the tribal cultural values and meaning of the resource, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - i.** Protecting the cultural character and integrity of the resource.
 - ii.** Protecting the traditional use of the resource.
 - iii.** Protecting the confidentiality of the resource.
 - c.** Permanent conservation easements or other interests in real property, with culturally appropriate management criteria for the purposes of preserving or utilizing the resources or places.
 - d.** Protecting the resource. (Pub. Resource Code §21084.3 (b)).
 - e.** Please note that a federally recognized California Native American tribe or a non-federally recognized California Native American tribe that is on the contact list maintained by the NAHC to protect a California prehistoric, archaeological, cultural, spiritual, or ceremonial place may acquire and hold conservation easements if the conservation easement is voluntarily conveyed. (Civ. Code §815.3 (c)).
 - f.** Please note that it is the policy of the state that Native American remains and associated grave artifacts shall be repatriated. (Pub. Resources Code §5097.991).
- 11. Prerequisites for Certifying an Environmental Impact Report or Adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration or Negative Declaration with a Significant Impact on an Identified Tribal Cultural Resource:** An Environmental Impact Report may not be certified, nor may a mitigated negative declaration or a negative declaration be adopted unless one of the following occurs:
- a.** The consultation process between the tribes and the lead agency has occurred as provided in Public Resources Code §21080.3.1 and §21080.3.2 and concluded pursuant to Public Resources Code §21080.3.2.
 - b.** The tribe that requested consultation failed to provide comments to the lead agency or otherwise failed to engage in the consultation process.
 - c.** The lead agency provided notice of the project to the tribe in compliance with Public Resources Code §21080.3.1 (d) and the tribe failed to request consultation within 30 days. (Pub. Resources Code §21082.3 (d)).

The NAHC's PowerPoint presentation titled, "Tribal Consultation Under AB 52: Requirements and Best Practices" may be found online at: http://nahc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/AB52TribalConsultation_CalEPAPDF.pdf

SB 18

SB 18 applies to local governments and requires local governments to contact, provide notice to, refer plans to, and consult with tribes prior to the adoption or amendment of a general plan or a specific plan, or the designation of open space. (Gov. Code §65352.3). Local governments should consult the Governor's Office of Planning and Research's "Tribal Consultation Guidelines," which can be found online at: https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/09_14_05_Updated_Guidelines_922.pdf.

Some of SB 18's provisions include:

1. **Tribal Consultation:** If a local government considers a proposal to adopt or amend a general plan or a specific plan, or to designate open space it is required to contact the appropriate tribes identified by the NAHC by requesting a "Tribal Consultation List." If a tribe, once contacted, requests consultation the local government must consult with the tribe on the plan proposal. **A tribe has 90 days from the date of receipt of notification to request consultation unless a shorter timeframe has been agreed to by the tribe.** (Gov. Code §65352.3 (a)(2)).
2. **No Statutory Time Limit on SB 18 Tribal Consultation.** There is no statutory time limit on SB 18 tribal consultation.
3. **Confidentiality:** Consistent with the guidelines developed and adopted by the Office of Planning and Research pursuant to Gov. Code §65040.2, the city or county shall protect the confidentiality of the information concerning the specific identity, location, character, and use of places, features and objects described in Public Resources Code §5097.9 and §5097.993 that are within the city's or county's jurisdiction. (Gov. Code §65352.3 (b)).
4. **Conclusion of SB 18 Tribal Consultation:** Consultation should be concluded at the point in which:
 - a. The parties to the consultation come to a mutual agreement concerning the appropriate measures for preservation or mitigation; or
 - b. Either the local government or the tribe, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes that mutual agreement cannot be reached concerning the appropriate measures of preservation or mitigation. (Tribal Consultation Guidelines, Governor's Office of Planning and Research (2005) at p. 18).

Agencies should be aware that neither AB 52 nor SB 18 precludes agencies from initiating tribal consultation with tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with their jurisdictions before the timeframes provided in AB 52 and SB 18. For that reason, we urge you to continue to request Native American Tribal Contact Lists and "Sacred Lands File" searches from the NAHC. The request forms can be found online at: <http://nahc.ca.gov/resources/forms/>.

NAHC Recommendations for Cultural Resources Assessments

To adequately assess the existence and significance of tribal cultural resources and plan for avoidance, preservation in place, or barring both, mitigation of project-related impacts to tribal cultural resources, the NAHC recommends the following actions:

1. Contact the appropriate regional California Historical Research Information System (CHRIS) Center (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1068) for an archaeological records search. The records search will determine:
 - a. If part or all of the APE has been previously surveyed for cultural resources.
 - b. If any known cultural resources have already been recorded on or adjacent to the APE.
 - c. If the probability is low, moderate, or high that cultural resources are located in the APE.
 - d. If a survey is required to determine whether previously unrecorded cultural resources are present.
2. If an archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey.
 - a. The final report containing site forms, site significance, and mitigation measures should be submitted immediately to the planning department. All information regarding site locations, Native American human remains, and associated funerary objects should be in a separate confidential addendum and not be made available for public disclosure.
 - b. The final written report should be submitted within 3 months after work has been completed to the appropriate regional CHRIS center.

3. Contact the NAHC for:
 - a. A Sacred Lands File search. Remember that tribes do not always record their sacred sites in the Sacred Lands File, nor are they required to do so. A Sacred Lands File search is not a substitute for consultation with tribes that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the project's APE.
 - b. A Native American Tribal Consultation List of appropriate tribes for consultation concerning the project site and to assist in planning for avoidance, preservation in place, or, failing both, mitigation measures.

4. Remember that the lack of surface evidence of archaeological resources (including tribal cultural resources) does not preclude their subsurface existence.
 - a. Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of inadvertently discovered archaeological resources per Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15064.5(f) (CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(f)). In areas of identified archaeological sensitivity, a certified archaeologist and a culturally affiliated Native American with knowledge of cultural resources should monitor all ground-disturbing activities.
 - b. Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plans provisions for the disposition of recovered cultural items that are not burial associated in consultation with culturally affiliated Native Americans.
 - c. Lead agencies should include in their mitigation and monitoring reporting program plans provisions for the treatment and disposition of inadvertently discovered Native American human remains. Health and Safety Code §7050.5, Public Resources Code §5097.98, and Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §15064.5, subdivisions (d) and (e) (CEQA Guidelines §15064.5, subds. (d) and (e)) address the processes to be followed in the event of an inadvertent discovery of any Native American human remains and associated grave goods in a location other than a dedicated cemetery.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me at my email address: Pricilla.Torres-Fuentes@nahc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Pricilla Torres-Fuentes

Pricilla Torres-Fuentes
Cultural Resources Analyst

cc: State Clearinghouse



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
North Central Region
1701 Nimbus Road, Suite A
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-4599
916-358-2900
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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



April 4, 2022

Rob Ferrera
Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
6201 S Street
Sacramento, CA 95817
Rob.ferrera@smud.org

Subject: CORDOVA PARK UNDERGROUND CABLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT
SCH# 2022030186

Dear Mr. Ferrera:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received and reviewed the Notice of Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) from SMUD for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project (Project) in Sacramento County pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute and guidelines.¹

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may need to exercise its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code (Fish & G. Code).

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's Trustee Agency for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a)). CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species (*Id.*, § 1802.). Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW provides, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW may also act as a Responsible Agency under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 et seq. The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 et seq.) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the Project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

SMUD proposes to install approximately 0.6 miles of 12 kilovolt (kV) underground cable, approximately 2.12 miles of 69kV underground cable and up to 13 new utility vaults in the City of Rancho Cordova, near the location of existing 12kV and 69kV underground cables that are approaching the end of their operational lives. Installation of the new cable, conduit and utility vaults would be done by open trenching. Where possible, the new conduit will be installed to align with the existing cable, which would be abandoned in place.

The Project description should include the whole action as defined in the CEQA Guidelines § 15378 and should include appropriate detailed exhibits disclosing the Project area including temporary impacted areas such as equipment stage area, spoils areas, adjacent infrastructure development, staging areas and access and haul roads if applicable.

As required by § 15126.6 of the CEQA Guidelines, the EIR should include an appropriate range of reasonable and feasible alternatives that would attain most of the basic Project objectives and avoid or minimize significant impacts to resources under CDFW's jurisdiction.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations presented below to assist SMUD in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, impacts on biological resources. The comments and recommendations are also offered to enable CDFW to adequately review and comment on the proposed Project with respect to impacts on biological resources. CDFW recommends that the forthcoming EIR address the following:

Assessment of Biological Resources

Section 15125(c) of the CEQA Guidelines states that knowledge of the regional setting of a project is critical to the assessment of environmental impacts and that special emphasis should be placed on environmental resources that are rare or unique to the region. To enable CDFW staff to adequately review and comment on the Project, the EIR should include a complete assessment of the flora and fauna within and adjacent to the Project footprint, with emphasis on identifying rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species and their associated habitats. CDFW recommends that the EIR specifically include:

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1. An assessment of all habitat types located within the Project footprint, and a map that identifies the location of each habitat type. CDFW recommends that floristic, alliance- and/or association-based mapping and assessment be completed following *The Manual of California Vegetation*, second edition (Sawyer 2009). Adjoining habitat areas should also be included in this assessment where site activities could lead to direct or indirect impacts offsite. Habitat mapping at the alliance level will help establish baseline vegetation conditions.
2. A general biological inventory of the fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, and mammal species that are present or have the potential to be present within each habitat type onsite and within adjacent areas that could be affected by the Project. CDFW recommends that the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), as well as previous studies performed in the area, be consulted to assess the potential presence of sensitive species and habitats. A nine United States Geologic Survey 7.5-minute quadrangle search is recommended to determine what may occur in the region, larger if the Project area extends past one quad (see *Data Use Guidelines* on the Department webpage www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Maps-and-Data). Please review the webpage for information on how to access the database to obtain current information on any previously reported sensitive species and habitat, including Significant Natural Areas identified under Chapter 12 of the Fish and Game Code, in the vicinity of the Project. CDFW recommends that CNDDDB Field Survey Forms be completed and submitted to CNDDDB to document survey results. Online forms can be obtained and submitted at: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>.

Please note that CDFW's CNDDDB is not exhaustive in terms of the data it houses, nor is it an absence database. CDFW recommends that it be used as a starting point in gathering information about the *potential presence* of species within the general area of the Project site. Other sources for identification of species and habitats near or adjacent to the Project area should include, but may not be limited to, State and federal resource agency lists, California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System, California Native Plant Society Inventory, agency contacts, environmental documents for other projects in the vicinity, academics, and professional or scientific organizations.

3. A complete and recent inventory of rare, threatened, endangered, and other sensitive species located within the Project footprint and within offsite areas with the potential to be affected, including California Species of Special Concern and California Fully Protected Species (Fish & G. Code § 3511). Species to be addressed should include all those which meet the CEQA definition (CEQA Guidelines § 15380). The inventory should address seasonal variations in use of the Project area and should not be limited to resident species. The EIR should include the results of focused species-specific surveys, completed by a qualified biologist and conducted at the appropriate time of year and time of day when the sensitive species are active or otherwise identifiable. Species-specific surveys should be conducted in order to ascertain the presence of species with the

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potential to be directly, indirectly, on or within a reasonable distance of the Project activities. CDFW recommends the lead agency rely on survey and monitoring protocols and guidelines available at: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols. Alternative survey protocols may be warranted; justification should be provided to substantiate why an alternative protocol is necessary. Acceptable species-specific survey procedures should be developed in consultation with CDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where necessary. Some aspects of the Project may warrant periodic updated surveys for certain sensitive taxa, particularly if the Project is proposed to occur over a protracted time frame, or in phases, or if surveys are completed during periods of drought or deluge.

4. A thorough, recent (within the last two years), floristic-based assessment of special-status plants and natural communities, following CDFW's *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (see www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Plants).
5. Information on the regional setting that is critical to an assessment of environmental impacts, with special emphasis on resources that are rare or unique to the region (CEQA Guidelines § 15125[c]).

Analysis of Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts to Biological Resources

The EIR should provide a thorough discussion of the Project's potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on biological resources. To ensure that Project impacts on biological resources are fully analyzed, the following information should be included in the EIR:

1. The EIR should define the threshold of significance for each impact and describe the criteria used to determine whether the impacts are significant (CEQA Guidelines, § 15064, subd. (f)). The EIR must demonstrate that the significant environmental impacts of the Project were adequately investigated and discussed and it must permit the significant effects of the Project to be considered in the full environmental context.
2. A discussion of potential impacts from lighting, noise, human activity, and wildlife-human interactions created by Project activities especially those adjacent to natural areas, exotic and/or invasive species occurrences, and drainages. The EIR should address Project-related changes to drainage patterns and water quality within, upstream, and downstream of the Project site, including: volume, velocity, and frequency of existing and post-Project surface flows; polluted runoff; soil erosion and/or sedimentation in streams and water bodies; and post-Project fate of runoff from the Project site.
3. A discussion of potential indirect Project impacts on biological resources, including resources in areas adjacent to the Project footprint, such as nearby public lands (e.g. National Forests, State Parks, etc.), open space, adjacent

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natural habitats, riparian ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and any designated and/or proposed reserve or mitigation lands (e.g., preserved lands associated with a Conservation or Recovery Plan, or other conserved lands).

4. A cumulative effects analysis developed as described under CEQA Guidelines section 15130. The EIR should discuss the Project's cumulative impacts to natural resources and determine if that contribution would result in a significant impact. The EIR should include a list of present, past, and probable future projects producing related impacts to biological resources or shall include a summary of the projections contained in an adopted local, regional, or statewide plan, that consider conditions contributing to a cumulative effect. The cumulative analysis shall include impact analysis of vegetation and habitat reductions within the area and their potential cumulative effects. Please include all potential direct and indirect Project-related impacts to riparian areas, wetlands, wildlife corridors or wildlife movement areas, aquatic habitats, sensitive species and/or special-status species, open space, and adjacent natural habitats in the cumulative effects analysis.

Mitigation Measures for Project Impacts to Biological Resources

The EIR should include appropriate and adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures for all direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that are expected to occur as a result of the construction and long-term operation and maintenance of the Project. CDFW also recommends that the environmental documentation provide scientifically supported discussion regarding adequate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to address the Project's significant impacts upon fish and wildlife and their habitat. For individual projects, mitigation must be roughly proportional to the level of impacts, including cumulative impacts, in accordance with the provisions of CEQA (Guidelines § § 15126.4(a)(4)(B), 15064, 15065, and 16355). In order for mitigation measures to be effective, they must be specific, enforceable, and feasible actions that will improve environmental conditions. When proposing measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts, CDFW recommends consideration of the following:

1. *Fully Protected Species*: Several Fully Protected Species (Fish & G. Code § 3511) have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area, including, but not limited to: white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*). Fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time. Project activities described in the EIR should be designed to completely avoid any fully protected species that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. CDFW also recommends that the EIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to fully protected species due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. CDFW recommends that SMUD include in the analysis how appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures will reduce indirect impacts to fully protected species.

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2. *Species of Special Concern*: Several Species of Special Concern (SSC) have the potential to occur within or adjacent to the Project area, including, but not limited to: western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*). Project activities described in the EIR should be designed to avoid any SSC that have the potential to be present within or adjacent to the Project area. CDFW also recommends that the EIR fully analyze potential adverse impacts to SSC due to habitat modification, loss of foraging habitat, and/or interruption of migratory and breeding behaviors. CDFW recommends SMUD include in the analysis how appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures will reduce impacts to SSC.
3. *Sensitive Plant Communities*: CDFW considers sensitive plant communities to be imperiled habitats having both local and regional significance. Plant communities, alliances, and associations with a statewide ranking of S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4 should be considered sensitive and declining at the local and regional level. These ranks can be obtained by querying the CNDDDB and are included in *The Manual of California Vegetation* (Sawyer 2009). The EIR should include measures to fully avoid and otherwise protect sensitive plant communities from Project-related direct and indirect impacts.
4. *Mitigation*: CDFW considers adverse Project-related impacts to sensitive species and habitats to be significant to both local and regional ecosystems, and the EIR should include mitigation measures for adverse Project-related impacts to these resources. Mitigation measures should emphasize avoidance and reduction of Project impacts. For unavoidable impacts, onsite habitat restoration, enhancement, or permanent protection should be evaluated and discussed in detail. If onsite mitigation is not feasible or would not be biologically viable and therefore not adequately mitigate the loss of biological functions and values, offsite mitigation through habitat creation and/or acquisition and preservation in perpetuity should be addressed.

The EIR should include measures to perpetually protect the targeted habitat values within mitigation areas from direct and indirect adverse impacts in order to meet mitigation objectives to offset Project-induced qualitative and quantitative losses of biological values. Specific issues that should be addressed include restrictions on access, proposed land dedications, long-term monitoring and management programs, control of illegal dumping, water pollution, increased human intrusion, etc.

5. *Habitat Revegetation/Restoration Plans*: Plans for restoration and revegetation should be prepared by persons with expertise in the regional ecosystems and native plant restoration techniques. Plans should identify the assumptions used to develop the proposed restoration strategy. Each plan should include, at a minimum: (a) the location of restoration sites and assessment of appropriate reference sites; (b) the plant species to be used, sources of local propagules, container sizes, and seeding rates; (c) a schematic depicting the mitigation area; (d) a local seed and cuttings and planting schedule; (e) a description of the irrigation methodology; (f) measures to control exotic vegetation on site; (g)

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specific success criteria; (h) a detailed monitoring program; (i) contingency measures should the success criteria not be met; and (j) identification of the party responsible for meeting the success criteria and providing for conservation of the mitigation site in perpetuity. Monitoring of restoration areas should extend across a sufficient time frame to ensure that the new habitat is established, self-sustaining, and capable of surviving drought.

CDFW recommends that local onsite propagules from the Project area and nearby vicinity be collected and used for restoration purposes. Onsite seed collection should be appropriately timed to ensure the viability of the seeds when planted. Onsite vegetation mapping at the alliance and/or association level should be used to develop appropriate restoration goals and local plant palettes. Reference areas should be identified to help guide restoration efforts. Specific restoration plans should be developed for various Project components as appropriate. Restoration objectives should include protecting special habitat elements or re-creating them in areas affected by the Project. Examples may include retention of woody material, logs, snags, rocks, and brush piles. Fish and Game Code sections 1002, 1002.5 and 1003 authorize CDFW to issue permits for the take or possession of plants and wildlife for scientific, educational, and propagation purposes. Please see our website for more information on Scientific Collecting Permits at www.wildlife.ca.gov/Licensing/Scientific-Collecting#53949678-regulations-.

6. *Nesting Birds*: Please note that it is the Project proponent's responsibility to comply with all applicable laws related to nesting birds and birds of prey. Migratory non-game native bird species are protected by international treaty under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, as amended (16 U.S.C. 703 *et seq.*). CDFW implemented the MBTA by adopting the Fish and Game Code section 3513. Fish and Game Code sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3800 provide additional protection to nongame birds, birds of prey, their nests and eggs. Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the Fish and Game Code afford protective measures as follows: section 3503 states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by the Fish and Game Code or any regulation made pursuant thereto; section 3503.5 states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by the Fish and Game Code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto; and section 3513 states that it is unlawful to take or possess any migratory nongame bird as designated in the MBTA or any part of such migratory nongame bird except as provided by rules and regulations adopted by the Secretary of the Interior under provisions of the MBTA.

Potential habitat for nesting birds and birds of prey is present within the Project area. The Project should disclose all potential activities that may incur a direct or indirect take to nongame nesting birds within the Project footprint and its vicinity.

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Appropriate avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation measures to avoid take must be included in the EIR.

CDFW recommends that the EIR include specific avoidance and minimization measures to ensure that impacts to nesting birds or their nests do not occur. Project-specific avoidance and minimization measures may include, but not be limited to: Project phasing and timing, monitoring of Project-related noise (where applicable), sound walls, and buffers, where appropriate. The EIR should also include specific avoidance and minimization measures that will be implemented should a nest be located within the Project site. In addition to larger, protocol level survey efforts (e.g. Swainson's hawk surveys) and scientific assessments, CDFW recommends a final preconstruction survey be required no more than three (3) days prior to vegetation clearing or ground disturbance activities, as instances of nesting could be missed if surveys are conducted earlier.

7. *Moving out of Harm's Way*: The Project is anticipated to result in the clearing of natural habitats that support native species. To avoid direct mortality, SMUD should state in the EIR a requirement for a qualified biologist with the proper handling permits be retained to be onsite prior to and during all ground- and habitat-disturbing activities. The qualified biologist with the proper permits may move out of harm's way special-status species or other wildlife of low or limited mobility that would otherwise be injured or killed from Project-related activities, as needed. The EIR should also describe the biologist qualifications and authorities to stop work to prevent direct mortality of special-status species. CDFW recommends fish and wildlife species be allowed to move out of harm's way on their own volition, if possible, and to assist their relocation as a last resort. It should be noted that the temporary relocation of onsite wildlife does not constitute effective mitigation for habitat loss.
8. *Translocation of Species*: CDFW generally does not support the use of relocation, salvage, and/or transplantation as the sole mitigation for impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species as these efforts are generally experimental in nature and largely unsuccessful. Therefore, the EIR should describe additional mitigation measures utilizing habitat restoration, conservation, and/or preservation, in addition to avoidance and minimization measures, if it is determined that there may be impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species.

The EIR should incorporate mitigation performance standards that would ensure that impacts are reduced to a less-than-significant level. Mitigation measures proposed in the EIR should be made a condition of approval of the Project. Please note that obtaining a permit from CDFW by itself with no other mitigation proposal may constitute mitigation deferral. CEQA Guidelines section 15126.4, subdivision (a)(1)(B) states that formulation of mitigation measures should not be deferred until some future time. To avoid deferring mitigation in this way, the EIR should describe avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures that would be implemented should the impact occur.

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California Endangered Species Act

CDFW is responsible for ensuring appropriate conservation of fish and wildlife resources including threatened, endangered, and/or candidate plant and animal species, pursuant to the CESA. CDFW recommends that a CESA Incidental Take Permit (ITP) be obtained if the Project has the potential to result in “take” (Fish & G. Code § 86 defines “take” as “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill”) of State-listed CESA species, either through construction or over the life of the Project.

CESA-listed species that are known in the area include but are not limited to: Swainson’s hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*).

The EIR should disclose the potential of the Project to take CESA-listed species and how the impacts will be avoided, minimized, and mitigated. Please note that mitigation measures that are adequate to reduce impacts to a less-than significant level to meet CEQA requirements may not be enough for the issuance of an ITP. To issue an ITP, CDFW must demonstrate that the impacts of the authorized take will be minimized and fully mitigated (Fish & G. Code §2081 (b)). To facilitate the issuance of an ITP, if applicable, CDFW recommends the EIR include measures to minimize and fully mitigate the impacts to any State-listed species the Project has potential to take. CDFW encourages early consultation with staff to determine appropriate measures to facilitate future permitting processes and to engage with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and/or National Marine Fisheries Service to coordinate specific measures if both state and federally listed species may be present within the Project vicinity.

American River Parkway Plan and American River Natural Resources Management Plan

The Project is within the boundaries of the American River Parkway managed by Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks, and as such, is managed under the American River Parkway Plan and forthcoming American River Natural Resources Management Plan. CEQA Guidelines section 15125(d) states that EIRs must discuss any inconsistencies between projects and applicable plans (including habitat conservation plans/natural community conservation plans). CDFW recommends that the EIR include a discussion of each Project alternative’s consistency with American River Parkway Plan and forthcoming American River Natural Resources Management Plan and how SMUD will ensure that implementation of the Project alternatives do not impede the plan’s goals and biological objectives.

Native Plant Protection Act

The Native Plant Protection Act (Fish & G. Code §1900 *et seq.*) prohibits the take or possession of State-listed rare and endangered plants, including any part or product thereof, unless authorized by CDFW or in certain limited circumstances. Take of State-listed rare and/or endangered plants due to Project activities may only be permitted

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through an ITP or other authorization issued by CDFW pursuant to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 786.9 subdivision (b).

Lake and Streambed Alteration Program

The EIR should identify all perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral rivers, streams, lakes, other hydrologically connected aquatic features, and any associated biological resources/habitats present within the entire Project footprint (including utilities, access and staging areas). The environmental document should analyze all potential temporary, permanent, direct, indirect and/or cumulative impacts to the above-mentioned features and associated biological resources/habitats that may occur because of the Project. If it is determined the Project will result in significant impacts to these resources the EIR shall propose appropriate avoidance, minimization and/or mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code requires an entity to notify CDFW prior to commencing any activity that may do one or more of the following: substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream or lake; substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or deposit debris, waste or other materials that could pass into any river, stream or lake. Please note that "any river, stream or lake" includes those that are episodic (i.e., those that are dry for periods of time) as well as those that are perennial (i.e., those that flow year-round). This includes ephemeral streams and watercourses with a subsurface flow. It may also apply to work undertaken within the flood plain of a body of water.

If upon review of an entity's notification, CDFW determines that the Project activities may substantially adversely affect an existing fish or wildlife resource, a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement will be issued which will include reasonable measures necessary to protect the resource. CDFW's issuance of an LSA Agreement is a "project" subject to CEQA (see Pub. Resources Code 21065). To facilitate issuance of an LSA Agreement, if one is necessary, the EIR should fully identify the potential impacts to the lake, stream, or riparian resources, and provide adequate avoidance, mitigation, and monitoring and reporting commitments. Early consultation with CDFW is recommended, since modification of the Project may avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources. To submit an LSA Notification package, please go to <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Environmental-Review/LSA>.

Please note that other agencies may use specific methods and definitions to determine impacts to areas subject to their authorities. These methods and definitions often do not include all needed information for CDFW to determine the extent of fish and wildlife resources affected by activities subject to Notification under Fish and Game Code section 1602. Therefore, CDFW does not recommend relying solely on methods developed specifically for delineating areas subject to other agencies' jurisdiction (such as United States Army Corps of Engineers) when mapping lakes, streams, wetlands, floodplains, riparian areas, etc. in preparation for submitting a Notification of an LSA.

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CDFW relies on SMUD's environmental document analysis when acting as a responsible agency issuing an LSA Agreement. CDFW recommends lead agencies coordinate with us as early as possible, since potential modification of the proposed Project may avoid or reduce impacts to fish and wildlife resources and expedite the Project approval process.

The following information will be required for the processing of an LSA Notification and CDFW recommends incorporating this information into any forthcoming CEQA document(s) to avoid subsequent documentation and Project delays:

1. Mapping and quantification of lakes, streams, and associated fish and wildlife habitat (e.g., riparian habitat, freshwater wetlands, etc.) that will be temporarily and/or permanently impacted by the Project, including impacts from access and staging areas. Please include an estimate of impact to each habitat type.
2. Discussion of specific avoidance, minimization, and mitigation measures to reduce Project impacts to fish and wildlife resources to a less-than-significant level. Please refer to section 15370 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Based on review of Project materials, aerial photography and observation of the site from public roadways, the Project site supports unnamed tributaries to the Cosumnes River and its associated riparian habitat. CDFW recommends that the EIR fully identify the Project's potential impacts to the stream and/or its associated vegetation and wetlands.

CHEMICAL USE

Rodenticides that control small mammal populations would also reduce available burrows, making the habitat less suitable for burrowing owl and other sensitive wildlife species. Lack of underground refugia could result in increase exposure to predators, heat, and other elements. The use of rodenticides may also result in impact to non-target wildlife. Anticoagulant rodenticides, including diphacinone, have been detected in the majority of predators and scavengers in California (Hosea 2000), including bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) (Serieys et al.) and raptors (Kelley et al. 2015). Since animals dependent on small mammals for habitat and for food sources are present in the American River Parkway CDFW recommends the project avoid use of chemical rodenticides and if they cannot be avoided, then the EIR should analyze the impact of their use to the ecosystem over the life of the Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database, which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e)). Accordingly, please report any special-status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the CNDDDB. The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link:

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Data/CNDDDB/Submitting-Data>. The completed form can be

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submitted online or mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address:

CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an effect on fish and wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by SMUD and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

Pursuant to Public Resources Code sections 21092 and 21092.2, CDFW requests written notification of proposed actions and pending decisions regarding the Project. Written notifications shall be directed to: California Department of Fish and Wildlife North Central Region, 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670.

CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Preparation of the EIR for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project and recommends that SMUD address CDFW's comments and concerns in the forthcoming EIR. CDFW personnel are available for consultation regarding biological resources and strategies to minimize impacts.

If you have any questions regarding the comments provided in this letter or wish to schedule a meeting and/or site visit, please contact Dylan Wood, Environmental Scientist at (916) 358-2384 or dylan.a.wood@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Kelley Barker

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Kelley Barker

Environmental Program Manager

ec: Tanya Sheya, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory)
Dylan Wood, Environmental Scientist
CEQACommentLetters
Department of Fish and Wildlife

Office of Planning and Research, State Clearinghouse, Sacramento

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Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board

6 April 2022

Rob Ferrera
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COMMENTS TO REQUEST FOR REVIEW FOR THE NOTICE OF PREPARATION FOR THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT, CORDOVA PARK UNDERGROUND CABLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT, SCH#2022030186, SACRAMENTO COUNTY

Pursuant to the State Clearinghouse's 4 March 2022 request, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) has reviewed the *Request for Review for the Notice of Preparation for the Draft Environmental Impact Report* for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project, located in Sacramento County.

Our agency is delegated with the responsibility of protecting the quality of surface and groundwaters of the state; therefore our comments will address concerns surrounding those issues.

I. Regulatory Setting

Basin Plan

The Central Valley Water Board is required to formulate and adopt Basin Plans for all areas within the Central Valley region under Section 13240 of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. Each Basin Plan must contain water quality objectives to ensure the reasonable protection of beneficial uses, as well as a program of implementation for achieving water quality objectives with the Basin Plans. Federal regulations require each state to adopt water quality standards to protect the public health or welfare, enhance the quality of water and serve the purposes of the Clean Water Act. In California, the beneficial uses, water quality objectives, and the Antidegradation Policy are the State's water quality standards. Water quality standards are also contained in the National Toxics Rule, 40 CFR Section 131.36, and the California Toxics Rule, 40 CFR Section 131.38.

The Basin Plan is subject to modification as necessary, considering applicable laws, policies, technologies, water quality conditions and priorities. The original Basin Plans were adopted in 1975, and have been updated and revised periodically as required, using Basin Plan amendments. Once the Central Valley Water Board has

adopted a Basin Plan amendment in noticed public hearings, it must be approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board), Office of Administrative Law (OAL) and in some cases, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Basin Plan amendments only become effective after they have been approved by the OAL and in some cases, the USEPA. Every three (3) years, a review of the Basin Plan is completed that assesses the appropriateness of existing standards and evaluates and prioritizes Basin Planning issues. For more information on the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins*, please visit our website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/

Antidegradation Considerations

All wastewater discharges must comply with the Antidegradation Policy (State Water Board Resolution 68-16) and the Antidegradation Implementation Policy contained in the Basin Plan. The Antidegradation Implementation Policy is available on page 74 at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/basin_plans/sacsjr_2018_05.pdf

In part it states:

Any discharge of waste to high quality waters must apply best practicable treatment or control not only to prevent a condition of pollution or nuisance from occurring, but also to maintain the highest water quality possible consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the State.

This information must be presented as an analysis of the impacts and potential impacts of the discharge on water quality, as measured by background concentrations and applicable water quality objectives.

The antidegradation analysis is a mandatory element in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and land discharge Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) permitting processes. The environmental review document should evaluate potential impacts to both surface and groundwater quality.

II. Permitting Requirements

Construction Storm Water General Permit

Dischargers whose project disturb one or more acres of soil or where projects disturb less than one acre but are part of a larger common plan of development that in total disturbs one or more acres, are required to obtain coverage under the General Permit for Storm Water Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities (Construction General Permit), Construction General Permit Order No. 2009-0009-DWQ. Construction activity subject to this permit includes clearing, grading, grubbing, disturbances to the ground, such as stockpiling, or excavation, but does not include regular maintenance activities performed to restore the original line, grade, or capacity of the facility. The Construction General Permit requires the development and implementation of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). For more information on the Construction General Permit, visit the

State Water Resources Control Board website at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/stormwater/constpermits.shtml

Phase I and II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permits¹

The Phase I and II MS4 permits require the Permittees reduce pollutants and runoff flows from new development and redevelopment using Best Management Practices (BMPs) to the maximum extent practicable (MEP). MS4 Permittees have their own development standards, also known as Low Impact Development (LID)/post-construction standards that include a hydromodification component. The MS4 permits also require specific design concepts for LID/post-construction BMPs in the early stages of a project during the entitlement and CEQA process and the development plan review process.

For more information on which Phase I MS4 Permit this project applies to, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/storm_water/municipal_permits/

For more information on the Phase II MS4 permit and who it applies to, visit the State Water Resources Control Board at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/stormwater/phase_ii_municipal.shtml

Industrial Storm Water General Permit

Storm water discharges associated with industrial sites must comply with the regulations contained in the Industrial Storm Water General Permit Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ. For more information on the Industrial Storm Water General Permit, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/storm_water/industrial_general_permits/index.shtml

Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit

If the project will involve the discharge of dredged or fill material in navigable waters or wetlands, a permit pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act may be needed from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). If a Section 404 permit is required by the USACE, the Central Valley Water Board will review the permit application to ensure that discharge will not violate water quality standards. If the project requires surface water drainage realignment, the applicant is advised to contact the Department of Fish and Game for information on Streambed Alteration Permit requirements. If you have any questions regarding the Clean Water Act

¹ Municipal Permits = The Phase I Municipal Separate Storm Water System (MS4) Permit covers medium sized Municipalities (serving between 100,000 and 250,000 people) and large sized municipalities (serving over 250,000 people). The Phase II MS4 provides coverage for small municipalities, including non-traditional Small MS4s, which include military bases, public campuses, prisons and hospitals.

Section 404 permits, please contact the Regulatory Division of the Sacramento District of USACE at (916) 557-5250.

Clean Water Act Section 401 Permit – Water Quality Certification

If an USACE permit (e.g., Non-Reporting Nationwide Permit, Nationwide Permit, Letter of Permission, Individual Permit, Regional General Permit, Programmatic General Permit), or any other federal permit (e.g., Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act or Section 9 from the United States Coast Guard), is required for this project due to the disturbance of waters of the United States (such as streams and wetlands), then a Water Quality Certification must be obtained from the Central Valley Water Board prior to initiation of project activities. There are no waivers for 401 Water Quality Certifications. For more information on the Water Quality Certification, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/water_quality_certification/

Waste Discharge Requirements – Discharges to Waters of the State

If USACE determines that only non-jurisdictional waters of the State (i.e., “non-federal” waters of the State) are present in the proposed project area, the proposed project may require a Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) permit to be issued by Central Valley Water Board. Under the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, discharges to all waters of the State, including all wetlands and other waters of the State including, but not limited to, isolated wetlands, are subject to State regulation. For more information on the Waste Discharges to Surface Water NPDES Program and WDR processes, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at: https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/waste_to_surface_water/

Projects involving excavation or fill activities impacting less than 0.2 acre or 400 linear feet of non-jurisdictional waters of the state and projects involving dredging activities impacting less than 50 cubic yards of non-jurisdictional waters of the state may be eligible for coverage under the State Water Resources Control Board Water Quality Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ (General Order 2004-0004). For more information on the General Order 2004-0004, visit the State Water Resources Control Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2004/wqo/wqo2004-0004.pdf

Dewatering Permit

If the proposed project includes construction or groundwater dewatering to be discharged to land, the proponent may apply for coverage under State Water Board General Water Quality Order (Low Threat General Order) 2003-0003 or the Central Valley Water Board’s Waiver of Report of Waste Discharge and Waste Discharge Requirements (Low Threat Waiver) R5-2018-0085. Small temporary construction dewatering projects are projects that discharge groundwater to land from excavation activities or dewatering of underground utility vaults. Dischargers seeking coverage

under the General Order or Waiver must file a Notice of Intent with the Central Valley Water Board prior to beginning discharge.

For more information regarding the Low Threat General Order and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2003/wgo/wgo2003-0003.pdf

For more information regarding the Low Threat Waiver and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/waivers/r5-2018-0085.pdf

Limited Threat General NPDES Permit

If the proposed project includes construction dewatering and it is necessary to discharge the groundwater to waters of the United States, the proposed project will require coverage under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Dewatering discharges are typically considered a low or limited threat to water quality and may be covered under the General Order for *Limited Threat Discharges to Surface Water* (Limited Threat General Order). A complete Notice of Intent must be submitted to the Central Valley Water Board to obtain coverage under the Limited Threat General Order. For more information regarding the Limited Threat General Order and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/board_decisions/adopted_orders/general_orders/r5-2016-0076-01.pdf

NPDES Permit

If the proposed project discharges waste that could affect the quality of surface waters of the State, other than into a community sewer system, the proposed project will require coverage under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. A complete Report of Waste Discharge must be submitted with the Central Valley Water Board to obtain a NPDES Permit. For more information regarding the NPDES Permit and the application process, visit the Central Valley Water Board website at: <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/help/permit/>

If you have questions regarding these comments, please contact me at (916) 464-4709 or Greg.Hendricks@waterboards.ca.gov.



Greg Hendricks
Environmental Scientist

cc: State Clearinghouse unit, Governor's Office of Planning and Research,
Sacramento



April 6, 2022

Rob Ferrera
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Subject: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project

Rob Ferrera,

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Cordova Park Underground Cable Replacement Project. The project proposes to install approximately 0.6 miles of 12 kilovolt (kV) underground cable, approximately 2.12 miles of 69kV underground cable, and up to 13 new utility vaults in the City of Rancho Cordova, near the location of existing 12kV and 69kV underground cables that are approaching the end of their operational lives. Sac Metro Air District comments follow.

Please refer to the Sac Metro Air District's [Guide to Air Quality Assessment in Sacramento County](#)¹ (CEQA Guide) when preparing the draft environmental impact assessment (DEIR). The CEQA Guide provides guidance on criteria and greenhouse gas analysis methodologies.

When available, please send a copy of the DEIR to projectreview@airquality.org.

Please contact me if you have questions at (279) 207 – 1127 or rdubose@airquality.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RDuBose".

Rachel DuBose
Air Quality Planner / Analyst

C: Paul Phillely, AICP, Land Use, and Transportation

¹ <http://www.airquality.org/Businesses/CEQA-Land-Use-Planning/CEQA-Guidance-Tools>