Notice of Exemption

To:
Office of Planning and Research
U.S. Mail:
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Street Address:
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

From:
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Central Region
1234 East Shaw Avenue
Fresno, CA 93710

Project Title: California Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit No. 2081-2022-064-04 for the eTS 58713.01 Line 85 Milepost 75.85 Remediation Digs Project (Project)

Project Location: The Project is located in the southern San Joaquin Valley approximately 6 miles east of the town of Taft in Kern County, California. The Project is specifically located at three distinct Work Areas on California Department of Water Resources-owned land adjacent to and on both sides of the California Aqueduct near Lake Station Road within the United States Geological Survey 7.5-Minute Quadrangle Map Buena Vista Lake Bed in Township 32 South, Range 24 East, Section 12, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian. Work Areas are located at approximately 35.158518, -119.349025, 35.157883, -119.346292, and 35.158184, -119.345164.

Project Description: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has issued a California Endangered Species Act (CESA; Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.) Incidental Take Permit (ITP) No. 2081-2022-064-04, to authorize Southern California Gas Company to incidentally Tipton kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys nitratoides nitratoides*) which is designated as an endangered species under CESA and San Joaquin antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus nelsoni*) which is listed as a threatened species under CESA, respectively (Fish & G. Code § 2050 et seq.; see Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 670.5, subd. (a)(6)(D) and (b)(6)(B), respectively).

The ITP authorizes take of Tipton kangaroo rat and San Joaquin antelope squirrel (Covered Species) for activities associated with the Project which is necessary to repair a high-pressure gas pipeline to prevent failure which is urgently required for health and human safety. The Project includes activities to inspect, repair or replace, and recoat the pipeline, install four magnesium anodes for cathodic protection, and return the temporary disturbance area to pre-project conditions. The Project is expected to temporarily disturb 0.173 acre of Covered Species habitat.

Public Agency Approving Project: **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Person or Public Agency Carrying Out Project: Southern California Gas Company, Mark Medina, Project Manager, 9400 Oakdale Avenue, SC9314, Chatsworth, California 91311

Exempt Status:

☒ Statutory Exemption. California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 15269, subdivision (b); Public Resources Code, section 21080, subdivision (b)(4)

Reasons why project is exempt: See Attachment

CDFW Contact Person: Sarah Bahm (Senior Environmental Scientist (Specialist)), sarah.bahm@wildlife.ca.gov

Signature: DocuSigned by: Julie Vance FA83F09FE08945A... *Date:* 11/22/2022

Julie A. Vance
Regional Manager, Central Region

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Attachment to Notice of Exemption

California Endangered Species Act Incidental Take Permit No. 2081-2022-064-04
Southern California Gas Company eTS 58713.01 Line 85 Milepost 75.85 Remediation Digs Project

Approval of this Project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) because the Project is subject to California Code of Regulations, Title 14, section 15269, subdivision (b), “Emergency repairs to publicly or privately owned service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety, or welfare which includes those actions that require a reasonable amount of planning to address an anticipated emergency” and Public Resources Code, section 21080, subdivision (b)(4), “Specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency”. “Emergency” is defined as “a sudden, unexpected occurrence, involving a clear and imminent danger, demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to, life, health, property, or essential public services” (Pub. Resources Code, § 21060.3).

The purpose of the Project is to prevent pipeline failure by inspecting and repairing three segments of the 26-inch natural gas pipeline (Line) 85 near Milepost 75.85 where potential anomalies have been identified via remote pigging equipment and installing cathodic protection to protect the integrity of the pipeline. The repairs are needed urgently to protect the integrity and safety of the pipeline as well as to ensure service to natural gas customers is not impacted this winter. Additionally, repairs are needed urgently to reduce potential impacts to other pipelines in the vicinity of the California Aqueduct, and possibly to the California Aqueduct itself.

The proposed Project includes excavating a trench along three segments of the pipeline to inspect, repair or replace, recoat, install anodes within two (2) trenches for cathodic protection, and backfill trenches. Excavations will require the use of hand tools and mechanized equipment. Excavated soil will be stockpiled adjacent to each trench within the Work Areas and/or within a paved 1.10-acre Staging/Laydown Area. Excavation of the trenches will result in steep walls that will be shored using metal shoring plates and steel supports to stabilize the plates. Once exposed, approximately 520 feet of the pipeline will be tested, cleaned, abated, and inspected. Abatement includes wrapping the exposed areas in plastic containment and sandblasting and/or scraping using hand tools the existing coating from the exposed pipe. Containment will remain in place to capture and contain any materials from sandblasting/scraping the exposed pipe as well as during recoating. If asbestos-containing material is found to be present, it will be removed. Once cleaned of all coating, dirt, and debris, the integrity of the pipe will be inspected both visually and using wave and b-scan inspection equipment, portable phased-array ultrasonic testing, and/or portable hand and pipe latching equipment.

If anomalies are detected during inspection, they must be immediately remedied by repairs or replacements. Repairs include installing soft padding around the affected area using hand tools or installing a patch called a wedding band around the anomaly (welding a metal sleeve over the anomaly in the existing pipeline). If severe anomalies

are detected, the section of pipeline may need to be removed and replaced by welding a new pipe segment in place. Replacement of the pipe section will occur in the same Work Area footprint and is not expected to result in additional impacts. The exposed pipeline segments will then be recoated with fusion-bonded epoxy or similar material using a handheld sprayer or brush. To provide cathodic protection, four magnesium anodes will be installed below ground, adjacent to the pipeline within Work Area 2 and connected to a three-inch-diameter post that contains the monitoring/test station that extends aboveground. The test stations are currently on the site but will be replaced following backfilling the trenches. The exposed pipeline segments will be filled with zero-sack slurry, or wet sand, to approximately 18 inches above the top of the existing pipe and with the stockpiled native soil or certified clean fill, as needed. Temporary disturbance areas will be returned to pre-Project conditions, as feasible, following the completion of work activities. The Project area will then be allowed to revegetate naturally. The Project is expected to cause the temporary loss of 0.173 acre of habitat for the Covered Species.

Impacts will be minimized and fully mitigated through the implementation of measures required by Incidental Take Permit No. 2081-2022-064-04. Measures include:
1) Monthly Compliance Reports; 2) establishment of avoidance zones; 3) worker education; 4) species relocation; and 5) permanent habitat protection.