



California Public Utilities Commission



To: State Clearinghouse, Responsible and Trustee Agencies, Property Owners, and Interested Parties

From: John Forsythe, CPUC Project Manager

Subject: **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING FOR THE VENTURA COMPRESSOR MODERNIZATION PROJECT**
(CPCN Application No. A.23-08-019)

Date: February 28, 2025

The Ventura Compressor Modernization Project (Proposed Project) is proposed by and would be constructed and operated by Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), a natural gas utility regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

On August 24, 2023, pursuant to CPUC General Order 177, SoCalGas filed an Application for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for the Ventura Compressor Modernization (CPCN Application No. A.23-08-019). CPUC has reviewed and deemed the application complete. Pursuant to Rule 2.4 of CPUC's Rules of Practice and Procedure, the application package for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity includes a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA).

As lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CPUC will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to conduct an objective analysis of the effects of the Proposed Project in compliance with CEQA. The CPUC will use the EIR, in conjunction with other information prepared for the CPUC's record of this proceeding, to act on SoCalGas's application.

In order to obtain early feedback on the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR, the CPUC is initiating the scoping process with a scoping period from February 28 through March 31, 2025.

WHAT IS SCOPING?

As required by CEQA, scoping is the process of soliciting public and agency input regarding the scope and content of an EIR, in advance of its preparation. Accordingly, the CPUC is requesting comments to inform the actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and environmental effects to be analyzed in the EIR. This notice includes a brief description of the Project, a brief summary of the anticipated potential impacts, information on public meetings, and how to provide input on the scope and content of the EIR. After the public scoping period has ended, a Scoping Report will be prepared to summarize the comments received.

This NOP and the Scoping Report will be included as an appendix to the Draft EIR and will also be available on the CPUC's website for the Project with other Project documents and reports, including SoCalGas's application and PEA. The CPUC's website for environmental review of the Project can be accessed at the following link or with the QR code: <https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/venturacompressor/vcm.htm>



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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Project would modernize the Ventura Compressor Station, located at 1555 North Olive Street in the City of Ventura. The scope of the Proposed Project includes:

- (1) replacing three existing 1,100 horsepower (HP) natural-gas-driven compressors (natural gas compressors) with two new 1,900 HP natural gas compressors, equipped with state-of-the art emission control technology to meet Best Available Control Technology (BACT) standards, and two new 2,500 nominal HP (estimated horsepower), electric-motor-driven compressors (electric compressors), with zero nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, resulting in a "hybrid" compressor station;
- (2) erecting a new 10,458-square-foot compressor building;
- (3) erecting a new 4,641-square-foot permanent office building;
- (4) erecting a new 5,459-square-foot warehouse;
- (5) installing a new 8-foot-tall perimeter block wall to replace the existing west and south chain-link fence/block wall; and
- (6) implementing other ancillary site improvements, such as piping interconnection and storage tanks.

The existing compressor equipment and temporary office facilities would be decommissioned approximately one year after the new facility has become fully operational.

Alternatives

The application and PEA identify a range of alternatives to the Proposed Project. These include the "No Project Alternative," the "Supplemental Electric-Driven Compressor Installation Only Alternative," and three site alternatives.

Consideration of the No Project Alternative is mandatory in CEQA, and it contemplates the possibility of CPUC denying the application.

The Supplemental Electric-Driven Compressor Installation Only Alternative would leave the three existing natural gas compressors and install new electric compressors at the site. The operation of the compressor station would primarily utilize the electric compressors first and use the existing natural gas compressors only as needed. No removal of the existing equipment and buildings related to the natural gas compressors would occur. Construction of a new building to house the new electric compressors and the associated improvements and infrastructure necessary would be completed as part of this alternative.

The three site alternatives would have SoCalGas constructing and operating the new project components at one of three new sites, as follows:

- Avocado Site. Approximately 15-acre agricultural site designated for open space uses and zoned for agriculture located approximately 3,000 feet west of the existing compressor station within the County of Ventura.
- Devil's Canyon Road. Approximately 12.88-acre oil extraction site designated for open space uses and zoned for agriculture, located approximately 6,000 feet to the north of the existing compressor station on the west side of State Route 33 within the County of Ventura.
- Ventura Steel. Approximately 10-acre industrial site with oil extraction infrastructure designated and zoned for industrial uses located approximately 8,000 feet north of the existing compressor station within the County of Ventura.

High-level analysis of the alternatives appears in PEA Section 6, Comparison of Alternatives. Under the Proposed Project and each of the three site alternatives, the existing compressor equipment would be decommissioned approximately one year after the new facility has become fully operational.

LOCATION

The Proposed Project is located on an approximately 8.42-acre property at 1555 North Olive Street in the City of Ventura, California. The Project would include replacement of existing natural-gas-driven compressors, construction of

associated facilities and site improvements at the existing compressor station site. The existing compressor equipment at the site would be decommissioned approximately one year after the new facility has become fully operational.

The surrounding area includes industrial uses, a school, and residential parcels. One residential parcel is adjacent to the northeast corner of the Project site fronting North Olive Street. The E.P. Foster Elementary School is located across North Olive Street to the east of the Project site.

A map of the Proposed Project site and potential site alternatives is provided in Attachment A.

Applicant Proposed Measures and Best Management Practices

The proposed modernization of the existing SoCalGas compressor station would include environmental protections in the form of project best management practices (BMPs). The CPUC treats the Project BMPs as “Applicant Proposed Measures” to be incorporated into SoCalGas’s design of the Proposed Project. These measures are considered binding and integral to the Proposed Project design. The following types of BMPs were identified by SoCalGas as part of their application:

- Air Quality: Emissions Minimization during Construction.
- Biological Resources: Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey and Avoidance.
- Cultural Resources: Inadvertent Discovery of Archaeological Resources.
- Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety: Updated Plans; and Building and Safety Permits.
- Hydrology and Water Quality: Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program.
- Noise: Compliance with Noise Ordinance.
- Transportation: Construction Traffic Control Plan; and Maintenance of Project Access Roads.

PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

The PEA prepared by SoCalGas does not identify any significant impacts from construction or operation of the Proposed Project. The EIR will independently and objectively evaluate the potential environmental effects of the Project and the need for mitigation.

Pursuant to Section 15123(b)(2) of the CEQA Guidelines, an EIR shall identify areas of controversy known to the lead agency including issues raised by agencies and the public. Natural gas compressor stations help maintain the flow of natural gas through pipelines. Primary topics of concern include air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and public safety.

The following issues identified in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G are known to the CPUC and will be addressed in the EIR for their potential environmental effects, as summarized below.

- Aesthetics: The Project site is located within the City of Ventura, slightly east of SR-33. The EIR will evaluate the potential for substantial adverse impacts to the existing visual character or quality of public views and the effects of new sources of light and glare.
- Agriculture resources: The SoCalGas property is not categorized as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The property is not subject to a Williamson Act contract, nor is it zoned for agricultural use.
- Air quality: The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to conflict with or obstruct implementation of an applicable air quality plan, result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard, expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people.
- Biological resources: The Project site is developed and has been previously disturbed. The potential presence of sensitive vegetation communities and habitats identified in local plans, policies, or regulations, or as designated by CDFW or USFWS, including wetlands and riparian habitat, will be assessed and potential effects will be evaluated in the EIR. The EIR will also evaluate the Project’s potential for effects on special-status and migratory species and conflicts with local regulations that protect biological resources.

- Cultural resources: The Project site has been previously disturbed by modern development, and a portion of the site has undergone soil remediation, including excavations up to 40 feet in depth, backfilled with clean fill soil. Preliminary records searches and surveys have not identified any archaeological or unique archaeological resources. No historical resources have been identified within the Project site. The potential for an adverse change in the significance of cultural resources will be evaluated in the EIR.
- Energy: The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to result in a significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during Project construction or operation.
- Geology, soils, and paleontological Resources: The Project is not located within, but is located within one mile of an Alquist-Priolo Zone, indicating that the potential for surface rupture is low. Additionally, due to the topography, there are no potential landslide hazards on the Project site. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to result in substantial soil erosion, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse. Potential effects on paleontological resources will also be evaluated.
- Greenhouse gas emissions: The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment, based on a quantified analysis of emissions associated with construction and operation, including fugitive emissions and blowdowns.
- Hazards, hazardous materials, and public safety: The Project components would be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, or a reasonably foreseeable accident.
- Hydrology and water quality: The Project site is located approximately 900 feet east of the Ventura River floodplain (i.e., the edge of the flood control levee) and approximately 1,200 feet east of the primary Ventura River channel within the Ventura River Watershed. The Project site is underlain by the Ventura River Valley – Lower Ventura River Groundwater Basin. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality, impede sustainable groundwater management, alter existing drainage patterns, or risk release of pollutants due to flooding.
- Land use and planning: Project components proposed by SoCalGas would not be subject to local discretionary land use or planning regulations, and the CPUC has preemptive jurisdiction of the Project. The EIR will evaluate the potential effects of the Project related to any conflicts with the existing City of Ventura General Plan, municipal code, and other applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations.
- Mineral resources: The EIR will address the potential for the Project to result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource based on location on or near mining claims, active mines, resources recovery sites, or mapped mineral resource zones.
- Noise: The EIR will evaluate whether the Project would result in exposure of persons to, or generation of, noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies and the potential for construction to generate excessive ground borne vibration.
- Population and housing: The Project does not propose new housing, businesses, or other land use changes, including roads or infrastructure, that would induce population growth in the area. Construction and operation of the Project would not displace any people or housing.
- Public services: The Project would not involve developing new residential units or services that would generate a new daytime or residential population in the area that would increase the demand for public services.
- Recreation: The Project would not involve the development or demolition of housing or otherwise generate a residential population that could impact existing parks or recreational facilities.
- Traffic and transportation: The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities; create potentially hazardous conditions for people walking, bicycling, or driving or for public transit operations; generate vehicle miles traveled; and result in inadequate emergency access.
- Tribal cultural resources: The Project's potential effects on tribal cultural resources will be evaluated by the CPUC during tribal consultation conducted pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.

- Utilities and service systems: The Project would require on site improvements for utilities such as water, stormwater, telecommunications, and natural gas. These improvements would be on site and would not cause an increase in demand related to wastewater generation, power, natural gas, or telecommunications as a result of the Project. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to result in new or expanded utility facilities that are not identified as part of the Project, which could cause additional environmental effects.
- Wildfire: The SoCalGas project site and staging area are not located within a State Responsibility Area or a high Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The nearest high or very high Fire Hazard Severity Zones are approximately 950 feet from the site. The EIR will evaluate the potential for the Project to exacerbate wildfire hazard or expose people to wildfire related hazards (i.e., pollutants, flooding, landslides).

Public Resources Code Section 21092.6(a)

Per Public Resources Code Section 21092.6(a), if the Project site or site of any project alternative to be analyzed is a site listed on the "Cortese list" of hazardous waste site, then this information must be included in the NOP. The Cortese list includes public databases maintained by the State of California pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.

The PEA discloses that the Proposed Project would be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. According to SoCalGas, the Proposed Project site is listed twice on the List of Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Sites from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker database (Health and Safety Code Section 25295). The CPUC will confirm this and whether the Proposed Project site or alternative sites are listed on any other databases that meet the Cortese list requirements.

ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED IN THE EIR

Non-environmental issues such as the costs of the project and the assessment of project need are outside the scope of CEQA and will not be addressed in the EIR. These issues may be addressed through the CPUC's concurrent general proceeding for the Proposed Project ([A.23-08-019](#)), as required by CPUC General Order 177.

The Project site is located in a disadvantaged community, as designated by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Health and Safety Code Section 39711). According to CPUC General Order 177, the application for the CPCN must explain how the Project would be consistent with the goals of the CPUC's Environmental & Social Justice Action Plan and discuss whether it would be possible to relocate the project outside such areas. Although environmental justice is not a topic in the consideration of environmental effects under CEQA, the EIR will disclose the CPUC procedures for consideration of environmental and social justice in the decision-making process.

SCOPING PERIOD

Information to be included in the EIR will be based in part on comments received during the scoping period. Responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, other interested agencies and organizations, property owners, and members of the public will also have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIR once it is issued. Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15103, the scoping period will be for 30 days following the release of this NOP. Accordingly, this scoping period closes at 5:00 p.m. on March 31, 2025. Please include the name, organization (if applicable), mailing address, and e-mail address of the contact person for all future notifications related to this process. Public comments will become part of the public record and will be published in a publicly available Scoping Report.

Please send your comments by mail to:

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Email: john.forsythe@cpuc.ca.gov
 Phone: 916-217-5073

Or, via electronic mail: vcm_ceqa@aspenerg.com

SCOPING MEETINGS

To provide information about the Proposed Project and CEQA process, the CPUC will hold a virtual scoping meeting on March 11, 2025. For assistance with or questions about the virtual meeting, email: vcm_ceqa@aspeneq.com.

Zoom meeting will be held Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Virtual Scoping Meeting

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

6:00 p.m.

Attend via Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81432321651>

Attend via phone: (669) 900-6833

Webinar ID: 814 3232 1651

Additional information about the Project is available in SoCalGas's application and supporting materials provided on the CPUC's website: <https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/venturacompressor/vcm.htm>

