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1 **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

2 This document is a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) with environmental studies  
3 that support the justification for an MND. This document has been prepared in  
4 accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code  
5 section 21000 et. seq.) (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of  
6 Regulations, section 15000 et seq.).

7 **1.1 PROJECT OBJECTIVES, PURPOSE, AND NEED**

8 Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) is proposing to reconstruct an existing 8.3-mile 60 kV  
9 transmission line between the Pease and Marysville substations in the Yuba City and  
10 Marysville area. PG&E has identified the following objectives for this Project:

- 11 • Improve service reliability to electric customers in Yuba County; and
- 12 • Add transmission capacity to better serve Yuba County.

13 This Project would allow PG&E to continue providing reliable electrical service to the  
14 Yuba County and Sutter County areas, in addition to providing sufficient electrical  
15 resources to support growth projected within the area served by the Project.  
16 Furthermore, installation of automated and more sophisticated equipment would help  
17 PG&E better restore service to customers in the event of a power outage.

18 **1.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

19 The MND is a public document to be used by the Lead Agency to determine whether  
20 the proposed Project may have a significant effect on the environment pursuant to  
21 CEQA. The following discussion identifies the ways in which the Lead Agency and any  
22 responsible agencies would use this document in the approval and/or permitting  
23 processes for the Project. The following discussion summarizes the roles of the  
24 agencies and the intended uses of the MND.

25 The California State Lands Commission (CSLC) is acting as the Lead Agency  
26 responsible for preparing the MND. PG&E is required to obtain approval of a new  
27 General Lease—Right-of-Way Use for operation of the reconstructed/expanded  
28 transmission line across the Feather River. CSLC's leasing jurisdiction is to the low-  
29 water mark of the Feather River. The MND will be used by the CSLC to exercise its

1 jurisdictional responsibilities in making its decision to approve a lease of California  
2 sovereign lands to PG&E.

3 It should be noted that due to its location within Rancho New Helvetia, the portion of the  
4 Project that traverses Jack Slough is not located within sovereign title interest;  
5 therefore, issuance of a lease to span this waterway is not required.

6 The proposed Project will also be approved or reviewed by a number of state, federal,  
7 and/or local agencies, as noted in Section 1.4, Permits, Approvals, and Regulatory  
8 Requirements.

### 9 **1.2.1 Organization of the Mitigated Negative Declaration**

- 10 • Section 1.0 provides an Introduction to the Objectives, Purpose, and Need for the  
11 proposed Project as well as the Purpose and Scope of the MND;
- 12 • Section 2.0 of this MND describes the proposed Project, its location, layout and  
13 facilities, and presents an overview of its operation;
- 14 • Section 3.0 is the Initial Study, which describes existing environmental  
15 conditions, Project-specific impacts, and mitigation measures;
- 16 • Section 4.0 presents the socioeconomic effects and environmental justice  
17 evaluation of the proposed Project;
- 18 • Section 5.0 presents the Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP);
- 19 • Section 6.0 presents information on those who prepared the report;
- 20 • Section 7.0 lists reference materials used to prepare the report;
- 21 • Section 8.0 lists acronyms and abbreviations used in the report;
- 22 • Appendix A to this MND contains the mailing list;
- 23 • Appendix B contains an air quality emissions model for the proposed Project; and
- 24 • Appendix C contains a listing of the special-status species potentially occurring in  
25 the Project area in tabular format.

### 1   **1.3   PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT**

2   This MND is being circulated to local and state agencies and to interested individuals  
3   who may wish to review and comment on the report. Written comments may be  
4   submitted to the CSLC during the 30-day public review period. All comments received  
5   will be considered for the proposed Project.

6   This MND identifies the environmental impacts of the proposed Project on the existing  
7   environment and indicates how those impacts will be mitigated or avoided. This  
8   document is intended to provide the CSLC the information required to exercise its  
9   jurisdictional responsibilities with respect to the proposed Project, which will be  
10  considered at a noticed public meeting of the CSLC.

### 11  **1.4   PERMITS, APPROVALS, AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

12  In addition to action by the CSLC, the proposed Project will require the following permits  
13  and approvals from reviewing authorities and regulatory agencies:

- 14       • Clean Water Act, Section 404, Certification (use of Nationwide Permit #12)—U.S.  
15       Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE);
- 16       • Clean Water Act, Section 401, Certification—California Regional Water Quality  
17       Control Board (RWQCB);
- 18       • Endangered Species Act, Section 7, Consultation for potential impacts to giant  
19       garter snake—U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS);
- 20       • General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction—State  
21       Water Resources Control Board;
- 22       • Levee Permit Application—The Central Valley Flood Protection Board (CVFPB)  
23       and the Reclamation Board;
- 24       • Local Endorsement—Marysville Levee District;
- 25       • Local Endorsement—Reclamation District 10;
- 26       • Encroachment Permit, for work in county roads—Sutter County Public Works;
- 27       • Encroachment Permit, for work in county roads—Yuba County Public Works;

- 1      • Encroachment Permit, for work in city streets—Yuba City; and
- 2      • Encroachment Permit, for work in city streets and on city-owned levees—city of
- 3      Marysville.

1 **2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

2 **2.1 PROJECT SETTING**

3 Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) is proposing to reconstruct an existing 8.3-mile 60 kV  
4 transmission line between the Pease and Marysville substations in the Yuba City and  
5 Marysville area. The proposed Project is located in both Yuba and Sutter counties, in  
6 the Sacramento Valley area of Central California. Figure 2-1, Regional Map, provides  
7 the regional context of the Project.

8 The existing facility consists of a single-circuit wood pole line and is generally located  
9 along Pease Road, Laurellen Road, and State Route 20/Levee Road, and traverses  
10 several agricultural operations, the Feather River, and Jack Slough. The western  
11 portion of the Project area is characterized by agricultural land to the north of Pease  
12 Road and a combination of rural residential, new suburban residential and agricultural  
13 uses south of Pease Road. Within the central portion of the alignment, a mixture of  
14 rural residential and agricultural uses in the Laurellen Road area is interrupted by  
15 natural habitat associated with Jack Slough and the Feather River. Finally, the eastern  
16 portion of the alignment, which rings the eastern edge of the city of Marysville, can be  
17 characterized by urban, agricultural, and flood control land uses. Figure 2-2, Project  
18 Overview Map, provides an overview of the Project area.

19 **2.2 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

20 PG&E's 60 kV transmission network, with 135 miles of power lines and 10 distribution  
21 substations, serves over 70 percent of the electric customers in Yuba County. Due to  
22 recent growth, the PG&E transmission planning analysis concluded that the Yuba  
23 County 60 kV network is deficient and currently operates at 110 percent design  
24 capacity. To add transmission capacity and improve service reliability, PG&E is  
25 proposing to reconstruct the existing single-circuit 60 kV transmission line to a double-  
26 circuit line.

27 The northern area of Yuba City and Marysville is experiencing a high level of new  
28 residential development, including Canterbury Estates and Cresleigh Peaks. Other  
29 public infrastructure providers are currently undergoing expansion and improvement  
30 projects such as the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans') State Route  
31 99/Pease Road intersection improvements and Sutter County's eventual Pease Road  
32 widening project. Electric demand within Yuba County is expected to grow at a rate of

1 three percent per year. This growth, coupled with current system inefficiencies, is  
2 prompting the need for additional electric capacity within the region.

### 3 **2.3 PROPOSED FACILITIES**

4 The proposed Project would reconfigure the existing Pease–Marysville 8.3-mile 60 kV  
5 transmission line to a double-circuit wood and tubular steel pole line. The Project would  
6 consist of removing all 155 existing 50- to 85-foot-high wooden poles that support the  
7 current 60 kV transmission line between the Pease and Marysville substations. Existing  
8 wood poles would be replaced with wood poles that are up to 10 feet taller. Angle  
9 points and select equipment poles would also be replaced and tubular steel poles,  
10 which range from 60 to 105 feet, would be installed for strength and to eliminate the  
11 need for guying. Approximately 125 wood poles and 35 tubular steel poles are  
12 proposed as replacements. Figure 2-3, Proposed Alignment (West) and Figure 2-4,  
13 Proposed Alignment (East), depict the approximate location of the proposed facilities.  
14 Figure 2-5, Proposed Transmission Line Cross Section, shows sample dimensions and  
15 characteristics of proposed tubular steel poles.

### 16 **2.4 LAND REQUIREMENTS**

17 The following are land requirements for construction work associated with the  
18 transmission line and description of the proposed aboveground facilities.

#### 19 **2.4.1 Transmission Line Right-of-Way and Additional Construction Work Areas**

20 Figure 2-3, Proposed Alignment (West) and Figure 2-4, Proposed Alignment (East),  
21 show the proposed work areas for the Project, including construction staging areas and  
22 lay-down areas. All work would be contained within the existing PG&E right-of-way with  
23 the exception of an existing franchise or utility corridor area north of Pease Road  
24 between the Pease Substation and State Route 99.

#### 25 **2.4.2 Aboveground Facilities**

26 The Project would replace 155 wood poles and the existing single-circuit 60 kV  
27 transmission line with 125 wood poles that are up to 10 feet taller than the existing  
28 poles, 35 tubular steel poles ranging in height from 60 to 105 feet, and a second 60 kV  
29 circuit.

1 Figure 2-1 Regional Map

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1 Figure 2-2 Project Overview Map

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1 Figure 2-3 Proposed Alignment (West)

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1 Figure 2-4 Proposed Alignment (East)

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Figure 2-5 Proposed Transmission Line Cross Section

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## 2.5 CONSTRUCTION PROCEDURES

### 2.5.1 Transmission Line Reconstruction Procedures

Construction of the overhead transmission line would take place within PG&E's existing right-of-way. A total of 17.5 acres would be disturbed during construction of the Project. Of that total, 17.3 acres would be temporarily disturbed. Areas temporarily disturbed would include lay-down areas, staging areas, pull and tension sites, and splice and snubbing sites. All of the areas that are temporarily disturbed will be restored to preconstruction conditions following Project construction. To eliminate the need to enhance unimproved access routes, those sections of the Project alignment that may become muddy during wet conditions would be scheduled for improvements during dry periods. Once access roads have been established, an area approximately 30 feet by 30 feet would be cleared around each new pole location prior to the commencement of construction activities. This would allow for a safe working area and provide for the placement of equipment, vehicles, and materials at each location.

Installation of new wood poles would begin with the excavation of holes 18 inches in diameter and 10 feet deep. In most cases, new poles would be placed immediately adjacent to the existing pole, "in line" to avoid oversway beyond PG&E's existing alignment. Wood pole holes would be drilled using a truck-mounted auger affixed to PG&E's line trucks. Once excavated, the holes would be cleaned and prepared. New poles would be lifted into place using a mobile crane. The holes would then be backfilled with the excavated material and compacted. Any remaining excavated material would be placed around the holes or spread onto adjacent access roads.

Steel pole holes would be 4 to 6 feet in diameter and 25 feet deep. Holes would be drilled using a 4- to 6-foot auger. Once excavated, the holes would be cleaned and prepared. In the event that soil conditions are unstable, a metal casing (such as a corrugated metal pipe or "culvert" section) would be inserted into the augured hole to keep the wall from caving or sloughing. Holes for new steel poles would require the installation of a concrete foundation. This would involve installation of a reinforcing steel cage and anchor bolt cage followed by the pouring of concrete to form the foundation. The steel pole structures would then be assembled within proximity of each site, and using a mobile crane, each structure would be lifted into position, while the construction crew bolts the pole to the foundation.

Once the new holes and/or concrete foundations are established and the new poles erected, the existing structures would be removed and the lines transferred to the new poles. The old structures would be dismantled by cranes or helicopter and would be hauled away by truck. All transmission poles and equipment that are removed from the Project alignment would be taken to the Marysville Substation and either hauled off site for recycling at the licensed recycling facility or stored on site for future use. Hazardous wastes would be removed from the right-of-way and disposed of at a licensed disposal facility.

It is estimated that approximately four construction crews of 10 workers each would be required to construct the Project. Construction equipment would include backhoes, graders, air compressors, man lifts, generators, drill rigs, truck-mounted augers, flatbed trucks, boom trucks, rigging and mechanic trucks, small to medium-sized cranes, concrete trucks, crew trucks, pullers, tensioners, and wire reel trailers.

### **2.5.2 Special Construction Techniques**

Construction within the existing PG&E right-of-way could necessitate special construction techniques, including possible helicopter installation; levee construction techniques; specialized techniques around roadway and railroad crossings; construction within the vicinity of sensitive resource areas, such as the Feather River; and nighttime construction techniques.

**Helicopter Installation.** Helicopter assistance would generally occur in the Feather River crossing area.

**Levee Construction Techniques.** All wood poles currently located within federal flood project levees would be replaced in place (or in the immediate vicinity) with either a wood pole or a tubular steel pole, with the exception of the existing wood pole located atop the eastern levee of the Feather River. This wood pole would be replaced by a steel pole immediately east, completely off the levee structure.

**Roadway and Railroad Crossing Construction Techniques.** In areas that cross State Route 20, State Route 99, city and county roads, and railroads, guard structures would be established to protect against accidental contact with new conductors during re-stringing. PG&E would install temporary wood H-frame guard structures spanning each site. An auger would be used to excavate the holes where the guard structures would be installed and a crane would lift the structures into place. No concrete

foundations would be required to set the guard structures and no grading or other site work would be required. The temporary guard structures would be removed following the completion of conductor stringing operations and the holes would be backfilled with excavated soil.

**Feather River Construction.** Given the sensitive nature of the Feather River, several specialized construction techniques will be used to minimize disturbance. An existing pole located between the left bank of the river and the easternmost levee, as well as a pole atop the eastern levee, would be replaced with the installation of two new steel poles immediately outside of the Feather River Levees. Because of the strength and height of the new steel poles, the entire river can be spanned. Once the two new steel poles are erected, the stringing line would be affixed with the aid of a helicopter. The stringing line would then be attached to the stringing equipment on the outside of the levee. Stringing would occur without disturbance to sensitive habitat within the river corridor.

Once the new line has been constructed, the existing pole on the periphery of the riparian area (within the confines of the levee), would be dismantled by hand. After the line has been turned off, a construction worker would scale the wood pole and saw 2 to 4 foot lengths of the pole. The subterranean pole structure would remain in place although the pole would be sawed off at the base. Workers would hand carry sections of the old wood poles to minimize construction equipment intrusion in the sensitive areas.

**Nighttime Construction.** Construction during summer months could occur at night when daytime temperatures exceed 90 degrees. This would eliminate potential disruption to the electrical grid during peak use. Nighttime construction may also be necessary during transmission line stringing across roadways. Nighttime construction would necessitate portable lighting. In an effort to minimize disruption to adjacent residences, PG&E would utilize the following techniques as necessary:

- Lighting shields;
- Work area shields; and
- Notification to local jurisdictions and/or to affected property owners.

## **2.6 CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE**

The Project would require approximately 10 to 12 months for completion. Construction would generally occur from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday; however, as described above, nighttime work may occur when daytime temperatures exceed 90 degrees or during transmission line stringing across roadways.

## **2.7 ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE INSPECTION AND MITIGATION MONITORING**

PG&E would implement the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), as required. The MMRP would be overseen by the CSLC.

## **2.8 OPERATION, MAINTENANCE, AND SAFETY CONTROLS**

Operation or maintenance personnel would require access to the right-of-way for routine maintenance and inspection activities or during emergency situations. Maintenance to the right-of-way would include patrol of the lines, climbing inspections, and maintenance of necessary access and spur roads. PG&E would keep the areas around all structures clear of vegetation and would limit the height of vegetation on the right-of-way. Routine maintenance activities to the transmission towers generally occur every three to four months.

## **2.9 FUTURE PLANS AND ABANDONMENT**

PG&E intends to maintain the proposed Project throughout the life of the transmission line. There are no current plans to abandon either the right-of-way or the proposed Project features.