

6450-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Western Area Power Administration

Record of Decision and Floodplain and Wetland Statement of Findings for the Sacramento Area Voltage Support Project (DOE/EIS-0323S1)

AGENCY: Western Area Power Administration, DOE.

ACTION: Record of Decision.

SUMMARY: Western Area Power Administration (Western) plans to construct a new double-circuit, 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line, approximately 31 miles long, between Western's O'Banion Substation and the area just south of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's (SMUD) Elverta Substation and reconstruct SMUD's existing 230-kV/115-kV transmission line between SMUD's Elverta and Natomas substations. The Sacramento Area Voltage Support (SVS) Project (Project) would be located in Sutter, Placer, and Sacramento counties in California. Western proposes to build the Project to provide needed transmission system additions and upgrades to maintain system voltage stability, reliability, and security. Western evaluated seven action alternatives and the No Action Alternative in its supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS). Of these, Alternative B was selected as both the Preferred Alternative and the Environmentally Preferred Action Alternative.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Steve Tuggle, Natural Resource Manager, Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region, 114 Parkshore Drive, Folsom, CA 95630-4710; telephone [REDACTED] Copies of the

SEIS are available from Mr. Tuggle. For information about the Department of Energy (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, contact Ms. Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, GC-20, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20585; telephone (800) 472-2756.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Western issued the SVS draft and final environmental impact statement (EIS) In November 2002 and September 2003 respectively. Western issued a record of decision (ROD) on January 12, 2004. In 2005, SMUD and the City of Roseville agreed to provide funding for Western to proceed with additional environmental review of the SVS Project and prepare an SEIS and environmental impact report (EIR).

Western markets and transmits electricity from multi-use, Federal water projects. Western sells wholesale electricity to more than 70 preference customers in central and northern California and Nevada. Western's Sierra Nevada Region (SNR) includes the greater Sacramento, California, area. SNR maintains and operates numerous substations and more than 1,200 miles of transmission lines. These transmission lines are interconnected to other greater Sacramento-area transmission system owners, Load Serving Entities, and utilities, including the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) and the City of Roseville (Roseville). Western's system contributes to and is affected by voltage stability, reliability, and security of the greater Sacramento area transmission system. Transmission system studies in 2001/2002 and 2006/2007 showed that the existing transmission lines in the greater Sacramento area have reached their maximum power transfer limits for serving the area's energy needs, particularly in the northern portion of the greater Sacramento area. Load Serving Entities and utilities in the area have taken

interim measures to avoid potential uncontrolled system-wide outages. As a last resort, operators may be required to implement post-contingency load shedding and/or rotating blackouts. These measures provide limited voltage stability improvement and are not always available or preferred. In addition, load shedding and rotating blackouts can have a significant negative impact on utility customers. The transmission system studies showed that additions and upgrades are needed to maintain system voltage stability, reliability, and security in accordance with NERC and WECC Planning/Operations Reliability Standards, and for Western to continue to meet its legislative and contractual requirements. The resulting system additions and upgrades would provide additional power-importing capabilities to the greater Sacramento area.

Western, in coordination with SMUD and the City of Roseville, prepared an SEIS and EIR, in compliance with NEPA, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508), California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 21000, *et seq.*), and California CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Reg. Tit. 14 §§ 15000, *et seq.*).

Project

The Project consists of (1) constructing a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line between O'Banion Substation and the area just south of Elverta Substation and (2) reconstructing the existing, double-circuit, 230-kV/115-kV transmission line between Elverta Substation and Natomas Substation into a double-circuit 230-kV transmission line.

Alternatives

Western analyzed seven action alternatives and the No Action alternative in the SEIS and

EIR. Western proposes to build the Project following three route segments. Segments 1 and 3 are common to each action alternative. Segment 1 consists of constructing a new transmission line from O'Banion Substation to an area near Cross Canal in a new right-of-way (ROW).

Segment 3 consists of rebuilding the existing SMUD double-circuit, 115/230-kV Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines within a ROW between Elverta and Natomas substations.

Segment 2 connects Segments 1 and 3. Seven routes were identified for Segment 2. Each of the 2A segments (i.e., segments 2A1, 2A2, 2A3, 2A4, and 2A5) include an option to be located along either the west or east side of Highway 99. The Segment 2 routes differentiate the seven action alternatives (Alternatives A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B, and C) as described below:

Alternative A1 is composed of Segments 1, 2A1, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 33.6 to 33.8 miles long (depending on whether it is located on the east or west side of Highway 99) and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative A2 is composed of Segments 1, 2A2, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 33.5 to 33.7 miles long (depending on whether it is located on the east or west side of Highway 99) and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative A3 is composed of Segments 1, 2A3, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 33.8 to 34.0 miles long (depending on whether it is located on the east or west side of Highway 99) and rebuilding approximately 4.8

miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative A4 is composed of Segments 1, 2A4, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 35.2 to 35.4 miles long (depending on whether it is located on the east or west side of Highway 99) and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative A5 is composed of Segments 1, 2A5, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 33.7 to 33.9 miles long (depending on whether it is located on the east or west side of Highway 99) and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative B is composed of Segments 1, 2B, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 31.3 miles long and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines.

Alternative C is composed of Segments 1, 2C1, 2C2, and 3. It would involve construction of a new, double-circuit, 230-kV transmission line approximately 37.6 miles long and rebuilding approximately 4.8 miles of existing Elverta-North City and Elverta-Natomas transmission lines. This alternative would abandon 8.6 miles of existing Cottonwood-Roseville transmission line.

The No Action Alternative would include operation and maintenance of the existing transmission lines. Western would not build any of the new transmission line segments presented in the SEIS and EIR. Implementing this alternative would preclude most short-term environmental impacts associated with construction activities. This alternative would not meet the Project's purpose and need. The No Action Alternative would not alleviate the greater

Sacramento area power system voltage stability, reliability, and security problems. While Western and interconnected transmission system owners, Load Serving Entities, and area utilities would continue to take appropriate measures to manage power system reliability, they may be unable to meet system reliability standards and contractual obligations under the No Action Alternative.

Western has proactively developed Environmental Protection Measures (EPMs) to protect sensitive resources in the field. These EPMs would be implemented as part of the Project.

Preferred Alternatives

Determining the preferred alternatives requires that Western balance many factors with the Project's purpose and need. Western identified the No Action Alternative as the Environmentally Preferred Alternative because it would have no additional impacts to environmental resources. However, the No Action Alternative would not meet the Project's purpose and need. Therefore, Western selected Alternative B as the Environmentally Preferred *Action* Alternative. With the implementation of the EPMs, Alternative B would not result in a significant adverse environmental effect on any resource and would be the shortest route, requiring the least amount of disturbance for the transmission line and access roads. In comparison to the other action alternatives, Alternative B would have greater effects on wetlands, including vernal pools and existing residences; however, these impacts could be minimized through proper design. Also, Alternative B would generally have less impact on other resources, including air quality, giant garter snake habitat, existing and planned habitat conservation plan areas, prime and unique farmland, and planned transportation projects.