

4.1 Introduction to the Environmental Impact Analysis

4.1.1 Introduction

The sections in this chapter present information on existing environmental conditions in the proposed Project area for each resource or issue not excluded from analysis due to the lack of potential for significant impacts (see Section 4.1.5, *Effects Not Found to be Significant*, below). These sections also describe environmental impacts that would result from the implementation of the proposed Project described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*. These analyses consider the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of the proposed Project, including short-term impacts during construction and long-term impacts during Project operation and maintenance (O&M). The sections in this chapter also identify mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant adverse impacts and describe any adverse impacts that cannot be avoided through the implementation of mitigation measures. The scope of the impact analysis is commensurate with the level of detail for the proposed Project provided in Chapter 2 and the availability and/or quality of data necessary to assess impacts.

Because the SEIR is a supplement to the Lompoc Wind Energy Project (LWEP) EIR, the SEIR utilizes and updates information presented in the LWEP EIR that remains relevant for the proposed SWEP, including environmental setting descriptions, impact analyses, and mitigation measures. In accordance with Section 15163(b), a SEIR “need only contain the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate” for the revised project. Where still relevant and up to date, the SEIR relies on descriptions of existing environmental conditions and applicable regulations contained in the LWEP EIR. Similarly, descriptions of environmental impacts in the LWEP EIR that remain relevant to the SWEP are utilized, with updates and adjustments applied as needed to accurately characterize the impacts of the proposed Project. Mitigation measures from the LWEP EIR have been updated and new mitigation measures proposed as needed.

4.1.2 Analytical Assumptions

The impact analysis was conducted with the following general assumptions:

- The applicable laws, regulations, and policies of Santa Barbara County and other jurisdictions with authority over the Project would be applied consistently to the Project.
- All applicable laws, regulations, and standards of the State of California would be applied consistently to the proposed Project.
- The applicant will obtain all required permits and approvals from other agencies and comply with all legally applicable terms and conditions associated with those permits and approvals.
- The proposed Project would be constructed, operated, and maintained as described in Chapter 2, *Project Description*.

- PG&E will implement all Avoidance and Protection Measures set forth in Section 2.5.5 for construction of its upgraded facilities and will obtain and comply with all required permits and approvals from other agencies.

4.1.3 Types of Effects

The potential impacts from those actions that would have direct, indirect, and cumulative effects have been considered for each resource. This includes both short-term and long-term impacts. The terms “effect” and “impact” as used interchangeably in this document are synonymous and may refer to either detrimental or beneficial effects. The types of impacts examined in this document are described below.

- Direct effects are caused by the Project and occur at the same time and place as the Project.
- Indirect effects are caused by the Project and occur later in time or further in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable.
- Cumulative impacts are those effects resulting from the incremental impacts of the Project when combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions (regardless of which agency or person undertakes such actions). Cumulative impacts could result from individually insignificant but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.
- Short-term impacts occur only for a short time after implementation of an action. For example, noise impacts from construction activities would be considered short-term in nature.
- Long-term effects occur for an extended period after implementation of a project. For example, noise generated during facility operations would be a long-term impact as it would last for as long as the facility is in operation.

4.1.4 Mitigation Measures Included in the Analysis

CEQA requires that a significance determination be made for each adverse impact identified in a SEIR. Significance thresholds are identified for each environmental issue or resource. The significance thresholds serve as a benchmark for determining if a project would result in significant adverse environmental impacts when evaluated against the baseline (i.e. existing environmental conditions). Impacts are assessed relative to each significance threshold to determine whether the Project would have no impact, a less-than-significant impact, or a significant impact, and these determinations consider whether feasible measures are available to reduce the severity of each significant impact. Impacts are quantified to the extent possible. In addition, the determination of an impact’s significance is derived from standards set by regulatory agencies, knowledge of the effects of similar past projects, professional judgment, and plans and policies adopted by governmental agencies.

CEQA requires that feasible mitigation measures be identified to reduce or avoid significant impacts. The State CEQA Guidelines Section 15370 define mitigation as:

- a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and

- e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

For significant impacts identified in the following resource/issue sections, mitigation measures have been proposed to reduce the significant impacts to the extent feasible. If impacts remain significant after all feasible mitigation is applied (i.e. continue to exceed the relevant significance threshold), the analysis concludes that the impact is significant and unavoidable.

Some measures that serve to reduce impacts are required by agencies other than the County, and their implementation will be enforced by those other agencies. The applicant will be required to comply with the requirements of these other agencies.

The transmission upgrades to be undertaken by PG&E on the Manville 115-kV power line would not contribute to any of the Project's significant and unavoidable (Class I) impacts. The combination of the Avoidance and Protection Measures presented in Section 2.5.5, PG&E Electrical System, and the mitigation measures presented throughout Chapter 4 of this SEIR would reduce all impacts associated with the PG&E upgrades to a less-than-significant level.

4.1.5 CEQA Significance Conclusions

For the purposes of CEQA compliance, a determination has been made regarding the significance of each adverse impact identified for the proposed Project and alternatives. The CEQA Lead Agency is responsible for determining whether an impact is significant and is required to adopt feasible mitigation measures to minimize or avoid each significant impact. A series of thresholds, identified in the "Significance Thresholds" section for each resource/issue area, are used to help the Lead Agency gauge the significance of each impact.

In order to provide a systematic evaluation of potential environmental impacts, a classification system has been applied to the impacts of the proposed Project. These classifications indicate whether an identified impact is significant and whether mitigation measures can reduce the severity of the impact to a level that is not significant. The following classifications were uniformly applied to each adverse impact:

- **Class I: Significant impact.** Class I impacts are significant adverse effects that cannot be mitigated below a level of significance through the application of feasible mitigation measures. Class I impacts are significant and unavoidable.
- **Class II: Significant impact.** A Class II impact is a significant adverse effect that can be reduced to a less-than-significant level through the application of feasible mitigation measures presented in this SEIR.
- **Class III: Adverse; less than significant.** A Class III impact is a minor change or effect on the environment that does not meet or exceed the criteria established to gauge significance.
- **Class IV: Beneficial impact.** Class IV impacts represent beneficial effects that would result from project implementation.

In cases where there is a potential for a certain type of impact, but no such impact would occur for the proposed Project, the reasons for no occurrence of an impact are described and a designation of "no impact" is assigned.

A significant impact is defined by CEQA as "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project" (State CEQA Guidelines §15382).

Although guidance provided by CEQA is used to help determine the significance of impacts, the determination of impact significance is based on the thresholds detailed in the Santa Barbara County Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (revised March 2018) and the independent judgment of the CEQA Lead Agency. The establishment of any criteria used to evaluate the significance of impacts is also the responsibility of the CEQA Lead Agency. Some impact categories in this document lend themselves to scientific or mathematical analysis and, therefore, to quantification, while others are more qualitative. Some resource topics, such as air quality, have significance thresholds that are established by agencies with regulatory authority for that resource and have been determined by the CEQA Lead Agency to be applicable to the analysis.

4.1.6 Environmental Issues Addressed

The County of Santa Barbara, as Lead Agency, determined that a SEIR was warranted for the proposed Project due to the potential for Project implementation to result in significant environmental impacts. Agency and public input received during the scoping period (July 2 through August 1, 2018) and at the public scoping meeting held on July 19, 2018, were used, along with the previous LWEP EIR and the NOP Scope of Work, in determining the scope of evaluation for the SEIR. The environmental issues considered in this SEIR and their corresponding section numbers are listed below:

- 4.2 Aesthetics/Visual Resources
- 4.3 Agricultural Resources
- 4.4 Air Quality
- 4.5 Biological Resources
- 4.6 Cultural and Tribal Resources
- 4.7 Energy
- 4.8 Fire Hazards & Emergency Services
- 4.9 Geology and Soils
- 4.10 Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- 4.11 Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- 4.12 Hydrology and Water Quality
- 4.13 Land Use and Planning
- 4.14 Noise
- 4.15 Paleontological Resources
- 4.16 Recreation
- 4.17 Transportation and Traffic
- 4.18 Utilities and Service Systems

Sections 4.2 through 4.18 provide a description of the environmental setting, applicable regulations, impacts associated with the proposed Project, and mitigation measures designed to reduce significant impacts.

4.1.7 Effects Found Not to be Significant

An EIR is an informational document intended to identify the significant environmental impacts of a project and identify possible ways to minimize these significant impacts. The impacts of the proposed Project were analyzed using the significance thresholds identified in the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (ETGM), as amended March 2018 (County of Santa Barbara, 2018) and the State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. Prior to preparing this SEIR and based on these significance thresholds, the County determined that construction and operation of the proposed Project would not result in significant impacts to mineral resources, population and housing, or public services; therefore, those topics are not analyzed in this SEIR. The reasons for these conclusions are presented in Section 6.5, *Effects Found Not to Be Significant*.

The environmental topics listed in Section 4.1.6 above are analyzed in this SEIR and, as part of that analysis, additional less-than-significant impacts have been identified. These additional less-than-significant impacts are discussed in Sections 4.2 through 4.18 and are also listed in Section 6.5.

4.1.8 Organization of the Environmental Analysis

To assist the reader in comparing information on the various environmental impacts of the proposed Project, each resource/issue section is organized in the following manner:

- **Environmental Setting.** A description of existing environmental conditions in the Project area against which the environmental effects of the Project are evaluated.
- **Regulatory Setting.** A summary of relevant laws and regulations.
- **Significance Thresholds.** Criteria used to determine the significance of identified impacts.
- **Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures.** An analysis of the proposed Project's direct and indirect impacts along with a conclusion regarding the significance of each identified impact. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce or avoid significant impacts anticipated to result from Project implementation.
- **Cumulative Effects.** A discussion of effects resulting from the impacts of the Project when combined with similar effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
- **Impact Significance Summary.** A summary of each identified impact, mitigation measures proposed for each significant impact, and a significance conclusion for each impact after application of the mitigation measures.

This page intentionally left blank.