

# **Notice of Preparation**

Of a Joint Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report

Including

## **Notice of Public Scoping Meetings/Request for Scoping Comments**

On the Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report

For the

### **San Luis Transmission Project**

**November 22, 2013**

#### **To: All Interested Parties**

#### **A. Introduction**

The San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority (Authority), a California joint powers agency, comprised of water agencies representing approximately 28 federal and exchange water service contractors within the western San Joaquin Valley, San Benito and Santa Clara counties, and Western Area Power Administration (Western), an agency of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), intend to prepare a joint Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) referred to as an EIS/EIR for the San Luis Transmission Project (SLTP). The Authority is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency and Western is the federal lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Authority and Western will prepare the Draft and Final EIS/EIR to comply with both CEQA and NEPA. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is a cooperating agency under NEPA.

Western proposes at a minimum to construct, own, operate, and maintain a new 230-kilovolt (kV) transmission line about 62 miles in length between Western's Tracy Substation and Western's San Luis Substation and a new 70-kV transmission line about 5 miles in length between the San Luis and O'Neill Substations. Western also will consider other transmission construction options including a new 500-kV transmission line about 62 miles in length operated at 230-kV between Western's Tracy and San Luis Substations; a new 500-kV transmission line operated at 500-kV about 62 miles in length between the Tracy Substation and PG&E's Los Banos Substation; and a new 230-kV transmission line about 18 miles in length between San Luis Substation and Dos Amigos Substation. Proposed corridor locations would traverse through Alameda, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced Counties.

This Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIS/EIR provides:

- a brief description of the proposed SLTP;
- a summary of potential project impacts;
- the times and locations of public scoping meetings;
- information on how to provide comments; and
- instructions for obtaining additional project information.

Concurrent with publication of this NOP, Western published a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the SLTP in the Federal Register. The Authority and Western intend to prepare a joint EIS/EIR and will conduct a public scoping process, during which public comments will be received on the scope of the EIS/EIR, the proposed action, alternatives, and other issues to be addressed in the EIS/EIR.

## B. Project Description and Location

Since 1965, the United States has had a contract with PG&E to transmit power between Western's Tracy Substation and Reclamation's San Luis Unit facilities near Santa Nella and Los Banos, including but not limited to the Gianelli Pump-Generating Plant, Dos Amigos Pumping Plant and the O'Neill Pump-Generating Plant (SLU). Reclamation requested that Western investigate options for transmission service so Reclamation can continue to economically pump, store, release and convey and deliver federal water resources through the SLU facilities under its existing and future renewal water service contracts when the current contract with PG&E expires in 2016. Western must respond to Reclamation's request consistent with Western's Open Access Transmission Service Tariff and existing laws.

Reclamation's water contractors have a direct interest in Western's transmission service arrangements to serve the SLU facilities and are represented by the Authority. One of the primary purposes of the Authority is to operate and maintain certain Reclamation Central Valley Project (CVP) water pumping/conveyance facilities, including the O'Neill Pumping Plant. The Authority and its member agencies are responsible for payment of the cost associated with the delivery of the CVP water including the costs associated with power transmission. The Authority's interest is to ensure reliable and cost effective electrical transmission to allow the continued cost-effective delivery of CVP water supplies to its member agencies. Another primary purpose of the Authority is to represent the common interests of its member agencies by assisting them with ensuring water is available for beneficial use within their service area.

Western proposes at a minimum to construct, own, operate, and maintain a new 230-kV transmission line about 62 miles in length between Western's Tracy Substation and Western's San Luis Substation and a new 70-kV transmission line about 5 miles in length between the San Luis and O'Neill Substations. Western also will consider other transmission construction options including:

- a new 500-kV transmission line about 62 miles in length operated at 230-kV between Western's Tracy and San Luis Substations;
- a new 500-kV transmission line operated at 500-kV about 62 miles in length between the Tracy Substation and PG&E's Los Banos Substation; and
- a new 230-kV transmission line about 18 miles in length between San Luis Substation and Dos Amigos Substation.

Additional components of the proposed project would include constructing new 230-kV breaker terminal bays at Western's Tracy 230-kV Substation or new 500-kV breaker terminal bays at the Tracy 500-kV Substation; new 230-kV breaker terminal bays at Western's San Luis 230-kV Substation or new 500-kV breaker terminal bays at PG&E's Los Banos Substation. Western may also build new 230-kV breaker terminal bays at Western's Dos Amigos 230-kV Substation and a new 230/70-kV transformer bank and interconnection facilities at San Luis Substation.

The proposed project also would include the following facilities and improvements:

- Right-of-way easements for the transmission lines with a typical width of about 125 to 175 feet for 230-kV lines and 200 to 250 feet for the 500-kV line.
- Tubular or lattice steel structures used to support the transmission lines. For the 230-kV line, structures typically would be between 100 and 200 feet tall depending on site-specific conditions. A few taller structures may be required in some locations to address engineering constraints.

- Access roads, including improvements to existing roads, new overland access, and new unpaved temporary roads to access the proposed project facilities and work areas during construction and operation phases.
- Ancillary facilities, such as communications facilities (e.g. overhead fiber optic ground wires, regeneration facilities) for access control and protection.

Proposed and alternative corridors have been identified based on currently available information that avoid, to the extent possible, residential and known environmentally-sensitive areas. Western and the Authority will evaluate other potential alternatives, including obtaining transmission service from a local public utility or private agency or the California Independent System Operator.

Western and the Authority will consider a no action/no project alternative. Under the no action/no project alternative, Western will continue to receive transmission service for the SLU under the existing contract with PG&E. Under CEQA, the no action/no project alternative would serve as a baseline against which to measure the environmental effects of the proposed action alternatives. For purposes of impact analysis under CEQA, the environmental baseline consists of the existing physical conditions in the vicinity of the project at the time of issuance of this NOP.

## **C. Potential Environmental Effects**

The EIS/EIR will discuss the potential environmental effects of the proposed SLTP, and will identify mitigation measures to avoid or substantially reduce any potentially significant adverse effects, to the extent feasible. It also will discuss the potentially significant environmental impacts of the alternatives to the transmission line route and the proposed mitigation to reduce those impacts.

Based on preliminary analysis, construction and operation of the proposed SLTP may result in the following environmental effects:

- Land use, recreation, and visual resources
- Water use and water quality
- Surface water features including rivers, floodplains, and wetlands
- Fish, wildlife, and vegetation, including critical habitat
- Socioeconomics
- Environmental justice
- Historic and cultural resources
- Geology, soil, and mineral resources
- Human health and electric and magnetic fields
- Construction-related impacts, including access, traffic, and noise
- Growth-inducing effects

No determinations have been made as to the significance of these potential impacts. Such determinations will be made in the EIS/EIR after the issues are thoroughly analyzed. The Authority and Western invite interested parties to suggest specific issues within these general categories, or other issues not included above, to be considered in the EIS/EIR. The EIS/EIR also will analyze the cumulative impacts of the proposed SLTP in combination with other present and planned projects in the area.

## D. Public Scoping

Pursuant to both CEQA and NEPA, the main intent of the EIR and EIS scoping process is to initiate the environmental review process for the project and to solicit input from affected governmental agencies and the public on the scope and content of the environmental document (i.e., the joint EIS/EIR). According to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d), the lead agency for a project may forego the detailed initial review of a project and begin work on the preparation of an EIR if the lead agency is able to determine that an EIR would clearly be required for the project. Because of the large-scale nature of the SLTP and its potential impacts on the environment, an Initial Study was not prepared and the Authority, in coordination with Western, will proceed with preparation of an EIS/EIR. A public scoping process will help to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth in the EIS/EIR, and to eliminate from detailed study those issues that are not pertinent to the final decision on the proposed project.

Members of the public, affected federal, State, and local agencies, interest groups, and other interested parties may participate in the scoping process by providing written comments or recommendations concerning the issues to be analyzed in the EIS/EIR.

## E. Public Scoping Meetings

Open-house public scoping meetings will be held on January 8 and January 9, 2014 (see specific dates, times and locations in the table below). The purpose of the scoping meetings is to provide information about the proposed SLTP, review project maps, answer questions, and take written comments from interested parties. The scoping meetings will not be used to resolve differences concerning the merits of the project or to anticipate the ultimate decision on the proposed project.

The dates and locations for the public scoping meetings are provided in the table below. Each meeting is scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m. with an open-house format during which attendees are invited to speak one-on-one with SLTP representatives and cooperating agency staff. Attendees are welcome to come and go at their convenience throughout the meeting.

All meeting locations will be wheelchair accessible. Please call Aspen Environmental Group at (916) 379-0350x17 if you are in need of additional accommodations, including translation services.

### Public Scoping Meetings

Date	Location/Address
Wednesday, January 8, 2014 5:00 – 8:00 PM	Tracy Transit Center 50 East Sixth Street, Tracy, CA 95376
Thursday, January 9, 2014 5:00 – 8:00 PM	Hotel Mission De Oro 13070 S. Highway 33, Santa Nella, CA 95322

## F. Scoping Comments

At this time, the Authority and Western are soliciting comments regarding any issues and alternatives that should be considered in the preparation of the EIS/EIR. Suggestions for submitting scoping comments are presented at the end of this section. Written comments must be postmarked or sent by no later than **January 21, 2014**. All written comments may be submitted in a variety of ways: (1) by mail, (2) by electronic mail (email), (3) by fax, or (4) by attending a Public Scoping Meeting (see times and locations above) and/or by providing a written comment at the meeting. Instructions for each method of comment submittal are provided below.

**By Mail:** If you send comments by mail, please use first-class mail and be sure to include your name and return address (please write legibly). All written comments on the scope of the SLTP EIS/EIR must be sent to:

**Mr. Don Lash  
NEPA Document Manager  
Western Area Power Administration  
Sierra Nevada Region  
114 Parkshore Drive  
Folsom, CA 95630**

**By Electronic Mail:** E-mail communications are welcome; however, please remember to include your name and return address in the email message. Email messages must be sent to [SLTPEIS-EIR@wapa.gov](mailto:SLTPEIS-EIR@wapa.gov).

**By Fax:** Faxed comments must be sent to (916) 353-4772. Your name and return address must be included in the fax.

**Suggestions for Effective Participation in Scoping:** Following are some suggestions for preparing and providing the most useful information for the SLTP EIS/EIR scoping process.

- Review the description of the proposed SLTP.
- Review the potential environmental effects.
- Attend the scoping meetings.
- Submit written comments.
- Suggest mitigation measures.
- Suggest alternatives.

## **G. Agency Comments**

We are seeking comments from all CEQA Responsible and Trustee Agencies and all other public agencies with jurisdiction by law with respect to the project as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIS/EIR. Agency responses should identify the issues to be considered in the EIS/EIR, including significant environmental issues, alternatives, mitigation measures, and whether the responding agency will be a responsible or trustee agency, and the basis for that determination. Due to the time limits mandated by state and federal laws, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but must be postmarked by no later than January 21, 2014. Please send your comments to:

**Mr. Don Lash  
NEPA Document Manager  
Western Area Power Administration  
Sierra Nevada Region  
114 Parkshore Drive  
Folsom, CA 95630**

## **H. Additional Project Information**

**Internet Website:** In addition to notice to be given in the manner required by law, information about the environmental review process will be posted on the Internet at: [www.sltpeis-eir.com](http://www.sltpeis-eir.com). This site will be used to post all public documents during the environmental review process and to announce upcoming public meetings. Additional project information will be posted at: <http://www.wapa.gov/sn/environment/>.



-  Substations
-  Proposed Corridor
-  Alternative Corridor
-  County

## San Luis Transmission Project

### Project Overview

