INTRODUCTION

Western Area Power Administration (Western), under the U.S. Department of Energy, has a contract with PG&E to transmit power between Western’s Tracy Substation and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) San Luis Unit facilities near Santa Nella and Los Banos. Western’s transmission contract with PG&E will end in spring 2016. Upon contract termination, power transmission costs to the San Luis Unit will increase.

Reclamation submitted a request to Western to interconnect several key San Luis Unit facilities to Western’s Central Valley Project transmission system. In response to the request, Western is investigating power delivery options. These options directly impact the costs of Reclamation’s delivery of federal water through the San Luis Unit. The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (Authority), under agreement with Reclamation, operates and maintains a part of the San Luis Unit and has a direct interest in the requested transmission service.

Western is required to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposal to construct the transmission project. Western is the lead federal agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Authority is the lead agency for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Western and the Authority will prepare a joint EIS/EIR. Reclamation is a cooperating agency in preparation of the EIS.

WHAT IS THE CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT?
The Central Valley Project is a series of dams, power plants and canals in Northern California that serves municipal and industrial water customers, and promotes greater agricultural productivity in California. It is one of the largest water delivery systems in the world.

WHAT IS THE SAN LUIS UNIT?
Developed as part of the Central Valley Project and the State of California Water Project, the San Luis Unit furnishes more than 1.25 million acre-feet of water as a supplemental municipal, industrial and irrigation supply to water users in Fresno, Kings, Merced, Santa Clara and San Benito counties.
PROPOSED PROJECT

Western proposes to construct, own, operate and maintain new transmission lines between Western’s Tracy Substation and several key pumping and generating facilities of the Central Valley Project San Luis Unit.

NEPA and CEQA require federal and state agencies to evaluate a range of reasonable alternatives to achieve the purpose of and need for the proposed project. Western and the Authority will evaluate a range of alternatives that include transmission lines, connection of various substations, additional project features and a no action/no project option. Project features may include one or more of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSMISSION LINE VOLTAGE</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE TRANSMISSION LINE LENGTH (IN MILES)</th>
<th>SUBSTATION CONNECTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>230-kilovolt (kV)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Western’s Tracy and San Luis Substations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-kV</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Western’s San Luis and O’Neill Substations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-kV (230-kV)*</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Western’s Tracy and San Luis Substations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500-kV</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Western’s Tracy and PG&amp;E’s Los Banos Substations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230-kV</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Western’s San Luis and Dos Amigos Substations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This option would install a 500-kV transmission line that operates at 230-kV.

WHAT IS A WESTERN RIGHT-OF-WAY?
A Western right-of-way or ROW is an easement on property owned by others that establishes Western’s right to construct, operate and maintain transmission line facilities.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT MAY ALSO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Construction of breaker terminal bays at various substations
- Construction of transformer bank and interconnection facilities at the San Luis Substation
- Right-of-way easements for the transmission lines with widths of 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 230-kV line: structures would be between 100 and 200 feet tall depending on site-specific conditions
  - Taller structures may be required 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, for access control and protection

Figure 1. Proposed corridors would be located in Alameda, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties. Western proposes the project follow existing transmission rights-of-way.
NO ACTION/NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE
The No Action/No Project Alternative serves as a baseline against which to measure the potential environmental effects of the alternatives. Under the No Action/No Project Alternative, Western will continue to receive transmission service for the San Luis Unit under contract with PG&E.

PROJECT NEED
The San Luis Unit is a key component in delivering water to central valley agricultural companies and farmers. The transmission lines, if constructed, would minimize expected power delivery cost increases for operating the San Luis Unit.

THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT AND CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT
NEPA requires federal agencies to consider the potential impacts on the human and natural environment before making a decision on a proposed project. CEQA was enacted to address concerns about environmental quality in the State of California. With the development of an EIS/EIR, Western and the Authority will:

- Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed project and alternatives
- Evaluate reasonable alternatives that could avoid or minimize adverse impacts
- Identify mitigation measures
- Provide information and environmental analyses for public review and comment
- Disclose to decision makers the environmental impacts, proposed mitigation measures and public comments

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
Western and the Authority will analyze the potential effects on environmental resources from the proposed project. Some resource areas to be analyzed in the EIS/EIR may include, but are not limited to:

- 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

Other resource areas will be identified by the public during the scoping period, the first phase of the environmental review process. If you have a suggestion on resource areas to analyze, share your comments and thoughts by January 21, 2014.
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Public involvement is a fundamental part of the development of an EIS/EIR. Public and agency comments provide decision makers with local knowledge before making a decision. The public participates in the process by:

• Helping to identify environmental issues and potential alternatives during the scoping period
• Evaluating and commenting on the analysis of the proposed project during the Draft EIS/EIR public comment period

NEXT STEPS

After the close of the scoping period on January 21, 2014, Western and the Authority will consider all comments received, and will begin the environmental analysis and prepare the Draft EIS/EIR. Below is an overview of the EIR/EIS development process and opportunities for public participation.

NEPA/CEQA PROCESS AND TIMELINE

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS

The 60-day public comment period for the scoping phase is from November 22, 2013, through January 21, 2014. Government agencies, elected officials, federally-recognized tribes, organizations and individuals are encouraged to participate and submit comments in any of the following ways:

• By attending public scoping meetings
• By emailing SLTPEIS-EIR@wapa.gov
• By faxing 916-353-4772
• By mailing comments to:
  Mr. Donald Lash  
  NEPA Document Manager  
  Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region  
  114 Parkshore Drive  
  Folsom, CA 95630

All comments must be postmarked by January 21, 2014, to be considered in the development of the Draft EIS/EIR. Western and the Authority welcome and appreciate your comments.