

4.0 Environmental Assessment

The following sections in Chapter 4 evaluate the potential environmental impacts from the Proposed Project. The analysis of each resource category begins with an examination of the existing physical setting (baseline conditions as determined pursuant to Section 15125(a) of the CEQA Guidelines) that may be affected by the Proposed Project as well as the regulatory framework that applies to the Proposed Project area. A completed CEQA Checklist is provided in Appendix C, based on the conclusions of this PEA. The effects of the Proposed Project are defined as changes to the environmental setting that are attributable to project construction and operation.

The Proposed Project does not involve changes to existing natural gas transmission pipelines used to transport natural gas to and from the Storage Field, nor any new pipelines or piping, with the exception for minor piping modifications required to connect the proposed Central Compressor Station to the Storage Field. Similarly, as described in Chapter 3.0, Project Description, the proposed Project does not change any aspect of gas storage within the Facility, except to allow a higher injection rate and therefore more rapid field cycling. Therefore, the Storage Field itself will not produce environmental impacts requiring evaluation.

This assessment covers all components of the proposed Project. However, as discussed in Chapter 3.0, some construction and operational elements of the proposed Project are minor activities. For example, installation of upgraded relay systems and equipment at the existing SCE Newhall, Chatsworth, and San Fernando Substations will not result in any structural changes or other permanent constructions within these facilities. Similarly, some construction support functions such as material storage and staging represent minor activities with minimal potential for resource impact. Assessment of these and similar minor project elements was performed, but not specifically discussed in the resource sections. These elements are specifically discussed in cases where a resource may be impacted.

Significance criteria are identified for each environmental resource area. The significance criteria serve as a benchmark for determining if a project would result in a significant adverse environmental impact when evaluated against the baseline. According to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15382, a significant effect on the environment means “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the Project”. If significant impacts are identified, feasible Mitigation Measures are developed and proposed to eliminate or reduce the level of the impacts and focus on the protection of sensitive resources.

Compliance with laws, regulations, ordinances, best practices and standards designed to reduce impacts are not considered mitigation measures under CEQA. Where such rules and practices are applicable to specific resource areas affected by the Proposed Project, SoCalGas and SCE have agreed and SoCalGas proposes to incorporate Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) as project design features that will be implemented to maintain existing conditions and minimize environmental impacts. These APM's will ensure that the Proposed Project conforms to the policies and best practices of SoCalGas and SCE, and compliance with applicable environmental laws.