Decision _____

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY, a California corporation, for a Permit to Construct the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project Pursuant to General Order 131-D. (U39E.)	Application 24-06-008

DECISION GRANTING PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY A PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT THE PLAINFIELD SUBSTATION UPGRADE PROJECT

Summary

This decision grants Pacific Gas and Electric Company's request for a permit to construct the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project. The decision determines the Final Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration complies with the California Environmental Quality Act, and approves the mitigation measures and applicant proposed measures included as part of the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program.

This proceeding is closed.

1. Background

On June 18, 2024, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) filed Application (A.) 24-06-008 for a Permit to Construct (PTC) to upgrade and expand the Plainfield Substation with two 5 megavolt ampere reactive power

(MVAR) shunt capacitor banks and related equipment. PG&E claims the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project (Project) is needed to address low voltage concerns in the 60 kilovolt (kV) transmission system and help maintain electric transmission system reliability in the cities of Woodland and Davis, and surrounding areas in Yolo County. PG&E says the current estimated cost at completion is approximately $26.8 million, and the expanded substation will be able to accommodate future upgrades when warranted.

The Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project (Project) would be located in unincorporated Yolo County, between the cities of Woodland and Davis, approximately 1.5 miles west of California State Route 113. The existing Plainfield Substation currently occupies approximately 0.9 acres (200 by 200 feet) adjacent to County Road 27. The Project would include the expansion and upgrade of Plainfield Substation by adding two 5 MVAR shunt capacitor banks and related equipment that would boost the voltage of the 60 kilovolt (kV) lines to acceptable levels. The substation expansion area, located directly east and south of the existing substation boundary, is currently used for agricultural purposes. This expansion would extend the substation 415 feet east and 235 feet south of the existing substation structures, adding approximately 5.2 acres to the substation footprint. After the proposed expansion, the Plainfield Substation would occupy approximately 6.1 acres.

In addition to the two new shunt capacitor banks, the substation expansion would include upgrades to the existing 60 kV bus, modifications to the existing Spill Prevention Control and Counter Measures containment system, installation of a stormwater retention pond, installation of a larger Modular Protection

Automation and Control enclosure, and the replacement and installation of tubular steel poles and all-aluminum conductor power lines. New fencing, lighting, and access road improvements would also be installed.

The Project is subject to review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as PG&E's PTC application is a project the Commission has discretion to approve or deny.[1] Before making a decision about PG&E's application, the Commission is required to evaluate potential environmental impacts associated with the Project and present the findings in an environmental document for public review and comment, pursuant to CEQA.

The application includes the Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) prepared pursuant to Rule 2.4 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.[2] The Project was identified by the California Independent System Operator (CAISO) in its transmission planning process as part of the Vaca Dixon Area Reinforcement Project to ensure the reliability of the CAISO-controlled grid.

As the CEQA Lead Agency, the Commission prepared an Initial Study (IS) to evaluate potentially significant effects of the Project on the environment. The IS determined that any potentially significant impacts can be mitigated to less-than-significant levels, so a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared. The draft IS/MND was published on April 9, 2025, with comments due by May 9, 2025. The final IS/MND was published on July 8, 2025.

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[1] *See*, Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 21065, 21080.

[2] All subsequent references in this decision to "Rules" are to the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, California Code of Regulations Title 20, Division 1, Chapter 1.

PG&E's planned in-service date for this project is July 2027, with a target project completion date of March 2028 for remaining activities that need not be completed prior to the in-service date (i.e., commissioning, testing, final grading, demobilization, and site restoration). PG&E estimates 30 months of construction and plans to begin construction later this year or early next year.

A prehearing conference was held on June 12, 2025. On July 24, 2025, the Assigned Commissioner's Scoping Memo and Ruling (Scoping Memo) was issued. The Scoping Memo identified the issues to be determined, confirmed the proceeding category as ratesetting, and found that evidentiary hearings were not required.

On July 25, 2025, PG&E filed a Motion to Move Exhibits into Evidence (Evidentiary Motion). The record of this proceeding was closed on July 25, 2025.

1.1. Submission Date

This matter was submitted on July 25, 2025, upon the filing of PG&E's Motion to move exhibits into evidence.

2. Issues Before the Commission

The issues to be determined in this proceeding are:

1. Is there no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before the Commission, that the project as proposed or revised (to avoid or mitigate the effects to a point where no significant effects would occur) may have a significant effect on the environment?
2. Did the Commission review and consider the MND, was the MND completed in compliance with CEQA, and does it reflect the Commission's independent judgment?

3. Is the Proposed Project designed in compliance with the Commission's policies governing the mitigation of EMF using low-cost and no-cost measures?

3. PG&E Has Met Its Burden To Be Granted a Permit To Construct (PTC) To Upgrade And Expand The Plainfield Substation

To issue a PTC pursuant to General Order (GO) 131-D, the Commission must find that the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project complies with CEQA.[3] In evaluating whether to approve a proposed project, CEQA requires the lead agency[4] (the Commission in this case) to conduct a review to identify the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project and ways to avoid or reduce environmental damage.

The Commission has the authority to mitigate the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project through the approval of mitigation measures within the Commission's jurisdiction, unless the changes or alterations are infeasible for specific economic, legal, social, technical and other considerations. The mitigation measures are intended to reduce the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project to less-than-significant levels.

[3] Subsequent to the filing of this application the Commission adopted GO 131-E in D.25-01-055. As this application was filed when GO 131-D was in effect, it is analyzed under that General Order.

[4] CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 14, Div. 6, Ch.3) § 15367 ("Lead Agency" is "the public agency which as the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. The lead agency will decide whether an EIR or negative declaration will be required for the project and will" prepare the appropriate environmental document.).

3.1. There is No Substantial Evidence that the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project will have a Significant Impact on the Environment after the Incorporation of the Mitigation Measures Included in the Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

As part of its review under CEQA, the lead agency conducts an initial study to identify the environmental impacts of a proposed project and ways to avoid or reduce the environmental damage. If the initial study shows that there is no substantial evidence that a proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment, or if the initial study identifies potentially significant impacts and a proposed project proponent makes or agrees to revisions to the project that will reduce all project-related environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels, then the lead agency must prepare a negative declaration or MND, subject to public notice and the opportunity for the public review and comment.[5]

CEQA requires that, prior to approving a proposed project, the lead agency consider the MND along with any comments received during the public review process,[6] and that the lead agency adopt the MND only if it finds on the basis of the whole record that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment and that the MND reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis.[7] If the lead agency adopts an MND, CEQA requires that it also adopt a program for monitoring or reporting

[5] CEQA Guidelines §§ 15070-15073.

[6] *See,* Table 2-1, PG&E Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project, Final Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration, July 2025.

[7] CEQA Guidelines § 15074(a)-(b).

on the changes or conditions required to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects.

Here, we find that there is no substantial evidence that the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project will have a significant impact on the environment after the incorporation of the mitigation measures included in the Final IS/MND. Although the Draft IS/MND identified potentially significant impacts during and after construction of the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project, all of these impacts can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level by implementation of Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) or other mitigation measures.[8]

The Draft IS/MND identified potentially significant impacts in the following areas: (1) biological resources; and (2) utilities and service systems. To avoid or reduce the potential significant impacts listed above, the Draft IS/MND identified mitigation measures in addition to the APMs identified by PG&E.

The APMs avoid or reduce a majority of the potentially significant impacts to less-than-significant levels. However, the Draft IS/MND includes additional mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant impacts of the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project to less-than-significant levels in the following resource areas: (1) biological resources; and (2) utilities and service systems.[9] Together these mitigation measures will reduce the impacts to less-than-significant levels.

[8] *See*, Table ES-1, Final IS/MND at ES-4 to ES-11

[9] Final IS/MND at ES-3 to ES-18.

The Final IS/MND includes the APMs and all mitigation measures recommended in the Draft IS/MND with a few minor modifications.[10] The Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program (MMCRP) attached to this decision as Attachment A provides a detailed implementation plan to ensure that the identified mitigation measures and APMs are properly implemented.[11] PG&E is responsible for the implementation of all APMs and mitigation measures identified for the environmental impacts of the construction and operation of the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project.[12] With PG&E's implementation of the identified APMs and mitigation measures as well as compliance with the MMCRP, all project-related environmental impacts would be avoided or reduced to a less-than-significant levels with the incorporation of feasible mitigation measures.

Since the circulation of the Draft IS/MND, there have been no "substantial revisions" to the IS/MND, as defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15073.5.

3.2. The Final IS/MND was Completed in Compliance with CEQA

The Commission must determine whether the Final IS/MND was completed in compliance with CEQA.

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[10] Some APMs have been superseded by Commission recommended mitigation measures, as described in the Final IS/MND. Non-superseded APMs are considered part of the Proposed Project and, upon adoption of the Final IS/MND, will be part of the Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program to assure that implementation of and compliance with the mitigation measures would be monitored and enforced by the Commission. *See*, Final IS/MND at ES-3.

[11] Final IS/MND at Chapter 5.

[12] *Id*. at 5-3 to 5-5.

The Final IS/MND describes the CEQA process and the steps taken to comply with those requirements, including extensive public outreach and notice efforts.[13] The Final IS/MND identifies all potentially significant environmental impacts, and in combination with the APMs proposed by PG&E, specifies additional mitigation measures to mitigate any potentially significant environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels.[14]

We find that the Final IS/MND was completed in compliance with CEQA. The Commission's preparation of the Final IS/MND complies with the applicable CEQA requirements. Additionally, the mitigation measures and APMs set forth in the MMCRP are designed to reduce or eliminate the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project and meet the criteria set forth in CEQA Guidelines Section 15370.[15]

3.3. The Final IS/MND Reflects the Commission's Independent Judgment and Analysis

The Commission must determine whether the Final IS/MND reflects the Commission's independent judgment and analysis.

In this case, the Commission's Energy Division oversaw the CEQA process and development of the Final IS/MND. In addition, the Commission will exercise its independent judgment and analysis when it reviews and considers the Final IS/MND and the proposed decision in this proceeding.

[13] *Id*. at 1-1 to 1-3.

[14] *Id*. at Chapter 5.

[15] *Id.*

We find that the record shows the Final IS/MND reflects the Commission's independent judgment and analysis. The Commission's thorough and independent analysis shows that no significant environmental impacts from the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project will remain after incorporation of PG&E's proposed measures and the Commission's imposed mitigation measures.[16]

3.4. Electromagnetic Field (EMF)

The Commission must evaluate whether the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project was designed in compliance with the Commission's policies governing the mitigation of EMF effects using low-cost and no-cost measures. Section X of GO 131-D requires that applications for a PTC include a description of the measures taken or proposed by the utility to reduce the potential exposure to EMF generated by the proposed project.[17] The Commission's EMF Design Guidelines for Electrical Facilities, dated July 21, 2006, provide a checklist for new substations in excess of 50 kV. Additionally, D.06-01-042 determined that only no-cost EMF mitigation measures are required for projects located in agricultural or undeveloped areas.

In accordance with Commission requirements, PG&E provided a Field Management Plan with its application that indicated the specific no-cost field reduction measures taken to reduce EMF exposure.[18] PG&E states the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project is sited in an agricultural area and the no-cost field

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[16] *See, id.* at ES-3 to ES-13.

[17] GO 131-D at 13 (last modified by D.23-12-035). *See infra,* Fn. 2 (While the adoption of GO 131-E moved this requirement to Section VII(B), it is the same requirement that is in Section X of GO 131-D which PG&E addresses in its application.).

[18] A.24-06-008 at 9, Exhibit D; *see also*, Final IS/MND at 2-43 to 2-44.

reduction measures are sufficient under the EMF Design Guidelines.[19] Based on the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project's location and design, PG&E used the Substation Field Management Plan Checklist to demonstrate its adoption of the no-cost EMF reduction measures.[20]

We find that PG&E has complied with the Commission's policies governing the mitigation of EMF effects. The Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project is located in an agricultural area, therefore, PG&E's inclusion of no-cost measures is consistent with Commission requirements. Therefore, the no-cost measures included in the Field Management Plan satisfy the Commission's requirements.

4. Minor Project Refinements

The Commission's Energy Division may approve requests by PG&E for minor project refinements that may be necessary due to the final engineering of the project, so long as such minor project refinements are located within the geographic boundary of the study area of the Final IS/MND and do not: (1) result, without mitigation, in a new significant impact based on the criteria used in the Final IS/MND; (2) substantively conflict with any mitigation measure or applicable law or policy; or (3) trigger an additional discretionary permit requirement.

A minor project refinement should be strictly limited to a minor project change that will not trigger other discretionary permit requirements, that does not increase the severity of an impact or create a new impact, and that clearly

[19] A.24-06-008 at 1; *see also*, EMF Design Guidelines for Electrical Facilities at 1.2E, D.06-01-042.

[20] A.24-06-008 at 1.

and strictly complies with the intent of the mitigation measure. PG&E shall seek any project changes that do not fit within these criteria by a petition to modify today's decision. A change to the approved project that has the potential for creating significant environmental effects will be evaluated to determine whether supplemental CEQA review is required.

Any proposed deviation from the approved project and adopted APMs or mitigation measures, including correction of such deviation, shall be reported immediately to the Commission and the mitigation monitor assigned to the construction for their review and Commission approval.

5. Summary of Public Comment

Rule 1.18 allows any member of the public to submit written comment in any Commission proceeding using the "Public Comment" tab of the online Docket Card for that proceeding on the Commission's website. Rule 1.18(b) requires that relevant written comment submitted in a proceeding be summarized in the final decision issued in that proceeding.

There have been no relevant public comments on the Docket Card related to this proceeding.

6. Procedural Matters

PG&E offers six exhibits, including the Application and attachments thereto as well as the Final IS/MND. There were no objections, and in accordance with our rules we receive the following documents into evidence:[21] (1) Application of Pacific Gas & Electric Company for a Permit to Construct the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project (June 18, 2024) (Application); (2) Project

[21] Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure Rule 13.8.

Overview map, Application Exhibit A (June 18, 2024); (3) Proponent's Environmental Assessment, Application Exhibit B (June 18, 2024); (4) Preliminary Project Schedule, Application Exhibit C (June 18, 2024); (5) Substation EMF Field Management Plan Checklist, Application Exhibit D (June 18, 2024); and (6) Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, Pacific Gas and Electric Company Plainfield, Substation Upgrade Project; California Public Utilities Commission (July 8, 2025).

This decision affirms all rulings made by the Administrative Law Judge and assigned Commissioner in this proceeding. All motions not ruled on are deemed denied.

7. Waiver of Comment Period

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 311(g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is waived.

8. Assignment of Proceeding

Karen Douglas is the assigned Commissioner and Robert Haga is the assigned Administrative Law Judge in this proceeding.

Findings of Fact

1. The Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project consists of the following: (1) adding two 5 megavolt ampere reactive power (MVAR) shunt capacitor banks; (2) creating upgrades to the existing 60 kV bus; (3) modifying the existing Spill Prevention Control and Counter Measures containment system; (4) installing a stormwater retention pond; (5) installing a larger Modular Protection Automation and Control enclosure; (6) replacing and installing tubular steel poles and all-aluminum conductor power lines; and (7) installing new fencing,

lighting, and access road improvements at the Plainfield Substation, located in unincorporated Yolo County.

2. All environmental impacts related to the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project are less than significant or reduced to less-than-significant levels with incorporation of feasible mitigation measures identified in the MMCRP of the Final IS/MND.

3. With the implementation of the APMs and mitigation measures identified in the MMCRP of the Final IS/MND, the potentially significant impacts to biological resources and utilities and service systems will be reduced to less than significant levels.

4. The Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project is designed in compliance with the Commission's policies governing the mitigation of EMF effects.

5. The Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project is located in an agricultural area.

6. The draft IS/MND was published on April 9, 2025, for a public review period from April 9, 2025, to May 9, 2025.

7. The final IS/MND was published on July 8, 2025, and addressed the comments received regarding the draft IS/MND.

8. The Commission has reviewed and considered the information contained in the Final IS/MND.

9. The Final IS/MND complies with CEQA.

Conclusions of Law

1. PG&E should be granted a permit to construct the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project in conformance with the mitigation measures and APMs included in the MMCRP attached to this order.

2. PG&E's Motion to Move Exhibits Into Evidence should be granted and all exhibits so moved should be received into the evidentiary record of this proceeding.

3. With the implementation of the MMCRP, there is no substantial evidence that the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project will have a significant impact on the environment.

4. The Final IS/MND reflects the Commission's independent judgment and analysis.

5. The Commission's preparation of an MND was supported by substantial record evidence.

6. The Final IS/MND was completed in compliance with CEQA requirements.

7. The Commission should adopt the Final IS/MND in this decision.

8. This order should be effective immediately.

9. This proceeding should be closed.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Pacific Gas and Electric Company is granted a permit to construct the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project in conformance with the mitigation measures attached to this order.

2. The Final Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Plainfield Substation Upgrade Project is adopted.

3. The mitigation measures and applicant proposed measures included as part of the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program attached to this order as Attachment A, are adopted.

4. Pacific Gas and Electric Company's Motion to Move Exhibits Into Evidence is granted and all exhibits so moved are received into the evidentiary record of this proceeding.

5. Application 24-06-008 is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated _____, at San Francisco, California

ATTACHMENT A

Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and
Reporting Program (MMCRP)