



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## Certificate of Determination Exemption from Environmental Review

*Case No.:* 2012.0940E  
*Project Title:* Crystal Springs Valve Automation  
*Project Sponsor:* Kristina Zaccardelli, Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
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### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) proposes to upgrade existing equipment at the Crystal Springs Valve Station to improve the operational safety of its natural gas transmission system as required by the California Public Utilities Commission. The project site is located on San Francisco Public Utilities (SFPUC) Peninsula Watershed lands on Buri Buri Ridge east of Highway 280 and north of Highway 92 in San Mateo County. The project would provide remote monitoring and control, automatic valve shutdown and inline inspection capabilities and other safety enhancements as further described below.

### EXEMPT STATUS:

Categorical Exemption, Class 1 (California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15301)

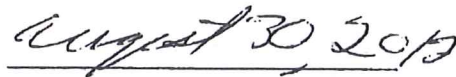
### REMARKS:

The proposed project would consist of minor alteration of existing facilities used to provide natural gas service involving no expansion of use and would not have a significant effect on the environment. See next page.

### DETERMINATION:

I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and local requirements.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Bill Wycko  
Environmental Review Officer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

cc: Robert Stiving, PG&E  
Tim Ramirez, SFPUC Natural Resources Division  
Irina Torrey, SFPUC BEM

Virna Byrd, M.D.F.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued):**

The California Public Utilities Commission has required PG&E to automate certain valves to improve the safety of its natural gas transmission system. Accordingly, the proposed project would involve replacement of existing valves, installation of new SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) equipment, pressure transmitters, over-pressure protection, in-line inspection facilities, and fencing. A new underground cable would be installed within a new utility easement from an existing power pole to provide electric power to the new automatic shutdown and monitoring equipment.

The existing valves and equipment are housed in a buried concrete vault located in an approximately 6,600-square-foot utility easement (see attached photographs). The site is subject to regular disturbance for fire suppression and maintenance activities. Construction equipment and materials would be staged within PG&E's utility easement as well as some temporary laydown areas on SFPUC property. PG&E is requesting SFPUC approval to expand its easement at the Crystal Springs Valve Station by approximately 18,000 square feet. The entirety of the valve station within the easement area would be fenced and graveled. Construction access would be via an existing access road between the valve lot to a rest stop located on the east side of Highway 280 between Exits 34 and 36. Approximately 400 cubic yards of grading (balanced cut and fill) is proposed for the valve area and approximately 50 cubic yards of grading to realign the SFPUC access road.

Temporary construction activities would involve minor grading, excavation and backfilling, installation of fencing, welding, and site restoration. Construction equipment would include two track hoes, one front end loader and one dump truck. Project construction is anticipated to take approximately six to eight weeks.

**REMARKS (continued):**

**Exempt Status**

CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, or Class 1, provides for an exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(b) specifically applies to existing facilities of both investor and publicly-owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage or other public utility services. The proposed project would involve minor alteration of existing mechanical equipment and facilities used to provide natural gas utility service involving negligible expansion of use, and is therefore within the range of activities properly exempted pursuant to Class 1.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 lists exceptions to the use of categorical exemptions. The exceptions include that an exemption shall not be used where the project would result in a significant cumulative impact (Section 15300.2(b)), where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances (Section 15300.2(c)), for a project that may result in damage to scenic resources within a state designated scenic highway (Section 15300.2(d)), or where the project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource



(Section 15300.2(f)). As described below, there are no conditions associated with the proposed project that would suggest the possibility of a significant environmental effect.

### Biological Resources

The SFPUC Peninsula Watershed lands contain significant biological resources, including special-status wildlife and plant species and sensitive habitats. According to biological resources and rare plant surveys conducted in the spring and summer of 2012, the project site does not contain special-status species, riparian habitat, wetlands or other sensitive natural communities.<sup>12</sup> Although the project site is located near a population Crystal Springs lessingia, the project as sited and designed would not affect this special-status plant species. The project site is characterized in the biological resources surveys as highly disturbed and includes existing graveled areas. Therefore, the project as proposed would not have a significant adverse impact on biological resources due to unusual circumstances.

For the reasons stated above, the project as sited and designed would not have a significant effect on biological resources. Furthermore, PG&E proposes to implement various avoidance and minimization measures designed to minimize site disturbance during project construction, to prevent construction vehicles and equipment from inadvertently operating outside of the construction and staging areas, and to provide for restoration of areas temporarily disturbed during construction.

The SFPUC has indicated that in accordance with its standard conditions of approval for PG&E's Watershed Access Permit, the project must be undertaken in strict conformity with the project description contained in PG&E's permit application. The SFPUC will monitor project construction to ensure compliance with the approved permit, including implementation of the proposed avoidance and minimization measures.

### Scenic Resources

Highway 280 in the project vicinity is a state designated scenic highway. The Crystal Springs Valve Lot is located approximately 360 feet east of Highway 280. Construction equipment and activities would have a short-term impact on the visual character of the site as viewed from the highway, but the project would have no long-term effect on the appearance of this existing facility. Following completion of construction, temporarily disturbed areas would be restored and revegetated. As such, the proposed project would not result in damage to a scenic resource.

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Fish and Game, California Natural Diversity Database for 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle of *Montara Mountain*, and *Woodside*, queried August 2012. The results of this records search are available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA as part of Case File No. 2012.0940E.

<sup>2</sup> Special-Status Plant Survey Report, PG&E PSEP Valve Automation Project at the Crystal Springs Valve Station, San Mateo California, prepared by AMEC Environment & Infrastructure Inc. and Orion Environmental Associates, June 2012. This document is available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA as part of Case File No. 2012.0940E.

### **Cultural Resources**

The proposed excavation and ground disturbance would occur in previously disturbed areas. The project site does not contain any structures that are listed or that are potentially eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources or on any local register of historical resources, and has a low sensitivity for the presence of buried cultural resources and surface deposits of archaeological artifacts.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the proposed project is not anticipated to cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a cultural resource.

### **Cumulative Impacts**

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15300.2(b) provides that a categorical exemption shall not apply if significant impacts would result over time from successive projects of the same type in the same place. The proposed project involves the minor alteration of existing facilities and mechanical equipment to improve the operational safety of PG&E's natural gas transmission system. PG&E is proposing to undertake similar projects at two other valve lots and to replace certain sections of its natural gas pipeline system at various locations within the SFPUC Peninsula Watershed. By their minimal nature and widely dispersed locations that would not create significant environmental impacts on biologic, visual, historic, or archeological resources, the impacts of PG&E's natural gas transmission system safety upgrades would not result in significant cumulative impacts on the environment.

### **Conclusion**

As noted above, the project as proposed would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances, would not result in damage to a scenic resource, would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, and would not contribute to cumulative impacts on the environment. Therefore, the proposed natural gas transmission system safety upgrades are categorically exempt from CEQA under Class 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Buried Site Sensitivity Study and Historical Resource Records Search for PG&E Line 109 Pipeline Replacement Project, prepared by Far Western Anthropological Research Group, December 15, 2011. Cultural Review for L-109, MP 30.77, L-132, MP 31.93 Crystal Springs, Hillsborough, CA, prepared by PG&E Cultural Resource Specialist, February 28, 2012. These documents are available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, Suite 400, San Francisco, CA as part of Case File No. 2012.0940E.





INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 7, 2013

TO: Rosanna Russell  
Director, Real Estate Services

FROM: *for* Irina Torrey  
Manager, Bureau of Environmental Management

SUBJECT: CEQA compliance for SFPUC's Real Estate Division issuance of an expanded easement for PG&E's Crystal Springs Valve Lot

The Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) proposes to upgrade existing equipment at the Crystal Springs Valve Station to improve the operational safety of its natural gas transmission system as required by the California Public Utilities Commission. The project site is located on San Francisco Public Utilities (SFPUC) Peninsula Watershed lands on Buri Buri Ridge east of Highway 280 and north of Highway 92 in San Mateo County. The project would provide remote monitoring and control, automatic valve shutdown and inline inspection capabilities and other safety enhancements. As part of this project, PG&E is requesting SFPUC approval to expand the PG&E easement at the Crystal Springs Valve Station by approximately 23,000 square feet. SFPUC's Real Estate Division is now considering PG&E's application for the easement expansion (the proposed Project).

Both the safety improvements and the expansion of the easement were subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) assessment by the San Francisco Planning Department, Environmental Planning Division, under Planning Department Case Number 2012.0940E. The Planning Department determined that the proposed safety enhancement, including expansion of the SFPUC easement, qualified for a Class 1 categorical exemption from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Section 15301. Class 1 provides for an exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(b) specifically applies to existing facilities of both investor and publicly-owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage or other public utility services. The proposed project would involve minor alteration of existing mechanical equipment and facilities used to provide natural gas utility service involving negligible expansion of

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use, and is therefore within the range of activities properly exempted pursuant to Class 1.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 lists exceptions to the use of categorical exemptions. The exceptions include that an exemption shall not be used where the project would result in a significant cumulative impact (Section 15300.2(b)), where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances (Section 15300.2(c)), for a project that may result in damage to scenic resources within a state designated scenic highway (Section 15300.2(d)), or where the project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource (Section 15300.2(f)). San Francisco Environmental Planning Division determined that there are no conditions associated with the proposed project that would suggest the possibility of a significant environmental effect, and formalized this determination in a Certificate of Determination (attached) on August 30, 2012.

Subsequent to this time, there have been no significant changes in the easement proposal or other changes in circumstances that would result in new or more significant environmental effects from the proposed issuance of the easement. Therefore, categorical exemption issued on August 30, 2012 by the City of San Francisco provides CEQA compliance for SFPUC's proposed Real Estate transaction, and CEQA compliance can be considered complete.

Attachment: Certificate of Determination

cc: Kendrick Li, RES  
Josh Keene, RES  
Sally Morgan, BEM