# **BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



Order Instituting Rulemaking To Revise and Clarify Commission Regulations Relating to the Safety of Electric Utility and Communications Infrastructure Provider Facilities. Rulemaking No. 08-11-005 (Issued November 13, 2008)

# MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE REPLY BRIEF FOR ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING R.08-11-005 PHASE 2

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# MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE OPENING BRIEF FOR ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING R.08-11-005 PHASE 2

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Rule 13 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) and the schedule established by Administrative Law Judge Kenney,<sup>1</sup> the Mussey Grade Road Alliance (MGRA or Alliance) files this reply brief on issues raised in Phase 2 of the Order Instituting Rulemaking R.08-11-005.

The Alliance and other parties filed comprehensive opening briefs in this proceeding and, for the most part, the content of these briefs matched the corresponding commentary submitted in the workshop report. The Alliance has consequently found that most of the comments it would have regarding the briefs of other parties were already put forward in its own opening brief. Consequently, this reply brief will deal only with new issues raised in briefs that had not been brought up in the workshop comments or which the Alliance did not fully address in its opening brief. The Alliance urges the Commission to consider this reply brief in tandem with its opening brief as it tries to weigh the arguments of the Alliance with those of other parties.

For the convenience of the Commission, the Alliance has maintained exactly the same format as in its opening brief. Our recommendations may be found in our opening brief.

# **II. OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES AND ISSUES**

The Consumer Protection and Safety Division (CPSD) raised an overarching issue that the Alliance finds to be of relevance to this proceeding, and which the Commission should keep in mind when evaluating the content of briefs by all parties. Entitled "The Utilities and CIPs Should Not Be Allowed To 'Vote' on How They Wish To Be Regulated," this section of the (CPSD) opening brief refers to the fact that there are cases in the comments where "…the utilities or CIPs point to the number of votes that a particular PRC received to support their arguments as to why it should be adopted by the Commission."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> R.08-11-005; ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE'S RULING GRANTING THE MOTION TO EXTEND THE SCHEDULE FOR PHASE 2; May 7, 2010; p. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF THE CONSUMER PROTECTION AND SAFETY DIVISION; September 3, 2010; p. 5. (CPSD Brief)

The Alliance notes that this tendency has been repeated in the briefs, sometimes to an egregious degree – and here we refer specifically to the brief by Southern California Edison (SCE). For a number of the MAP PRCs, SCE states that a proposed rule change (PRC) had "very little support" or received "very little opposition", which in fact completely misrepresents the workshop discussions.

For instance, regarding the discussion of Rule 35, Exception 3 Proposal By The Joint Electric Utilities (which had to do with the proposal by utilities to cut off power to all properties owned by customers who refuse access to utilities for purposes of vegetation management), SCE states that this PRC "received very little opposition".<sup>3</sup> In fact, discussion of this item was long and involved, and raised many concerns among advocacy groups. By "little opposition" here and concerning other PRCs we assume that SCE is referring to the disparity in numbers between utility representatives than non-utility representatives (or perhaps SCE means that this PRC was opposed by "little people" rather than "big corporations").

A rough tally of the voting roster reveals that there were 27 companies or utilities and their contractors participating in the workshop, as opposed to eight advocacy groups.<sup>4</sup> Hence, it is obvious that the sheer volume of votes will favor pro-industry measures at the cost of pro-ratepayer measures. We therefore agree with CPSD that "the significance of the number of parties voting for or against an item should not count as much as who the entities are that voted for or against a proposed regulation, as well as the consistency of the parties' position with the Commission's purpose in issuing the OIR 'to adopt additional requirements and clarifications, which may be necessary in order to further reduce the risk of hazards, including fires."<sup>5</sup>

# **III. JURISDICTION ISSUES**

The Alliance has no comment at this time.

<sup>4</sup> The voting sheet is available on numerous pages of the Workshop report, Appendix B, for instance on p. B-102. We have classified CAISO, CPSD, DRA, Facilities Management, LA County, MGRA, CFBF, and IBEW as advocacy groups. We apologize in advance to any group incorrectly left off of (or placed onto) this list.

<sup>5</sup> CPSD Opening Brief; p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY (U 338-E) ON THE PHASE 2 WORKSHOP REPORT TO BE PROVIDED; September 3, 2010; p. 26. (SCE Opening Brief)

## **IV. ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION ISSUES**

The Alliance has no comment at this time.

# V. PROPOSED RULES

# A. Consensus Rules

The Alliance has no comments on the consensus rules at this time.

## **B. MAP Rules**

# 1. MAP No. 4 – General Order 95, Rule 18C [Mussey Grade; App. B. – V.A.]

The Alliance sponsored this PRC and we discuss our position and those of other parties in our opening brief.<sup>6</sup>

# a) LA County

Los Angeles County, which is responsible for the safety of ten million people, supports this rule. Its brief states that "Contingency planning for major utilities should not be a consideration, it should be a given. While significant actions, like turning off the power, should only be considered under the most extreme conditions, the utilities need to have this procedure fully operational and available when faced with extreme circumstances."<sup>7</sup>

# b) CPSD

CPSD explains their neutral vote on this item in the following way: "Although CPSD agrees with the intent of this proposal, contingency planning is something utilities should already be applying in their daily operations. Therefore CPSD voted neutral on this item."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> R.08-11-005; MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE OPENING BRIEF FOR ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING R.08-11-005 PHASE 2; September 3, 2010; p.8. (Alliance Opening Brief)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> R.08-11-005; LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S OPENING BRIEF ON WORKSHOP REPORT FOR PHASE II; September 3, 2010; p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> CPSD Opening Brief; p. 13.

While the Alliance concurs that utilities *should* have contingency plans for extreme conditions in place, we have seen no evidence (with the possible exception of SDG&E) that this is so. This is understandable from the standpoint that extreme events (exceeding the system design limitations) are expected to be rare, and it is unlikely that such conditions will arise under the tenure of any particular utility officer. For most disastrous conditions – floods, earthquakes, and (non-power line) fires, utilities have in place recovery plans – this is "standard" contingency planning. What concerns the Alliance, however, is that extreme fire-weather conditions could cause a utility's infrastructure to become the *source* of the disaster, with multiple near-simultaneous ignitions as observed in October 2007 in California, and in 1977, 1983, and 2009 in Australia. We therefore maintain that utilities should have contingency plans in place that would prevent an extreme weather event from necessarily resulting in a conflagration.

We are asking the Commission to adopt the premise that such events are "foreseeable", rather than "acts of God", and to require that utilities show that they have measures in place that will protect the public from their infrastructure under foreseeable conditions.

## c) SCE

Southern California Edison claims that "The proposed rule is also severely flawed because it assumes the utilities (or anyone else) can predict wildfires in areas containing facilities that conform to G.O. 95. Thus, the proposed rule is impossible to operationalize."<sup>9</sup>

This has been a common misconception regarding this PRC. The Alliance PRC does not require that utilities be able to predict wildfires nor does it, as other parties have claimed, require that utilities be capable of preventing 100% of wildland fires. What it *does* require is that electrical utilities be capable of recognizing when conditions may be likely to exceed GO 95 design requirements, and having engineering and / or operational measures in place that would prevent the widespread damage that would be *likely* if conditions significantly in excess of utility design specifications were to occur.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY (U 338-E) ON THE PHASE
 2 WORKSHOP REPORT TO BE PROVIDED; September 3, 2010; p. 18. (SCE Opening Brief)

SCE also urges "Mussey Grade to support the full funding of each utility's vegetation management program (in conformance with the Phase 1 decision) and infrastructure replacement program."<sup>10</sup> While this is a constructive suggestion, neither of these measures would ameliorate the failure case that the Alliance proposed this PRC to address.

# d) SDG&E

SDG&E is concerned that "The contingency planning proposal submitted by Mussey Grade Road Alliance (Mussey Grade) would duplicate work already being done in SDG&E's ongoing collaborative process. There is no need for the Commission to order SDG&E to come up with a contingency plan to deal with wind and fire danger -- SDG&E and interested stakeholders are hard at work addressing these issues already."<sup>11</sup>

First off, as SDG&E knows, the Alliance is part of that collaborative process and has been for almost a year. That process led SDG&E to declare unilaterally that it will shut off electricity at the tolerance level of its equipment, which it interprets as 56 miles per hour gust winds under GO 95. There was no discussion of this approach (other than a general reminder by SDG&E that the Commission requires it to operate its system safely) before SDG&E announced it – and told all of the so-called stakeholders at the time that the company has no shut off plan other than this unilateral decision. Moreover, SDG&E is missing the point of this PRC – the work it and stakeholders are doing to deal with wind and fire danger will form the *basis* of the contingency plan. We stated in our opening brief that this work would likely make them compliant with the proposed rule.<sup>12</sup>

# e) Multi-Jurisdictional Utilities

PacifiCorp and Sierra Pacific raise a legitimate concern with this proposed rule change as they perceive it would affect their territories: "As described above, high winds in both PacifiCorp's and Sierra's service territories typically occur during the winter and correspond with snow and rain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Id.; p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> R.08-11-005; PHASE 2 OPENING BRIEF OF SAN DIEGO GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY (U902E); September

<sup>3, 2010;</sup> p. 9. (SDG&E Opening Brief).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 15.

As the windiest periods occur in the wet season, fire risks are much lower and contingency plans like those contemplated in this proposal are unlikely to reduce fire risks."<sup>13</sup>

We address this concern in our opening brief, which explains that contingency plans should cover foreseeable conditions.<sup>14</sup> We have not examined meteorological data for PacifiCorp or Sierra's service territories, nor consulted with meteorologists regarding this issue, so we hesitate to say that they should be exempted from this rule. However if electrical utilities are able to demonstrate that there is no reasonable scenario that would lead to wind levels exceeding GO 95 design standards during fire weather conditions, that would, in our opinion, meet the intent of this rule. Likewise, we would not object to certain geographical areas being included in or excluded from this rule, provided that this geographical basis is determined on a scientific basis. A statewide utility hazard map (discussed in MAP 14) might form an appropriate basis for such classification.

# f) Summary

All in all, the Alliance believes that this PRC is a practical step that the electrical utilities would want to undertake in order to lessen the chances that ignitions by their equipment develop into catastrophic fire events. One would think that, following the 2007 Firestorm in Southern California, at least SDG&E and SCE would support such a rule because it would benefit them to do so. However, their arguments against this PRC make it obvious that they often forget the purpose of this rulemaking. Instead, they prefer to argue against measures that would prevent loss of life and property than to either suggest or support new approaches to safety that would decrease the chance of wildland fires being started by them. Contingency planning is necessary to prevent disasters before they start and that is why the Alliance became involved in this process and proposed this PRC.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> R.08-11-005; JOINT OPENING BRIEF OF THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL ELECTRIC UTILITIES; September
 3, 2010; p. 9. (MJEU Opening Brief)
 <sup>14</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; pp. 14-15.

# 2. MAP No. 7 – General Order 95, Rule 35 (paragraph 4) [Joint Elec. Utils.; App. B – VIII.A.]

The Alliance opening brief argued against adoption of this PRC.<sup>15</sup>

## a) TURN

We note that while TURN supported this PRC, it did so contingent upon a number of additional notification requirements, which include a change to Electric Rule 11 (Discontinuance of Service) that would explicitly state that utilities have discretion to cut off power when they cannot gain entry to do required vegetation management,<sup>16</sup> a thirty day notice period prior to shut-off,<sup>17</sup> and notification of all occupants in the event of shut-off of a multi-unit structure.<sup>18</sup>

The Alliance agrees with TURN that "[t]here are certain instances, however, where a customer's reluctance to allow a utility onto their property may be entirely reasonable."<sup>19</sup> However, we do not think that simply expanding notification requirements would be sufficient to address these issues, and electrical utilities will likely argue that introducing this delay could potentially leave a hazardous situation unaddressed. The Alliance, on the other hand, argued that facilitating law enforcement support would reduce the potential for abuse while still allowing the utilities ready access to address hazardous situations.<sup>20</sup>

However, if the Commission determines that this PRC should be adopted, the Alliance believes that the additional measures proposed by TURN will have an overall effect of reducing impacts on the public, especially those who are "innocent bystanders" who would have their power shut off but who have no control over access to the utility facilities.

<sup>16</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK IN PHASE TWO OF RULEMAKING 08-11-005; p. 4. (TURN Opening Brief)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>.Alliance Opening Brief; p. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Id.; p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Id.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Id. p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 20.

# b) PacifiCorp

The description Sierra PacifiCorp of how it manages its own problem customers is illustrative of the point that the Alliance wishes to raise about the relationship between electrical utilities and law enforcement:

"Only after numerous informal attempts to resolve a situation with a customer will PacifiCorp involve legal processes such as contacting local law enforcement or seeking an injunction. There would be extremely limited instances in which PacifiCorp would seek to shut-off service."<sup>21</sup> Sierra Pacific makes a very similar statement.

This description begs the question of why some electrical utilities are completely unable to get adequate support from either law enforcement or the courts. We note that what they are effectively asking for is an authority that transcends the law and is answerable to no one. As we noted in our opening brief, we believe that this is approaching the problem backwards. If law enforcement officials and the courts are leaving real hazard situations in place, the Commission needs to ask how this could possibly be the case and what can be done to address it.

Finally, we also note that if the circumstances under which this draconian power would be enacted are "extremely limited", then we would expect they make up a very small fraction of refusals. This is a tremendous amount of power being brought to bear to address what is admittedly a very limited problem. We do not consider it appropriate.

# c) SCE

The Alliance *does* consider SCE's stated approach to customer refusals and shut-off to be appropriate and reasonable. Specifically:

"As a matter of policy, SCE does not intend to turn off service at a location different from the location causing the unsafe condition, but may choose to terminate service at the location of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> R.08-11-005; JOINT OPENING BRIEF OF THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL ELECTRIC UTILITIES; September 3, 2010; p. 18. (MJEU Opening Brief)

obstructed access if the threat of harm from the condition appears imminent and all other options for correcting the condition have been exhausted."<sup>22</sup>

In fact, SCE does not fully support the ability of utilities to turn off power at locations other than those that are directly responsible for the hazard:

"SCE supports the right to terminate service at the location where access is restricted, and is neutral on authority to terminate service at other locations where the property owner receives service."<sup>23</sup>

However, according to PG&E, the authority to shut off power to protect public safety already exists under its current tariff rules:

"PG&E already has the right to deny or terminate service immediately and without notice to any customer who threatens to create a hazardous condition (PG&E Tariff rule 11(H)(1)(b)) or with reasonable notice if 'any of the required clearances between the existing Service Facilities and any object becomes impaired under any applicable laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations'. (PG&E Tariff rule 16(F)(3)(b).)"<sup>24</sup>

It is therefore not clear to the Alliance why SCE is supporting this PRC when the authority it would grant greatly exceeds that of SCE's current termination policy.

# d) PG&E

Despite the fact that it has authority to terminate service to eliminate hazardous conditions under its Tariff rule 11(H)(1)(b), PG&E also claims that it needs more authority in order to turn of multiple locations. It maintains, though that this would be a very rare occurrence because the utility is already has strong disincentives to turn off power:

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EDISON COMPANY (U 338-E) ON THE PHASE
 2 WORKSHOP REPORT TO BE PROVIDED; September 3, 2010; p. 25. (SCE Opening Brief)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Id.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF PACIFIC GAS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY (U39E) ON PHASE 2 JOINT PARTIES' WORKSHOP REPORT FOR WORKSHOPS HELD JANUARY – JUNE 2010; September 3, 2010; p. 10. (PG&E Opening Brief)

"An electric power company is in the business of making money from providing service, and no company makes any money when it is forced to terminate power to a customer -- especially at multiple locations. Such action stops the meter(s) from running and guarantees an even unhappier customer. It simply runs counter to basic business incentives. Termination of power at one location to enforce vegetation management clearances is not something that a utility wants to do - althoughit may be forced to do so in extreme situations. Termination of power at multiple locations is the last thing that a utility wants to do."<sup>25</sup>

We do not believe that the logic of this statement is complete. Yes, utilities are businesses that make money by selling electricity to customers. However, there are customers that all businesses would prefer not to do business with - those who cost the company more than the company stands to make in profit from them. This is one basis for Commission regulation of shutoff practices. We would assume that stubborn refusal customers, who require numerous visits by utility staff, and possibly action on the part of utility attorneys, would fall into this category. Hence, this PRC would lighten the load for electrical utilities in such cases but would also potentially be subject to abuse because there is no significant business incentive to prevent inappropriate use of this proposed shut-off mechanism. Simply put, it is like shooting at a fly with a canon. It is better to let those utilities in favor of the PRC handle those few problem customers on an individual basis than to subject all customers to a shut off standard that could only be challenged after the fact.

# 3. MAP No. 7 – General Order 95, Rule 35 (3<sup>rd</sup> exception) [Joint Elec. Utils.; App. B – VIII.B.]

a)

The Alliance opposed this PRC in its opening brief.<sup>26</sup>

# 4. MAP No. 8 – General Order 95, Rule 35, Appendix E (Guidelines only) [Joint Elec. Utils.; App. B – IX.A.]

The Alliance argued against adoption of this PRC in its Opening Brief.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Id.; p. 11.
<sup>26</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 24.

# a) LADWP

The electric utility support for extending the minimum trim distance from 6.5 feet to 10 feet is not universal. The Alliance was pleased to see that LADWP does not think that an increased trim distance is necessary because: "overcutting can impact the health of the trees and may be counterproductive to existing utilities programs that combat GHG gases. For example, LADWP has undertaken numerous programs to reduce CO2 emissions, including distributing more than 100,000 trees through the "Trees for a Green LA"

Reduced trim cycles can maintain the proper balance of fire safety, while obtaining the proper clearances from conductors, preserving the health of the trees and enduring the environmental benefits."28

The Alliance noted in its own opening brief that the question of trim cycle timing is critical to the question of trim distances, and that one of the primary motivations for this PRC is to reduce electrical utility vegetation costs by reducing the trim cycle frequency<sup>29</sup> to the potential detriment of the trees involved.

## b) SDG&E

One claim that SDG&E makes to support this proposal for increased trim distances is that "it is sometimes necessary to take legal action, and in such instances the utility may only be allowed to trim to the minimum guidelines listed in Appendix E.<sup>30</sup> We assume that this is a hypothetical concern, as SDG&E has cited no cases as example. Besides, the language of the current guidelines clearly state that the specified trim distances are *minimum* trim distances. A court might deliberately misread the rule, but adopting a more stringent rule based upon this unlikely possibility would be inappropriate.

SDG&E goes on to question the credibility of the Alliance:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF THE LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF WATER AND POWER ON THE PHASE 2 JOINT PARTIES' WORKSHOP REPORT; p. 9. (LADWP Opening Brief) <sup>29</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> SDG&E Opening Brief; p. 21.

"On one hand, Mussey Grade professes to be very concerned about the possibility of wildfires in Southern California, and professes to be the concerned voice of San Diego County's extensive back country. On the other hand, however, Mussey Grade wants to limit the amount of tree trimming done around high-voltage conductors in high-risk fire zones to levels that SDG&E, SCE, and PG&E do not believe are adequate. This dichotomy should give the Commission pause as it considers all of the fire safety claims and arguments made by Mussey Grade."<sup>31</sup>

We assume that SDG&E also questions the safety commitment of LADWP and Los Angeles County, who also oppose this expanded trim distance. However, this observation by SDG&E suggests that it might be advantageous to reiterate the purpose and goals of the Mussey Grade Road Alliance.

It is our goal to protect the environs and quality of life of residents of the Mussey Grade Road area including specifically such matters as the preservation of trees as well as fire safety. By extension as intervenors before the CPUC, the Alliance also protects the environs and quality of life of other rural California residents living in similar environments. One key aspect of this protection in California, and a key concern and area of study of the Alliance, is fire safety. However, if avoidance of wildland fires were our sole or primary motivation, none of us would live here – it is dangerously fire-prone. Rural Californians accept a higher level of risk to life and property in order to benefit from the outstanding environmental quality that rural California offers. Achieving the proper balance between safety on the one hand and environmental health and aesthetics on the other is a constant struggle, for the back-country residents themselves and for the government agencies that serve them. The Commission has recognized the importance of this balancing act itself in D.97-01-044: "we must be certain that our efforts to insure safe and reliable service cause as little disruption to the natural environment and the aesthetics of affected property as possible, to the extent that we offer guidance about trimming beyond specified minimum clearances."

In fact, SDG&E's own data from the Mussey Grade area fully supports our assertion that SDG&E has been perfectly able to conduct trimming that is in excess of the minimum trim distances specified in Appendix E under the current guidelines: "86 percent of the trees trimmed by SDG&E in the vicinity of Mussey Grade Road (286 trees out of 330) were trimmed to 10-11.9 feet post-trim clearances. The remaining 44 trees were trimmed to additional clearances, but these were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Id.; p. 22.

not routine clearance trims that would be covered by the Appendix E recommended guidelines."<sup>32</sup> This has all been conducted under the *current* guidelines, without need of the expanded trim distances specified in this PRC.

We do not have knowledge of customer refusals or legal action taken by residents of the Mussey Grade area as SDG&E extended its trim distances over the last couple of years, though some residents have expressed dismay and concern due to the greater impact to the Mussey Grade oak canopy. Leaving aside the question of whether the current SDG&E trimming practices are appropriate, the Alliance is most concerned with the following question: If minimum trim distances are expanded from six to ten feet as proposed by this PRC, would SDG&E (or other utilities) take this as a message to expand their standard trimming distances to an even greater distance still? To 15 feet? To 20 ? To 25?<sup>33</sup> By increasing the *minimum* distance, we believe that electrical utilities will be encouraged to exercise greater *discretionary* trim distances – and they may do so not for safety reasons but rather to reduce costs by increasing the time between trim cycles.

We therefore request that the Commission reject this PRC as unnecessary and potentially counterproductive.

# 5. MAP No. 8 – General Order 95, Rule 35, Appendix E (Guidelines only) [Mussey Grade & Farm Bureau; App. B – IX.C.]

The Alliance and the Farm Bureau co-sponsored this proposed rule change.<sup>34</sup>

# a) LA County

Los Angeles County supports the Alliances and Farm Bureau's proposed rule language: "This proposed rule change, by expanding on the current rule, provides clear reasoning for both the public and the employees of the utility as to why clearance distance may need to be greater than the minimum clearance distances recommended at the time of pruning."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> SDG&E Opening Brief; p. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> A 25 foot minimum trim was suggested by SDG&E in Phase 1 of these proceedings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> LA County Opening Brief; p. 5.

# b) PG&E

PG&E is concerned that the proposed language would lead to difficulties with customers: "The phrase "tree health" (which has nothing to do with the overarching safety and reliability purposes of GO 95) especially could cause extended disagreements with property owners who might argue that the health of their tree will be damaged by any pruning at all."<sup>36</sup> However, this is a hypothetical concern that ignores the word "or" - any of the proposed criteria would be considered as reasonable grounds for pruning. It also ignores the fact that according to the stated criteria, tree health would be considered reasonable grounds for pruning beyond the minimum trim distance - for instance if the arborist were to decide that a more extensive cut would reduce the overall strain on the tree, or if the cut were extended to remove a diseased portion of the tree.

# c) SDG&E

SDG&E expresses concern that "...[p]roblem property owners would treat these as words of limitation, and claim that no additional trimming beyond the recommended minimums can take place because none of the three listed factors require trimming beyond the recommended minimums."<sup>37</sup> By "these words" SDG&E means "public safety, reliability or tree health", which is the phrase added to the original text offered by the IOUs. Unfortunately, SDG&E does not describe what legitimate purpose for tree trimming there might be that does not fall within these categories. As we explained in our opening brief, other electrical utilities were more explicit – they'd like to reduce costs through longer trim cycles, at the cost of greater impact to the quality of life in rural areas.38

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> PG&E Opening Brief; p. 13.
 <sup>37</sup> SDG&E Opening Brief; p. 26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; pp. 28-29.

# 6. MAP No. 13 – General Order 165, Section V [Mussey Grade & CPSD; App. B – XIV.A.]

## a) TURN

Both TURN<sup>39</sup> and Sierra Pacific<sup>40</sup> suggest that data collection for minor electric utility fires would be better conducted by fire agencies than by utility personnel. While this proposal looks reasonable on its face, there are two significant problems with it. For one, fire agencies may not respond to every fire if they are self-extinguishing. It may be that utility personnel discover that a fire has occurred when conducting an inspection or when investigating an outage. The second issue is that it is essential that the fire record contain an exact technical description of the utility components that are responsible for igniting the fire. Firefighters are trained to identify fire causes, and whether utility equipment is involved. However, they do not have the technical expertise of electric utility crews in identifying the components and failure mode involved in starting the fire.

It should be kept in mind that the primary beneficiary of fire data collection will be the utility that collects the data. This data will provide them with actionable information that they can apply to inspections, component selection and procedures in order to further their own fire prevention programs. Further value is added by pooling the data, which allows a broader range of incidents to be examined and compared between utility systems.

# 7. MAP No. 13 – General Order 165, Ordering Paragraph [PG&E; App. B – XIV.B.]

The Alliance opposed this proposed ordering paragraph in our opening brief.<sup>41</sup>

# a) LA County

Los Angeles County strongly objects to the ordering paragraph proposed by PG&E as a replacement for the data collection rule sponsored by the Alliance and CPSD for reasons discussed in the Alliance opening brief. LA County's concern, like that of the Alliance, is that this proposed ordering paragraph is simply a delaying tactic. LA County goes further to state that "...the utilities

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> TURN Opening Brief; p. 10.
 <sup>40</sup> MJEU Opening Brief; p. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 40.

have been less than enthusiastic about sharing data related to fires caused by power lines and equipment. Postponing the establishment of a data collection rule until after the rulemaking has ended will offer little recourse to CPSD and other public safety agencies if data offered or collected is insufficient."42

# b) SCE

The Alliance takes issue with SCE's characterization of the Alliance's and CPSD's data collection rule as "hastily proposed".<sup>43</sup> In fact, as we explained in our brief and comments, we originally proposed a data collection rule as early as Phase 1, and we had discussions with all electric utilities in order to garner support and explain the justification for the PRC. As noted by Los Angeles County,<sup>44</sup> utilities are loathe to divulge data even when required to do so by law. Therefore, it is not surprising that SCE and other electrical utilities have expressed opposition to this rule.

# 8. MAP No. 14 – Fire Maps [Mussey Grade & CPSD; App. B – XV.A.]

This PRC was co-sponsored by the Alliance and CPSD, and is discussed in the Alliance Opening Brief.45

# a) CAL FIRE

The proposed ordering paragraph was composed by CPSD and the Mussey Grade Road Alliance in consultation with CAL FIRE. It is specifically tailored to enable the full cooperation of CAL FIRE within the constraints CAL FIRE's own policies. This is acknowledged in CAL FIRE's opening brief:

"As stated in the Report, The Final Proposed Ordering Paragraph (Exhibit B, p. B-212) reflects Departmental staff input and, subject to staff availability and the ability to recover significant costs, CAL FIRE is willing to:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> LA County Opening Brief; p. 6.
<sup>43</sup> SCE Opening Brief; p. 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Op. Cite.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 42.

- Participate with CPUC staff, utilities, and other stakeholders in developing a work • plan for the generation, maintenance, and accessibility of more detailed and appropriate mapping.
- *Participate in a study that may be developed under the work plan.* •
- *Comment on the results of any fire mapping study presented in future CPUC* • workshops."46

Due to its "inspection, law enforcement, and other governmental considerations that relate to utilities, power lines, and fires"<sup>47</sup>, CAL FIRE has refrained from taking a position on many of the PRCs before the Commission. It should be noted that this PRC is the only one in Phase 2 receiving CAL FIRE's active support.

It should also be noted that CAL FIRE also interprets the Ordering Paragraph to allow the use of the Reax maps in the mapping creation process.<sup>48</sup>

# b) CPSD

CPSD quotes CAL FIRE's input from public agency workshops as to the key inputs for a state-wide utility-specific fire map would contain "updated or expanded data on vegetation and localized wind data...particularly extreme winds is critical to dealing with mapping that is responsive to the kinds of things that impact utility base.... [T]he main thing that's missing is detailed localized wind data, especially extreme events to our modeling."49

# c) SCE

SCE does not wish to have the CAL FIRE FRAP map permanently approved for inspection purposes. It was their hope that a replacement for it would be vetted in the Phase 2 workshops, but this did not occur.<sup>50</sup> The Alliance agrees and shares SCE's concern. This was our primary

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> R.08-11-005: OPENING BRIEF OF THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION(CAL FIRE); September 3, 2010; p. 2 (CAL FIRE Opening Brief)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Id.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Id.; p. 3: "Reax maps might serve as an appropriate starting point for developing a work plan."
 <sup>49</sup> Quoted in CPSD Opening Brief; pp. 35 -36.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> SCE Opening Brief; p. 10.

motivation for offering this proposed ordering paragraph – to create a process that will allow the Commission to create a scientifically defendable utility threat map.

# d) TURN

In its opening brief, TURN states that: "The inputs to such a map (weather, wind, vegetation cover, vegetation growth, etc.) are variable from year to year..."<sup>51</sup> Some discussion of map and condition variability occurred during the mapping subcommittee meetings, and there was general consensus that while conditions might change over a multi-year period, maps would remain essentially valid for an extended period of time. We note that the CAL FIRE FRAP maps currently in use were originally created in the 2001-2004 time frame.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the method used by the Reax consultants to create their fire map averaged weather over a multi-year period.<sup>53</sup>

The assertion by TURN that maps would need to be updated yearly is incorrect.

# e) PG&E

PG&E suggests an alternative process for map review and approval: "...the reasonable course is to allow CPSD time to review the REAX report, complete the peer review and publishing, and then have the Commission consider the adoption or approval of the REAX maps for CIPs use. This effort may be more appropriate for a Phase 3 of this proceeding."<sup>54</sup>

The Alliance has raised the point that CPSD does not have sufficient in-house fire expertise to be able to conduct a technical evaluation of the Reax report and map, which is why we felt it important to bring CAL FIRE into the process. We assume that CPSD would follow an evaluation process much like that described in the proposed ordering paragraph.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> TURN Opening Brief; p. 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> A.06-08-010; MG-1; PHASE 1 DIRECT TESTIMONY OF THE MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE; May 31, 2007; Appendix E; p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Chris Lautenberger, et al; Communication Infrastructure Provider Assets in the Wildland Setting; CIP Fire Threat Map; June 9, 2010; Prepared for California CIP Coalition; Reax Engineering Inc. Job # 10-0134. (Workshop Report; Appendix E); p. 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> PG&E Opening Brief; p. 18.

We have one additional concern regarding the suggestion of a Phase 3 for this proceeding for this purpose. One of the problems that plagued progress on the issue of the creation of utility-specific fire maps throughout this rulemaking is that each phase has come with a specific (and short) deadline. This has led to each phase producing "the best we can do for now" rather than the best overall map. For example, it led to the adoption of the FRAP maps against CAL FIRE's advice in Phase 1, and it has led to the submission of the CIP/Reax maps before they have been reviewed, not to mention leaving Southern California without a utility specific wind-map. We are concerned that the attempt to fit the review of the Reax map and / or development of a derivative or new state-wide map into the time constraints of a phased process would lead to more compromises on overall quality. This is why the Alliance favors the creation of a *process* through this ordering paragraph that will assure the production and maintenance of scientifically sound utility-specific maps for the entire state.

## f) Multi-Jurisdictional Utilities

Sierra Pacific and PacifiCorp give a misleading interpretation of the working group process regarding map development: "All workshop participants, including CPSD and Mussey Grade, were invited to participate in the mapping working groups. Any efforts to develop new maps should have been coordinated with the mapping working groups that were formed during workshops in this proceeding."<sup>55</sup> In fact, both CPSD and Mussey Grade were very actively involved in the mapping workshops, and were two of the parties that worked hardest in order to coordinate a unified approach. How this effort proceeded and failed due to legal concerns on the part of some working group members, leading to an independent process being spawned by the CIP Coalition, is described in the Alliance opening brief.<sup>56</sup>

# g) CIP Coalition

The CIP Coalition insists that the Reax map that it sponsored be immediately adopted without review because "the Commission does not require peer review with respect to expert reports submitted to the Commission. In fact, the Commission regularly reviews expert reports and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> MJEU Opening Brief; p. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; pp. 43-44.

testimony that have not undergone peer review and issues decisions addressing the merits of such reports."<sup>57</sup>

CSPD joined with the Alliance in sponsoring this proposed ordering paragraph precisely because neither CPSD nor any other division of the Commission has the relevant technical expertise to judge the correctness and completeness of the Reax map. As far as retaining external experts for this purpose, there is significant difficulty in choosing those as well – as those of us involved in the mapping working group learned. Because some experts have given testimony either in Commission proceedings or investigations, or in external litigation, there might very well be significant objections if the Commission were to choose an expert favored by either CPSD or by a utility. This is why we appealed to CAL FIRE as a neutral third party with technical expertise, and formulated an ordering paragraph that would allow their involvement.

The CIP Coalition also is the source of the commonly echoed complaint that the ordering paragraph would require that a map be generated "from scratch", and goes on to state that "at a minimum MGRA appears to be confused about exactly what the effect of the ordering paragraph which they are cosponsoring with CPSD would have... The ordering paragraph does not just initiate the creation of a formal review process, but rather initiates the creation of a new high resolution map, of which peer review would just be one aspect."<sup>58</sup> The Alliance does not interpret our ordering paragraph as *requiring* that a new map be created "from scratch" (and therefore that the Reax map be discarded or be precluded from forming the basis of a state-wide map), and neither does CPSD or CAL FIRE. If the Commission were to agree with the CIP Coalition that our interpretation of our language is "confused", then the obvious remedy is to revise the language to make it more clear that existing work may be utilized. The CIP Coalition has offered no such revision – instead they attempt to push the straw-man "from scratch" argument to prevent a proper review of the Reax report and to prevent the creation of a utility-specific map for all of California.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> R.08-11-005; OPENING BRIEF OF THE CIP COALITION; September 3, 2010; p. 48. (CIP Coalition Opening Brief)
 <sup>58</sup> Id.

# 9. MAP No. 14 – Fire Maps [CIP Coalition; App. B – XV.B.]

The Alliance has taken the position that while interim use of the Reax maps may be appropriate for CIP inspection purposes, these need to undergo a formal technical review before being adopted permanently or being incorporated into a state-wide utility hazard map.<sup>59</sup>

## a) CAL FIRE

CAL FIRE notes that "it was mentioned by PGE in the Report (Exhibit B, p. B-219) that the Reax fire threat maps were going to undergo peer review but that there had not been time to complete this process. The Report does not contain specific information about how this peer review would occur."<sup>60</sup> It also notes that it would participate in the review if possible.<sup>61</sup>

Additionally, CPSD quotes Dean Cromwell of CAL FIRE from the transcript of the public workshops as stating that ""[I]t's difficult to determine the efficacy of the proposed approach particularly in regard to how you do a numerical estimation for refined wind data....And I think we're certainly interested in understanding and cooperating more about the REAX kind of engineering methods that were suggested."<sup>62</sup>

CAL FIRE also maintains, however, that responsibility for final approval of the maps lies with the Commission.<sup>63</sup> Since neither the utilities nor the Commission have staff with expertise in fire map creation, it is incumbent upon the Commission to obtain such expert assistance in order to verify that the maps that it approves meet their public safety goals. The proposed Ordering Paragraph put forward by CPSD and the Alliance would lay out a structure that would allow the Commission to have confidence that any map that they approve has been vetted against the appropriate technical standards.

<sup>62</sup> CPSD Opening Brief; p. 35.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Alliance Opening Brief; p. 59.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> CAL FIRE Opening Brief; p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Id.: "In the event that CAL FIRE is invited to participate in any peer review of the maps, CAL FIRE will provide input and analysis to the extent that staff and other resources are available."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Id.: "CAL FIRE maintains the position that it is not appropriate for CAL FIRE to approve any maps, but rather the CPUC should have the responsibility to approve maps that are developed as part of its regulatory structure."

# 10. MAP No. 14 - Fire Maps [CIP Coalition; App. B - XV.C.]

Argument and comments made by the Alliance in the previous section (regarding Appendix B, section XV. B.) are equally applicable to this section.

# VI. ANCILLARY ISSUES

The Alliance has no comment at this time.

# **VII. CONCLUSION**

The Alliance has deeply appreciated the opportunity to participate in this public rulemaking. We have endeavored to apply our knowledge regarding wildland fire and scientific methodology toward the goal of improving the safety of our fellow Californians. We request that the Commission accept the recommendations made by the Alliance in our opening brief.

Respectfully submitted this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2010,

By: <u>/S/</u> Diane Conklin

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# **TABLE OF AUTHORITIES**

# **Commission Decisions**

# **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that pursuant to the California Public Utilities Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, I have served a true copy of the MUSSEY GRADE ROAD ALLIANCE REPLY BRIEF FOR ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING R.08-11-005 PHASE 2 to all parties on the service list for R.08-11-005 via electronic mail.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2010 at Ramona, California.

# /s/ Diane Conklin

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