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**Notice of Preparation and Public Scoping Meeting
for a Draft Environmental Impact Report**

Date: January 19, 2022
To: Responsible/Trustee Agencies and Interested Parties
From: California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Southern California Gas Company California Desert Conservation Area Operations and Maintenance Long-Term Incidental Take Permit and Notice of Public Scoping Meeting

NOP Public Review Period: January 19, 2022, to February 18, 2022

Public Scoping Meeting (Online Webinar Format)

Date: February 2, 2022

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Scoping Meeting Registration: Please register for the scoping meeting at the following link. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yG2fMaGxOpGOPk2VE8YfEQ

A. Introduction

In accordance with Sections 15081 and 15082 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), as the CEQA lead agency, will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas) California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Long-Term Incidental Take Permit (ITP) (Project). The Project applicant, SoCalGas, has filed an application with CDFW for an ITP under California Fish and Game Code Section 2081(b) and Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Sections 783.0–783.8, to authorize the otherwise prohibited “take” as defined by State law of six state-listed wildlife species incidental to SoCalGas ongoing O&M activities within the CDCA. The wildlife species protected by the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) that SoCalGas proposes for incidental take coverage under the ITP (Covered Species) are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Incidental Take Permit Covered Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	State Status
Birds		
Least Bell's vireo	<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	Endangered
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Endangered
Tricolored blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	Threatened
Reptiles		
Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard	<i>Uma inornate</i>	Endangered
Desert tortoise	<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	Threatened, Proposed Endangered
Mammals		
Mohave ground squirrel	<i>Xerospermophilus mohavensis</i>	Threatened

CDFW's consideration of the SoCalGas application and the proposed issuance of a long-term ITP under CESA is the proposed discretionary approval of a project subject to required environmental review under CEQA. CDFW will comply with CEQA and fulfill its related obligations as a lead agency. (CEQA Guidelines, § 15367.) CDFW will also fulfill its obligations as the CEQA lead agency consistent with its CESA ITP certified regulatory program. (*Id.*, § 15251, subd. (o); Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, §§ 783.3, subd. (b), 783.5, subd. (d).)

As required by CEQA, this NOP is being sent to the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, responsible and trustee agencies, and interested members of the public who submitted a request for such notices. The purpose of the NOP is to inform recipients that CDFW is beginning preparation of a Draft EIR for the proposed Project and to solicit comments concerning the scope and content of the environmental information, including information relevant to an agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed Project. Information that would be most useful at this time would be descriptions of the significant environmental issues, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures you would like to have explored further in the Draft EIR.

This NOP includes background information regarding ongoing SoCalGas O&M activity in the CDCA (Section B), a description of the requested long-term ITP and how ongoing O&M would be implemented consistent with relevant permitting requirements under CESA (i.e., the proposed Project) (Section C), a summary of potential Project impacts (Section D), day and time of the virtual public scoping meeting (Section E), information on how to provide comments to CDFW (Section F), and where documents are available for public review (Section G).

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(b), there will be a 30-day comment period for this NOP, beginning on January 19, 2022, and ending on February 18, 2022. CDFW welcomes agency and public input during the public review period. In the event that no response or well-justified request for additional time is received from any responsible, federal, or trustee agency by the end of the review period, CDFW may presume that such agencies have no comments.

B. Background and Project Location

B.1 Background

SoCalGas operates and maintains approximately 1,100 miles of transmission pipeline and 308 miles of main distribution pipelines within the CDCA. Each pipeline transports natural gas and includes appurtenant and support facilities including valve, metering, and pressure-limiting stations; cathodic protection equipment; aerial and ground markers; telecommunications equipment; and access roads. Routine and ongoing O&M of these pipelines is required by California Public Utilities Commission General Order 112-E, in addition to the Federal Pipeline Safety Regulations under Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 190, 191, and 192.

SoCalGas has been conducting O&M operations on its pipeline network within the CDCA for more than 70 years. Ongoing O&M of the existing pipelines and appurtenant and supporting facilities has been occurring in accordance with an existing CESA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that CDFW executed with SoCalGas in 1997 under former Fish and Game Code Section 2081. (See Fish & G. Code, 2081.1.) The CESA MOU is set to expire on December 31, 2022. The long-term ITP SoCalGas seeks for its continued and ongoing O&M activity in the CDCA would replace the CESA MOU, consistent with the permitting criteria set forth in current Fish and Game Code Section 2081, subdivisions (b) and (c).

The 1995 Biological Opinion for Ongoing Maintenance Activities on SoCalGas's Pipeline System in the Southern California Deserts and 2017 Biological Opinion for Activities in the California Desert Conservation Area provided formal consultation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) regarding the effects of SoCalGas pipeline activities on five of the Covered Species and their habitat (tri-colored blackbird was recently listed and thus not included in the previous documents). The CESA MOU along with the 1995 and 2017 Biological Opinions analyzed the impacts of SoCalGas O&M activities related to the natural gas pipelines.

In the CESA MOU, CDFW concluded O&M activities would not result in jeopardy to the continued existence of the Covered Species if the terms and conditions therein were implemented. In the 1995 and 2017 Biological Opinions, USFWS concluded that O&M activities would not likely result in destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat for the desert tortoise or jeopardize the continued existence of the desert tortoise.

In sum, SoCal Gas proposes to pursue a long-term state ITP from CDFW for its O&M activities in the CDCA region to replace the CESA MOU upon its expiration. The state ITP would provide an enhanced conservation strategy while eliminating the time and expense involved in processing individual state ITPs. An ITP application was submitted to CDFW on October 8, 2020 and was subsequently deemed complete on February 27, 2021. The ITP application includes the Covered Species identified in Table 1 above. Issuance of an ITP is the discretionary action that requires the preparation of an EIR in accordance with CEQA. The ITP, if issued, would authorize O&M-related incidental take of the Covered Species subject to certain conditions under the CESA.

B.2 Project Location

The Project Area is defined as the SoCalGas Desert Region, which consists of approximately 9,480 acres within the CDCA. The CDCA is a 25-million-acre expanse of land that extends across the desert regions of seven southern California counties, including Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, and San Diego counties. In 1976, Congress designated the CDCA as a conservation area under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

The Project Area is located west of the Colorado River and includes Imperial County and desert portions of Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties. Most of the Project Area is within the Mojave Desert Region, and the southern area is within the Sonoran Desert. The extent of the Project Area and general location of the SoCalGas natural gas pipeline rights-of-way (ROWs) are shown in Figure 1.

C. Project Description

The Project consists of issuance of an ITP specific to ongoing SoCalGas Covered Activities outlined in the CDFW 2081 ITP application for six state-listed species located within the CDCA. The pipelines included in this Project include all major transmission pipelines and distribution pipelines located within areas of potentially suitable habitat for the Covered Species.

Covered O&M activities would occur along the SoCalGas natural gas pipeline ROW within the CDCA and would continue to be conducted on a regular and continuous basis to ensure that the system operates in compliance with all environmental and safety regulations. The Covered Activities are categorized into the following four classes, generally based on intensity of the activity:

- **Class I:** routine O&M activities on existing facilities within the ROW that do not result in new surface disturbance and use light-duty equipment;
- **Class II:** activities within the ROW that result in minimal amounts of surface disturbance using medium-duty equipment, as well as surface maintenance of existing access roads;
- **Class III:** activities within the ROW that result in moderate to major surface disturbance using medium- to heavy-duty equipment, as well as emergency repair activities; and
- **Class IV:** activities identified under Class I, II, and III that extend outside of pipeline ROW corridors on existing facilities or access roads up to 0.5 acre of disturbance outside the ROW.

Table 2 provides details of the Covered Activities under each of the four classes, a description of each activity and the typical frequency and duration of the occurrence of activity. The Covered Activity descriptions are based on current methods used to repair, maintain, and operate gas pipelines and related facilities, as well as SoCalGas' past work experience in the southern California deserts. New technologies may create new or different types of O&M activity during the term of the permit requested by SoCalGas. To the extent the new O&M activities are consistent generally with the proposed Project and the related environmental effects addressed by CDFW during the current lead agency review effort, SoCalGas may seek approval from CDFW in the future to amend the permits to add the new O&M activities as Covered Activities under the permit, subject to CDFW's subsequent exercise of discretion and independent judgment as required by CEQA.

Table 2. Covered Activities

Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
Class I Activities		
Pipeline Inspection	<p>Pipeline inspection regularly conducted over all portions of the pipeline system using on-the-ground visual inspection while driving a truck or on foot.</p> <p>Inspections include pipelines (including spans over watercourses), maintenance roads, and support facilities. Crew members check and record ROW conditions, clear debris, replace missing or damaged pipeline markers and aerial patrol signs, ensure that pipeline markers are clearly visible, perform minor maintenance activities, and record conditions that may affect pipeline operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the year • Approximately 4 times annually
Line Break Control	<p>Line break controls are located at most main line valve stations, which are typically 8 to 10 miles apart. Line break controls on valve actuators are inspected and calibrated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twice annually • Typically completed within 5 to 10 days for the entire pipeline system each year
Valve Inspection and Lubrication	<p>Work includes valve inspection, lubrication, and general maintenance (removal of vegetation and debris from valve station enclosures; touchup painting of valves and related equipment using lead-free paint).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually • Frequency depends on valve classification (critical or non- critical)
Modulating Valves	<p>Modulating (i.e., pressure-limiting) valves regulate the flow of gas through a pipeline. These valves are inspected and lubricated semi-annually to ensure proper function.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-annually
Metering Systems	<p>Fuel and flow meters located at main line valve stations measure the flow of gas through the pipeline. These meters must be inspected each month to ensure that they maintain their integrity and accuracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly at any time of the year
Leakage Surveys	<p>Gas leak surveys are conducted on all pipelines. Leaking gas from pressurized pipelines or appurtenant facilities can present hazardous conditions, which must be avoided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least once per year along pipelines • Twice per year in more densely populated areas • Throughout the year for entire system

Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
Removal of Liquids	Pipeline condensate is created as pressurized natural gas travels through the pipeline under differing temperature conditions. This condensate is collected into drums from collection valves along the pipelines. Crews collect the condensate at intervals dependent upon the rate of liquid accumulation in the particular pipeline. The condensate is disposed of in compliance with federal and state regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected at intervals dependent upon the rate of liquid accumulation in the particular pipeline throughout the year • Ongoing process
Cathodic Protection Surveys	<p>Cathodic protection is a method of preventing corrosion by making the pipeline surface a cathode in an electrochemical cell. Surveys determine pipe and soil electrical potentials.</p> <p>Surveys are conducted through existing test leads and are performed to ensure that the system is operating effectively. Simple testing instruments (hand-held potentiometers) are needed to determine millivolt current gradients on the pipeline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually • Surveys typically require 10 days to complete, but some can require up to 90 days
Cathodic Protection Test Station Maintenance and Inspections	Cathodic protection inspections are needed to ensure that the system is operating effectively. The Cathodic Protection Test Stations (or Electrolysis Test Stations) are exposed to the elements and require ongoing repair and maintenance following natural events (e.g., earthquakes, fires, wildlife contact) and human-caused damage (e.g., vandalism, reckless 4-wheel drive vehicle use, farming activities) that may damage the electrical wires. Crews routinely inspect and maintain Cathodic Protection Test Stations by conducting pipe-to-soil surveys and bond reads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspections are bimonthly throughout the year • Maintenance and inspection will vary in duration, size, and complexity for each pipeline
Rectifier Maintenance	An alternating current (AC) rectifier provides direct current for Cathodic Protection Test Stations. Rectifiers must be serviced so that they are in operating condition to protect the pipelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually • Require 30 days to complete
Anode Irrigation	Cathodic protection system anodes are irrigated to increase the efficiency of the AC rectifier. A water truck is used to direct 200 to 2,400 gallons of water into a vent tube to irrigate the anodes. All of the water remains underground after completion of the activity. Water for anode irrigation is obtained from a local municipal source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semiannually along the pipeline throughout the year • Completed in less than a day at each location
Painting of Aboveground Pipes and Structures	Painting of aboveground pipes and structures, as necessary. General maintenance includes inspection, preparation, and painting of aboveground pipes and structures using lead-free paint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 to 21 days

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Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
Class II Activities		
Vegetation Trimming	Vegetation trimming is only associated with aboveground facilities. As such, it could occur in areas where vegetation has grown against any aboveground structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted in combination with other listed operation and maintenance (O&M) activities
Vegetation Removal	Vegetation removal is only associated with aboveground facilities. As such, it could occur in areas where vegetation has grown against any aboveground structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted in combination with other listed O&M activities
Right-of-Way/Access Road Repairs	<p>Grading to repair eroded ROWs and access roads, as necessary. Road maintenance and repairs are critical in ensuring pipelines and ROWs are accessible at all times.</p> <p>Maintenance structures (e.g., culverts, sandbags, or riprap) may be installed (within the ROW) to prevent erosion. Repair activities may extend beyond the existing roadbed and berm but remain within the existing ROW.</p> <p>At the request of the tortoise Recovery Implementation Team (including USFWS and CDFW) to aid in avoidance of steep berm slopes, which can be problematic for tortoises, road maintenance may pull in up to 2 feet of berm on each side of the road to minimize slope angle/height.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occur at any time during the year, but typically only conducted during the dry season to avoid flowing water Up to 60 days per year to complete
Existing Access Road Surface Maintenance	<p>Existing access road surface maintenance occurs on a regular basis to keep existing access roads in operational and safe conditions. Road maintenance and repairs are critical in ensuring the pipelines and ROWs are accessible at all times. Surface maintenance is accomplished by dragging the road with a truck or tractor, or by using a motor grader, backhoe, or loader.</p> <p>The road is repaired without substantially altering the road profile or the original road prism. All vehicles are required to stay on existing roads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occur at any time during the year, but typically only conducted during the dry season to avoid flowing water Length of road surfaces subject to maintenance in any given year varies due to weather conditions
Class III Activities		
Pipeline Segment Replacements	Severe corrosion or other damage to a pipeline may be revealed through a below- grade inspection or an in-line inspection process, and any damaged segment(s) would need to be excavated and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time dependent upon length of pipeline segment that requires replacement

Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
	<p>replaced. A typical excavation is between 1 foot and 1.5 feet below the bottom of the pipeline to allow removal and replacement. To avoid shoring, the excavation usually has a slope of 18 inches of width per 12 inches of depth. As a pipeline typically has 36 inches of cover, the excavation for a 16-inch line would be 4 to 5 feet deep and up to 8 feet wide; the excavation for a 30-inch line would be 5 to 6 feet deep and up to 8 feet wide.</p> <p>Excavated soil is stockpiled nearby until repairs are completed and then used for backfill. Alternatively, imported soil may be utilized as backfill, depending on native soil conditions. The disturbance area and time required to complete the job is dependent upon the length of the pipeline segment that requires replacement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occur at any time during the year
Installation of Magnesium Anodes	<p>Magnesium anodes are installed when cathodic protection surveys indicate pipeline segments with low pipe-to-soil electrical potentials. After the anodes are installed, a shallow trench is excavated between the pipeline and the anodes. Generally, the trench will have a depth of 3 to 6 feet, with a length of 5 to 10 feet and a width of 1 to 2 feet. Connecting wires are placed within the trench and welded into place around the pipeline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-day completion • 3 to 6 installations annually • Occur at any time during the year
Installation of Deep Well Anodes	<p>Deep well anodes are installed 200 to 600 feet below the ground surface and are generally located within 100 feet of depleted anode beds. During drilling, mud and spoil are removed by a vacuum truck and disposed of offsite at approved facilities.</p> <p>After the anodes are installed, a shallow trench is excavated between the pipeline and the anodes. Connecting wires are placed within the trench and welded into place around the pipeline.</p> <p>Each deep well anode lasts 15 to 20 years, and frequency of activity is determined by status of the existing deep well anode.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically 4 weeks to complete or longer • Occur at any time during the year
Installation of Replacement Horizontal Anodes	<p>Horizontal anodes are installed when shallow-depth cathodic protection units do not maintain the desired pipe-to-soil electrical potentials. Horizontal anodes parallel the pipeline 400 to 800 feet from the ROW centerline and are installed at approximately the same depth as the pipeline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 to 7 days to complete • Occur at any time during the year • Infrequent and performed on an as- needed basis

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Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
	<p>Shallow trenches are excavated to connect the anodes to the pipeline with connecting wires, which are cad welded around the pipe. Not as effective as deep well anodes, SoCalGas's use of horizontal anodes is infrequent and performed on an as-needed basis. Typically, horizontal anode installation disturbs 20,000 to 25,000 square feet of soil outside of the established ROW.</p>	
Hydrostatic Testing	<p>Any time there is a pipeline replacement, hydrostatic testing is required to test the integrity of the new pipeline. Testing is usually conducted at a laydown or other yard and the pipe is then transported to the installation site. For larger replacements of pipeline, hydrostatic testing would be completed in situ for direct evaluation of pipeline and leakage integrity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once per year and mostly as part of Pipeline Safety Enhancement Plan activities
Below-Grade Pipe and Coating Inspections	<p>Pipelines are excavated and inspected when cathodic protection surveys indicate low pipe-to-soil electrical potentials, when SoCalGas's Pipeline Integrity Program (PIP) requires smart pig technology to inspect the inside of the pipeline, when hydrostatic testing is conducted, or when vulnerable areas of the pipeline are identified by SoCalGas. Pipe inspection disturbs 1,000 to 2,000 square feet of pipeline ROW.</p> <p>Cal/OSHA guidelines for Trenching and Excavation Safety Measures are applied based on the types of soils encountered. Excavated soil is staged in piles near the excavation until the inspection is complete, and then used for backfill. Visual inspection of buried pipelines involves excavation, inspection, repair (if necessary), and backfill.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occur at any time of the year • 5 to 10 days to complete
Valve/Pipeline Excavation and Recoating	<p>At times, a below-grade pipeline inspection may reveal that the protective coating over the pipeline has failed. In these instances, the pipeline segment is excavated and recoated.</p> <p>Recoating of the pipeline involves two methods: (1) Installation of single or multiple joints of pipe would be accomplished with fusion-bonded epoxy already on the pipe; (2) at circumferential weld locations, the pipe would be coated with a two-part epoxy prior to being inspected and installed below ground.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recoating will take place any time there is a cylindrical cutout or new pipe is installed and can occur at any time of the year • Duration of work depends on the length of pipeline that needs repair
Leak Excavations and Repairs	<p>Pipeline inspections may detect signs of escaping gas. In these instances, that portion of the pipe would be excavated for visual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occur at any time of the year

Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
	<p>inspection and confirmation of the leak. The pipe inspections for locating potential leaks would disturb 1,000 to 2,000 square feet of pipeline ROW, and a typical excavation is between 1 and 1.5 feet below the bottom of the pipeline to allow thorough inspection and repairs.</p> <p>To avoid shoring, the excavation usually has a slope of approximately 18 inches of width per 12 inches of depth. As a pipeline usually has 36 inches of cover, excavation for a 16-inch line would be 4 to 5 feet deep and up to 8 feet wide; excavation for a 30-inch line would be 5 to 6 feet deep and up to 8 feet wide. Typical repairs are made by welding bands or replacing the corroded pipeline segment. Excavated soil is staged in piles near the excavation until the inspection and repair are complete, and then used for backfill.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 to 10 days to complete
Emergency Repairs	<p>Emergency situations are defined as any natural or human-caused events that require an immediate response by SoCalGas to protect human health, welfare, property, the natural environment, or system reliability.</p> <p>Emergency response actions are not limited to the actual repair of SoCalGas facilities and include preliminary site assessments conducted to understand the extent of the potential problem. These response actions are also designed to limit further potential threats.</p> <p>Emergency repairs may be necessary to address pipeline leaks or breaks; to prevent leaks from occurring in the near future; to fix access roads severely damaged by natural disasters; or for any other condition that jeopardizes system reliability, property, human health, or the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most O&M activities can routinely be conducted on specific schedules; however, emergencies may require SoCalGas to take immediate responsive action and preclude the implementation of avoidance and minimization measures. • Anytime throughout the year • Time required varies with each situation
Emergency Repairs – Fire Response	<p>Fires may threaten aboveground structures, including pipelines and facilities. They may also damage the protective coating of the pipeline and cause substantial damage to facilities, resulting in the loss of facility use or possible rupture of the gas pipeline. When these situations arise, crews may be required to create firebreaks or fire roads in an effort to stop the fire, or to minimize the resulting damage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As-needed basis

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Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
	<p>These activities are typically performed by the local fire department(s). Actual fire- related activities are dependent on the local fire department(s), allowing the work to be performed when conditions are safe.</p>	
<p>Emergency Repairs – Slope, Slump, and Slide Stabilization</p>	<p>Saturation of soils and/or erosion can result in unstable slopes, slumps, landslides, and other conditions that may threaten pipelines and facilities. When these emergency situations arise, crews are required to stabilize the surrounding areas immediately.</p> <p>An immediate response is particularly important when pipeline pressure must be reduced or shut off. Often during these response actions, the slopes are stabilized temporarily until long-term solutions can be planned or implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As-needed basis
<p>Emergency Repairs – Emergency Repairs</p>	<p>Emergency repairs may be necessary to respond to pipeline leaks or breaks; to prevent leaks from occurring in the near future; to fix access roads severely damaged by natural disasters; or for any other condition that jeopardizes system reliability, property, human health, or the environment.</p> <p>Most emergency repair situations affect less than 1 acre, although the amount of habitat disturbance varies depending upon the nature of the emergency and the weather conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As-needed basis
<p>Emergency Repairs – Emergency Pipeline Integrity Program Response</p>	<p>In some instances, inspection data identify pipeline anomalies that require an immediate response to identify the problem, possibly resulting in emergency repair work.</p> <p>Depending upon the nature of the anomaly and the urgency required, several correlation digs may be necessary to inspect and verify the anomaly.</p> <p>Repair activities would be conducted in accordance with federal regulations. Digs to inspect and repair the anomaly would consist of, at a minimum, excavating and inspecting the pipeline, repairing the anomaly, and backfilling the excavation.</p> <p>In emergency situations, crews are required to excavate and repair or replace pipelines that have serious anomalies within specified regulatory time limits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As-needed basis • Fix the anomaly within 5 days for emergency situations

Covered Activity	Activity Description	Duration/Frequency
Class IV Activities		
<p>Class IV activities include any of the previously described activities that occur outside of SoCalGas' ROW corridors</p>	<p>Class IV activities include placement of cathodic protection units (including pipeline segment replacements, deep well, shallow well, and horizontal well); facility installation along existing pipeline segments; creating staging or laydown sites, equipment stockpile or spoils pile deposition areas; repairing large pipeline washouts; and relocating segments of existing pipeline due to corrosion, damage, or other conditions.</p> <p>The extent of disturbance outside of the existing pipeline ROWs would vary with the activity, and are dependent on ROW width, topography, layout, and other factors.</p> <p>Up to 0.5 acre of disturbance outside of a pipeline ROW, per activity, would qualify as a Covered Activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies with O&M activity

D. Potential Environmental Effects

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a), CDFW has elected to proceed directly to the preparation of a Draft EIR rather than preparing an Initial Study. CDFW has determined as the CEQA lead agency that substantial evidence supports a fair argument that the proposed ITP requested by SoCalGas may result in a significant impact to the Covered Species. These potentially significant effects and other environmental effects that may be caused by CDFW issuing an ITP that will condition the implementation of ongoing SoCalGas O&M activity will be addressed and analyzed in detail in the Draft EIR.

The impact analysis in the EIR will be conducted in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and address each threshold question in Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, of the CEQA Guidelines. An example of the Environmental Checklist Form can be found at the following website: https://califaep.org/docs/2019-Appendix_G_Checklist.pdf. This link is provided to assist the public and agencies in preparing written scoping comments.

Potential issues and impacts to the existing environment to be analyzed in the Draft EIR include the following environmental topics:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils (including Paleontological Resources)
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Noise
- Transportation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Wildfire

The Project is expected to result in no impacts or less than significant impacts to the following environmental issues, and therefore will not be analyzed in the Draft EIR, unless substantial evidence to the contrary is submitted during scoping:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Mineral Resources
- Population and Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation

The EIR, consistent with CEQA, will include sufficient information to facilitate meaningful public review and informed public decision making regarding the significant effects to the environment that may be caused by CDFW issuance of an CESA ITP as requested by SoCalGas. The EIR will include information regarding the environmental baseline, including the past, current, and reasonably foreseeable expected future environmental impacts of SoCalGas ongoing O&M activity in the Project Area. The EIR will also include by resource category an analysis of whether issuance of an ITP conditioning continued SoCalGas O&M activity will cause an incremental physical change to the baseline condition and, importantly, whether any such change is significant for purposes of CEQA in CDFW's independent lead agency judgment. In addition, the EIR will evaluate potential environmental effects of SoCalGas's best management and standard practices, as well as applicant-proposed measures, and analyze whether or to what extent those measures may avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects caused by the proposed issuance of the ITP. Where needed, the Draft EIR will identify potentially feasible

mitigation measures to avoid and/or substantially lessen any significant adverse effects identified in the EIR's impact analysis.

The EIR will also address the cumulative environmental consequences of the proposed Project in combination with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the area. In particular, the EIR will evaluate whether the incremental contribution of any environmental effect caused by the proposed issuance of the ITP conditioning ongoing SoCalGas O&M activity is cumulatively considerable and, therefore, significant. This will serve to satisfy CEQA requirements regarding potential regional cumulative effects.

In compliance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will describe and evaluate the effects of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed Project and will compare the impacts of the alternatives to the impacts of the proposed Project. The EIR will also identify any alternatives that were considered but rejected by the lead agency as infeasible and briefly explain their reasoning. The EIR will provide an analysis of the No Project Alternative and will also identify the Environmentally Superior Alternative. The alternatives to be analyzed in the EIR will be developed during the environmental review process and will consider input received during public scoping period.

E. Public Scoping Meeting

CDFW will conduct a public scoping meeting online, through a webinar-type format. The scoping meeting will involve a presentation about the proposed Project and the environmental review process and schedule. The purpose of the meeting is to facilitate the receipt of written comments about the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be addressed in the Draft EIR. The scoping meeting is for information gathering; it is not a public hearing, and no public testimony will be taken. No decisions about the Project will be made at the public scoping meeting. The meeting date, time, and the online address for the Project's scoping meeting are as follows:

Date: February 2, 2022

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Scoping Meeting Registration: Please register for the scoping meeting at the following link. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.
https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yG2fMaGxQpGOPk2VE8YfEQ

Everyone is encouraged to attend the teleconference online to express their concerns about the proposed Project and to offer suggestions regarding the proposed Project, including alternatives.

F. Submitting Comments

At this time, CDFW is soliciting comments on the NOP regarding your views on how the Project may affect the environment. This information will be considered when preparing the Draft EIR's discussion of environmental topics, significant effects, mitigation measures, and alternatives. Because of time limits mandated by state law, comments should be provided no later than 5:00 p.m. on February 18, 2022 (the end of 30-day comment period, which starts on January 19, 2022).

Your options for submitting comments are by U.S. mail, or by email. Comments should include "SoCalGas O&M – NOP Scoping Comments" in the subject line, and the name and physical address of the commenter should be contained in the body of the email or letter.

Please send all comments to:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Attention: Ali Aghili, Senior Environmental Scientist Supervisor

Mailing Address: 3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220, Ontario, California 91764

OR via email: ali.aghili@wildlife.ca.gov; include “SoCalGas O&M – NOP Scoping Comments” in the subject line

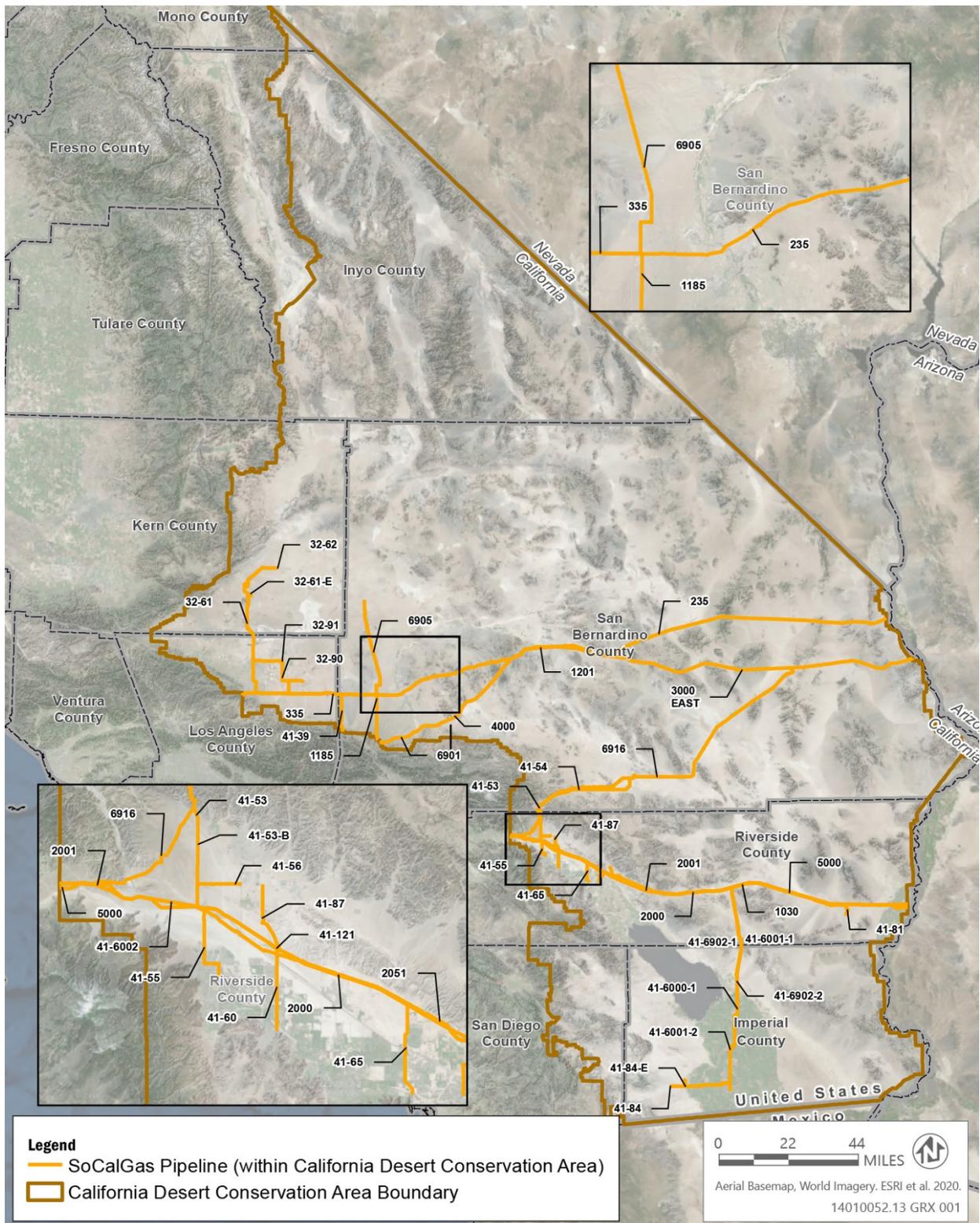
All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered and addressed in the Draft EIR, which is anticipated to be available for public review in the fourth quarter of 2022.

G. Location of Documents Available for Public Review

The NOP and all public review documents for this Project will be available for review online at <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Notices>.

Due to COVID-19, public libraries and county offices are currently closed or have limited office hours available. Instead, a hard copy of the NOP is available for review by appointment at the CDFW Inland Deserts Region Office, located at the following address:

CDFW Inland Deserts Region Office
3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220
Ontario, California 91764



Source: Figure produced by AECOM in 2021.

Figure 1: Project Area and SoCalGas Pipeline Location Overview