Decision Memo
PG&E Pit 3
Power Transmission Line Separation and Easement Project
USDA Forest Service
Shasta-McCloud Management Unit, Shasta-Trinity National Forest
Shasta County, CA
Sections 9 and 16, T.36N., R2E., MDM

Background
The project will separate the existing 230 kV power transmission line owned by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) from the Pit 3, 4, and 5 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydroelectric license No. 233, and put it directly under a Forest Service authorization document. On December 22, 1998, the FERC issued an order deleting this transmission line from the license. The purpose of the proposed action is to authorize the transmission line as it currently exists and to continue to administer the authorization to protect resources in the area that may be impacted by power line operation and maintenance activities. Continuation of the authorization will allow PG&E to provide reliable delivery of electrical power to the people of California and the United States.

Decision
My decision is to issue a 50-year easement for the continued operation and maintenance of an existing 1.09-mile long, 175-foot wide segment of the Pit 3 230 kV power transmission line and 0.73 mile of associated project access road as shown on Figures 1 and 2. The project occupies approximately 23 acres of National Forest System land. Maintenance activities include aerial inspections, ground inspections, wood pole testing and treating, insulator replacement, cross arm replacement, anchor/guy or incidental pole replacement, vegetation management, hazard tree trimming or removal of trees within the easement or trees that can fall onto the line, and road maintenance. Management requirements for the proposed action and measures to protect Forest resources are contained in the “Pacific Gas and Electric Company Operation and Maintenance Plan on Shasta-Trinity National Forest System Lands, Pit 3 230 kV Transmission Line Easement” and “Appendix A – Standard Management Requirements for the Operation and Maintenance of the Pit 3 230 kV Transmission Lines on Shasta-Trinity National Forest System Lands” which are located in the Project File and are incorporated as part of the easement. This document includes measures summarized below:

- Awareness training for PG&E employees (awareness of noxious weed issues, local special status species, and heritage resources)
- Annual operations meeting between PG&E and the Forest Service.
- Limited Operating Periods (starting January 1 through August 15 annually or January 1 through September 15 depending on species) for certain activities with high noise levels to minimize effects on northern spotted owl territory and bald eagles.
- Maintenance of a database of sensitive resource areas and noxious weeds in cooperation with the Forest Service.
- Monitoring of Forest Service sensitive plant species in the vicinity of the line.
- Prevention of the spread of noxious weeds; methods as specified by the Forest Service.
- Fire prevention plan and fuels management as specified by the Forest Service in the Operating Plan.
- Protection of newly discovered heritage resources.

This action is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or an environmental assessment because it meets the intent of FSH 1909.15, Sec. 31.2, number 15., “Issuance of new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities, or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorization.” There are no proposed structural changes in this power line or how it is operated. The line has been inspected both by the FERC and the Forest Service and it is in compliance with the current license.

The categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects which may significantly affect the environment. The scope of the project is limited and localized; there are no parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, heritage or cultural resource sites within the project area and the action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973. On September 12, 2003, the Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the Biological Assessment (BA). The BA concluded that implementing Limited Operating Periods and, the scope of the work associated with the project, would avoid effects to the suitability of nesting, roosting, or foraging habitat for bald eagles and northern spotted owls within or near the project area.

I considered the affect of electromagnetic fields to humans but, because the scope of the project is limited and localized, the lines are located in a remote and relatively inaccessible area, and there is considerable experience and literature concerning the types of activities to be implemented and the effects to humans, I concluded there is no potential for significant effects.

Public Involvement
A proposal to separate the power transmission line from the FERC hydroelectric license was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest beginning September of 1999 and every quarter through December of 2005. A scoping notice was published in the Record Searchlight on September 30, 1999. A legal notice for comment was published in the same newspaper on December 26, 2003 and March 3, 2004.

Findings Required by Other Laws
This decision to issue a Forest Service authorization for the Pit 3 power transmission line is consistent with the intent of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (the Plan)
as required by the National Forest Management Act. It is consistent with the long term goals and objectives listed on pages 4-4 through 4-10 of the Plan. The project was designed in conformance with land and resource management plan standards and incorporates appropriate plan guidelines for fire and fuels, lands, and wildlife (threatened, endangered, and sensitive Species) (Land and Resource Management Plan, pages 4-11 to 4-30).

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities
In accordance with the October 19, 2005, order issued by the U. S. District Court for the Eastern District of California in Case No. CIV F-03-6386JKS, this decision is not an activity subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Implementation of this decision may occur immediately.

Contact Person
For additional information concerning this decision contact Kathy Valenzuela, Special Uses and Lands Administrator, Shasta Trinity National Forest, 14225 Holiday Rd, Redding, CA 96003, (530) 275-1587.

J. SHARON HEYWOOD Date
Forest Supervisor

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