

camouflage for protection. Because of their cryptic coloration, this strategy makes them very hard to detect.

The applicants will attempt to schedule construction to occur as much as possible during the flat-tailed horned lizard's dormant period, November 15 to February 15, and to employ all mitigation measures recommended by the management strategy during that period. Construction is to be completed in as short a time as possible to minimize the length of time that habitat will be disturbed by activity. Some construction would probably be necessary during the lizard's active period (before November 15 and after February 15), however, and if so the applicants would employ additional mitigation measures during that period. In addition, the applicants would employ mitigation measures intended to minimize and mitigate for general disturbance of biological resources, and assure restoration of disturbed areas.

Several features of the project, as proposed by the applicants and described in Section 2.2.2, would be effective in minimizing harm to biological resources. These include positioning the lattice towers and locating the access roads so that permanent disturbance can be minimized. In addition, moving the tower assemblies to their locations in the line by helicopter, instead of assembling them on-site, would greatly reduce the amount of disturbance at each tower site. The mitigation recommended in this EA includes monitoring for flat-tailed horned lizards and western burrowing owls, and would help avoid impacts to other sensitive biological resources. A list of mitigation measures is in Section 2.2.6 of this EA.

4.6 Cultural Resources

The cultural resource survey conducted for the proposed project (see Section 3.6 of this EA) resulted in the relocation of 9 previously recorded sites, the discovery of 18 previously unrecorded sites, and the identification of 34 isolates. All of the sites, except one, date to the prehistoric period and appear to be linked to prehistoric human occupation focused on the 40-foot contour of Lake Cahuilla. Sites that are located below the 40-foot contour are considered important in the study of culture change because they represent activities that were undertaken after one of the intermediate recessions of the lake, or more likely, the final recession. Three of the sites were previously recommended as eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. The remaining sites should also be considered eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

If implemented, formation of a National Register district in the project area would include all of the sites recorded within the study for this EA. The proposed district would include the generalized boundaries for site 4-IMP-115, which extends outside of the project area. Site testing has been conducted on three of the identified sites. Eligibility

of the remaining sites is based on surface indications and on the interrelationship of these sites with ancient Lake Cahuilla. The suggested National Register of Historic Places district would have contributing and non-contributing properties.

Four prehistoric sites may be directly impacted during construction of the new transmission lines. Indirect impacts associated with new access roads or use of the existing road may require inclusion of additional sites, although the final determination of these variables has not been made. Direct impacts to the archaeological sites located east of the transmission line could include excavation for footings, general ground clearing, and the movement of workers and equipment.

In order to protect the information that is present in this region, a treatment plan has been developed by the applicants and submitted to the BLM for approval. The treatment plan is intended to pose questions and define data needs for sites that may be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed project. This plan would be developed in concert with final project design information and the precise location of on-the-ground impacts. Surveyors would establish specific work zone areas and the locations would be checked by field archaeologists to determine potential impacts. Work or access areas that correspond to archaeological sites would be defined and data recovery would be implemented. The plan would include protection measures, monitoring steps, and Native American consultation. The plan would also include recommendations for long term protection of the study area resources.

To mitigate for the potential impact to valuable cultural resources from the construction of this project, the applicants have agreed to implement a mitigation plan that complies with the treatment plan, subject to the approval of the BLM. The mitigation measures would apply only to those areas identified as permanent or temporary construction impact areas that correspond with surface indications of historic properties. Mitigation would consist of measures to avoid impacts to sensitive cultural resource sites, monitoring of work on the proposed transmission lines, recovery of cultural materials and information, appropriate cataloging and curation, and reporting the findings. The mitigation measures are listed in Section 2.2.6 of this EA.

4.7 Visual Resources

Construction of the proposed project would add electrical transmission towers and conductors to the landscape adjacent to the existing SDG&E transmission line. The evaluation of potential visual impacts takes into account factors such as distance, the angle of observation, the duration of view, the relative size or scale of the project, and the light conditions within the proposed project area. Views by persons from highways or travel routes are not considered to be as sensitive as those from recreational areas or residences due to both the nature of the land use and the longer duration of the view.