

**ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION
PROPOSED EASEMENT FOR NEW RIGHT-OF-WAY (ROW) FOR ELECTRIC
FACILITIES TO SERVE THE PALA ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) 45 MINI
MART CHARGERS (TRIBAL TRACT T-1004)**

eTS No. 6424501, SR No. 1322317, Project No. 3-408044; Job Notification No. 3-408045

**Pala Indian Reservation
Pala, CA
March 13, 2024**

Prepared by: Katie Basinski, Environmental Services, San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E)

Introduction: SDG&E proposes to obtain an easement for a new Right-Of-Way (ROW) to install, own, operate, maintain, repair, replace, reinstall, reconstruct, and/or remove electric facilities that would provide electrical service to the Pala Electric Vehicle (EV) 45 Mini Mart Chargers within the Pala Indian Reservation, BIA Tribal Tract T-1004. The requested easement would be 10 feet wide and approximately 0.028 mile long, totaling 0.035 acres (1,534 square feet). The new easement would include new underground electric facilities and an existing pad-mounted transformer D238765. The construction activities that would be conducted by SDG&E consist solely of connecting service; the customer is responsible for digging the trench for the underground electric facilities. The term of the easement would be held in perpetuity, but the Tribe may terminate it per 25 C.F.R. Part 169.

Location: 11152 Highway 76, Pala, California, BIA Tribal Tract T-1004 (see Attachment 1).

Affected Environment: The project area consists of the requested easement area, the location of which is shown on Attachment 3. The project area is primarily located along the disturbed shoulder of Highway 76 and within highly disturbed and paved parking lot areas associated with the Pala Casino, Pala Casino Gas Station, and Pala Mini Mart (see the photographs in Attachment 2). Soils are classified as Tujunga sand with 0 to 5 percent slopes and Riverwash (Natural Resources Conservation Service 2024), and the geologic unit includes alluvium, lake, playa, and terrace deposits (Q) and Older alluvium, lake, playa, and terrace deposits (Qoa, California Geological Survey 2015). The project area is within the Peninsular ranges province at approximately 375 feet in elevation, surrounded by chaparral hills. Pala Creek is located approximately 490 feet south of the proposed easement and 500 feet south of Transformer D238765. The San Luis Rey River is mapped approximately 800 feet south of the proposed easement (Regional Water Quality Control Board 2024).

SDG&E acquired an Official Species List from the United States Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USDOI-FWS) via the Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) website (Attachment 5). Official species lists include any threatened, endangered, or candidate species managed by the USDOI-FWS with the potential to occur within a project area based on the known or expected range of each species. As discussed in Attachment 5, the species listed in the IPaC lack suitable habitat within the project area and have no potential to occur, except for the least Bell's vireo. The proposed easement and surrounding area south of Highway 76 are designated as critical habitat for least Bell's vireo. However, the proposed easement area is highly disturbed and primarily consists of paved areas associated with Pala Casino, Pala Casino Gas Station, and Pala Mini Mart; therefore, the area lacks suitable breeding habitat and there is a low potential for least Bell's vireo to occur near the work area.

Project Objectives: SDG&E is requesting a new easement to install, own, operate, maintain, repair, replace, reinstall, reconstruct, and/or remove underground electric facilities needed to provide service to the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers at 11152 Highway 76, Pala, California, Tribal Tract T-1004.

Alternatives:

1. Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative) — Under the No Action Alternative, the BIA would not grant SDG&E's request for an easement for a new ROW that is required to install, operate, and maintain the electric facilities to serve tribal members. Without approval of the new easement for a new ROW by the BIA, SDG&E could not operate and maintain the electric facilities, which would leave the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers without electric service. Instead, other new facilities and an easement would be required to provide electric service, potentially in areas that have not been previously disturbed.
2. Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative) — The Preferred Alternative is to grant SDG&E the requested easement for a new ROW, which would allow SDG&E to install, own, operate, maintain, repair, replace, reinstall, reconstruct, and/or remove the electric facilities within the Pala Indian Reservation. The requested easement area would include new underground electric facilities with a width of 10 feet and length of 0.028 mile, and the existing pad-mounted transformer D238765 (Attachment 3). While not part of the requested easement, the proposed new underground electric facilities would connect the existing handhold H118205 with a new meter and EV charging panel, which are constructed and maintained by the customer. The Preferred Alternative would allow SDG&E to own, operate, maintain, repair, replace, reinstall, reconstruct, and/or remove electric facilities and structures in perpetuity, unless terminated by the Tribe per 25 C.F.R. Part 169.

The construction activities that would be conducted by SDG&E consist solely of connecting service to transformer D238765 and the installed underground

facilities. The customer is responsible for digging the trench associated with the proposed underground electric facilities. Construction activities associated with the Preferred Alternative would require one or two crew trucks. The vehicles would access D238765 from the disturbed shoulder of Highway 76 as well as the existing parking lot areas associated with the Pala Casino, Pala Casino Gas Station, and Pala Mini Mart, accessed via Highway 76. No work areas would be required and no excavation, grading, grubbing, or other ground disturbing activities are anticipated. Vehicles would remain within previously disturbed land and if work areas are needed, they would be located on the disturbed shoulder of Highway 76 and existing paved parking lot areas.

Operations and Maintenance (O&M) activities are those related to the control and upkeep of existing SDG&E facilities, including but not limited to routine, preventive, scheduled, and unscheduled actions aimed at preventing equipment failure or decline with the goal of maintaining or increasing efficiency, reliability, and safety. O&M activities include inspecting, monitoring, and testing existing equipment; operating valves and switches; repairing and replacing existing facilities, structures, wires, and access roads; increasing the height above ground or the depth below ground of facilities; replacing overhead lines with buried underground lines; and vegetation management, including tree removal and pruning. The easement also includes the right of SDG&E to ingress and egress to, from, along, and within the easement by a practical route or routes in, upon, over, and across the Pala Indian Reservation. The easement would also require the easement area to be kept clear of structures, including but not limited to buildings, explosives, brush, combustibles and materials, and allows the construction and maintenance of roads as are necessary and appropriate.

SDG&E regularly inspects facilities, including those part of the Preferred Alternative, to determine O&M requirements. If O&M requirements are identified during inspections, SDG&E crews or contractors conduct the required maintenance activities. This typically includes utilizing a small crew with one or two four-wheel-drive crew trucks. If overhead line or pole work is required, an aerial lift could be utilized. Transformer D238765 would be accessed as described above. The potential O&M activities include, but are not limited to, equipment repair and replacement, such as conductors (wires) and insulators, poles and crossarms, communications equipment, vegetation management, such as tree trimming or removing flammable materials, transmission road regrading and erosional repairs, and driving vehicles to and from existing poles and facilities. Vehicle access and work areas for O&M activities would be located in the same areas as described above for construction activities.

Vegetation management plays a critical role in maintaining reliable and safe gas and electric service throughout the region. Vegetation is managed within and adjacent to all SDG&E facilities including but not limited to overhead electric lines, substations and regulators, access roads, drainage structures, areas around transformers, and buildings. Vegetation is controlled to facilitate the construction

and use of roads, allow inspection and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities, expose hazards such as ruts to drivers, eliminate noxious weeds, prevent fires, and provide safe working areas.

SDG&E conducts ongoing vegetation removal and management around electric and gas infrastructure to comply with California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) General Orders, California Public Resources Code Section 4292, and other applicable laws relating to fire prevention or control. These fire control measures can aid in the prevention of fire caused by arcing and can protect the facilities from failure due to a fire in a surrounding area.

All O&M activities on BIA-regulated lands are conducted in accordance with the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Amendment, which was approved by DOI-FWS and ensures compliance with section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The HCP Amendment authorizes the “incidental take of 41 species in San Diego County and portions of Orange and Riverside County.” The incidental take permit (ITP) is in effect and provides take authorization for all ESA-listed species on BIA and in SDG&E’s service territory.

The HCP Amendment ensures a continuation of SDG&E’s efforts to avoid and minimize impacts to numerous wildlife and plant species and their habitats, while allowing SDG&E to install, maintain, operate, and repair its existing system and undertake typical expansion of the electric grid. It includes dozens of required operational protocols, including species-specific and vernal pool protocols.

SDG&E would continue to operate and maintain existing facilities in an environmentally sensitive manner by complying with its ITP and following a number of other best management practices and other standard operating procedures that have been developed and implemented by SDG&E over the past 28 years to avoid and minimize environmental impacts, and to comply with applicable environmental laws and regulations. A summary of these practices and procedures is included as Attachment 6.

Consequences of Selected Alternative:

1. **No Action:** If BIA does not grant SDG&E the easement for a new ROW, SDG&E would not be able to provide electric service to the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers. The Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers would need an alternate energy source and/or route to provide electricity, either provided by SDG&E or obtained independently by the Tribe. New construction of these facilities would be required, as well as O&M activities for the new facilities and ROW.
2. **Preferred Alternative:** If BIA grants the easement to a new ROW, SDG&E would be able to install, own, operate, maintain, repair, replace, reinstall, reconstruct, and/or remove electric service for the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers within the Pala Indian Reservation.

Potential Effects to Environment:

- 1. Land Resources:** As part of existing O&M procedures, SDG&E routinely evaluates the soil and geologic conditions prior to working in an area and implements the necessary measures to address any concerns. For example, the Best Management Practices (BMP) Manual for Water Quality Construction (SDG&E 2011) includes measures that reduce soil loss and help ensure BMP usage is consistent with applicable rules and regulations. All of these procedures would be implemented as part of the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects on land resources.
- 2. Water Resources:** As noted above, there are no surface waters within the proposed easement area. Pala Creek is located approximately 490 feet south of the proposed easement area and 500 feet south of Transformer D238765, and the San Luis Rey River is mapped approximately 800 feet south of the proposed easement (RWQCB 2024). As explained above, the transformer and proposed easement area would be accessed from Highway 76 and existing parking lot areas, and therefore avoids Pala Creek and the San Luis Rey River. Future O&M work would remain within the approved easement area. In addition, SDG&E utilizes BMPs in accordance with their BMP Manual for Water Quality Construction and would remain in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including the Clean Water Act. In the unlikely event that O&M activities would result in impacts to jurisdictional waters, SDG&E would acquire the appropriate permits, potentially including (but not necessarily limited to) Clean Water Act Section 401 and 404 permits, and follow the permit conditions, which would minimize impacts. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects on water resources.
- 3. Biological Resources:** As stated in Attachment 5, the USDOI-FWS IPaC report identified endangered, threatened, or candidate species on the Official Species List for the project area. While critical habitat for the least Bell's vireo does exist within the proposed easement area and Transformer D238765, there are no potential effects to this species as a result of the Preferred Alternative if crews follow SDG&E's Operational Protocols. The other species identified in the IPaC report have no critical habitat and no potential to occur within the immediate project area. In addition, pursuant to SDG&E's HCP Amendment, SDG&E crews and contractors are required to follow all applicable Operational Protocols while working in natural areas (see Attachment 6 for additional details). Operational Protocols include general behaviors (i.e., BMPs) that all field personnel must follow when working in environmentally sensitive areas, training, and pre-activity surveys that can result in additional measures to further minimize impacts to listed species and vegetation communities. Therefore, a field survey is not necessary at this time and the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects on biological resources.

4. **Cultural Resources:** The project area has previous ground disturbance and has been modified so extensively that the likelihood of finding any cultural properties is negligible. There are no known historic properties in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register within the vicinity of the project area. No further cultural resources evaluation is needed. In the event of a discovery (discovery means any previously unidentified or incorrectly identified cultural resources including, but not limited to, archaeological deposits, human remains, or locations reportedly associated with Native American religious/traditional beliefs or practices), all operations in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will cease and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Regional Archaeologist will be notified. The Area of Potential Effects for the Preferred Alternative is limited to the ROW, as shown in Attachment 3. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects on cultural resources.

5. **Sensitive Area Resources:** The Preferred Alternative would not result in visual or lighting alterations to the project area, as the proposed facilities would be located underground. In addition, there are no underground storage tanks (USTs) or Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) sites located within the vicinity of the project area and SDG&E would comply with all local noise ordinances, as applicable. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects on other sensitive area resources (Attachment 8).

6. **Air Resources:** The easement to the new ROW would allow for standard O&M activities, which could result in minimal and temporary construction activities. However, this minimal amount of construction would not be anticipated to result in harmful or nuisance emissions to the air. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would not result in direct or indirect effects related to air quality.

Recommendation:

The Preferred Alternative is recommended because if SDG&E obtains the easement for a new ROW, the electric facilities would be able to be installed, owned, operated, and maintained properly, thus ensuring reliable electrical service to the tribal members.

References

- California Geological Survey (CGS). 2015. Geologic Map of California. Retrieved January 22, 2024 from <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/gmc/>
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). 2024. Web Soil Survey. Retrieved January 22, 2024 from <https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). 2024. San Diego Basin Plan Map. Retrieved January 23, 2024 from <https://gispublic.waterboards.ca.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1f58bd97fdcd45329a5e16e373ede24d>
- SDG&E. 2011. Best Management Practices Manual for Water Quality Construction. Revised July 2011.

Attachments

- Attachment 1: General Site Map
- Attachment 2: Project Site Photographs
- Attachment 3: Location Information for Project Site
- Attachment 4: Cultural/Historical Properties Determination
- Attachment 5: Biological Determination
- Attachment 6: Operational Protocols and Standard Operating Procedures
- Attachment 7: Environmental Overview Form
- Attachment 8: NEPAssist Report











Environmental Evaluation: Easement for a New ROW for Electric Facilities to Serve the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers, Pala Indian Reservation, California (Tribal Tract T-1004)
Pala Indian Reservation

Attachment 1: General Site Map

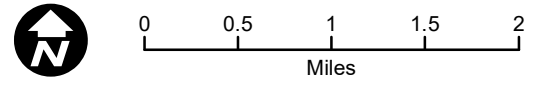
New Easement for Electric Facilities to Serve Pala Electric Vehicle 45 Mini Mart Chargers at 11152 Highway 76

Attachment 1 General Site Map

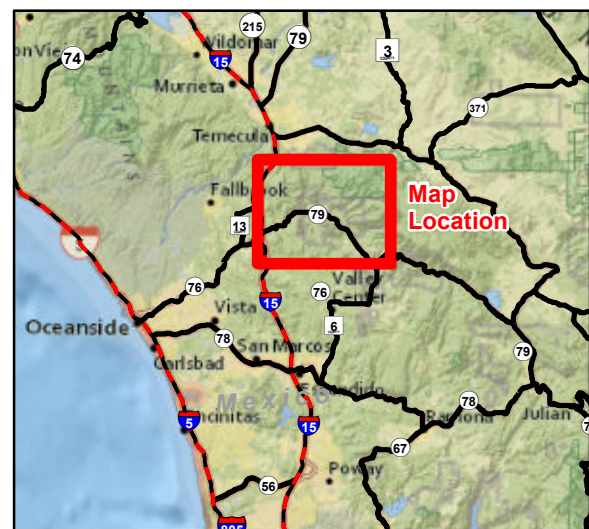
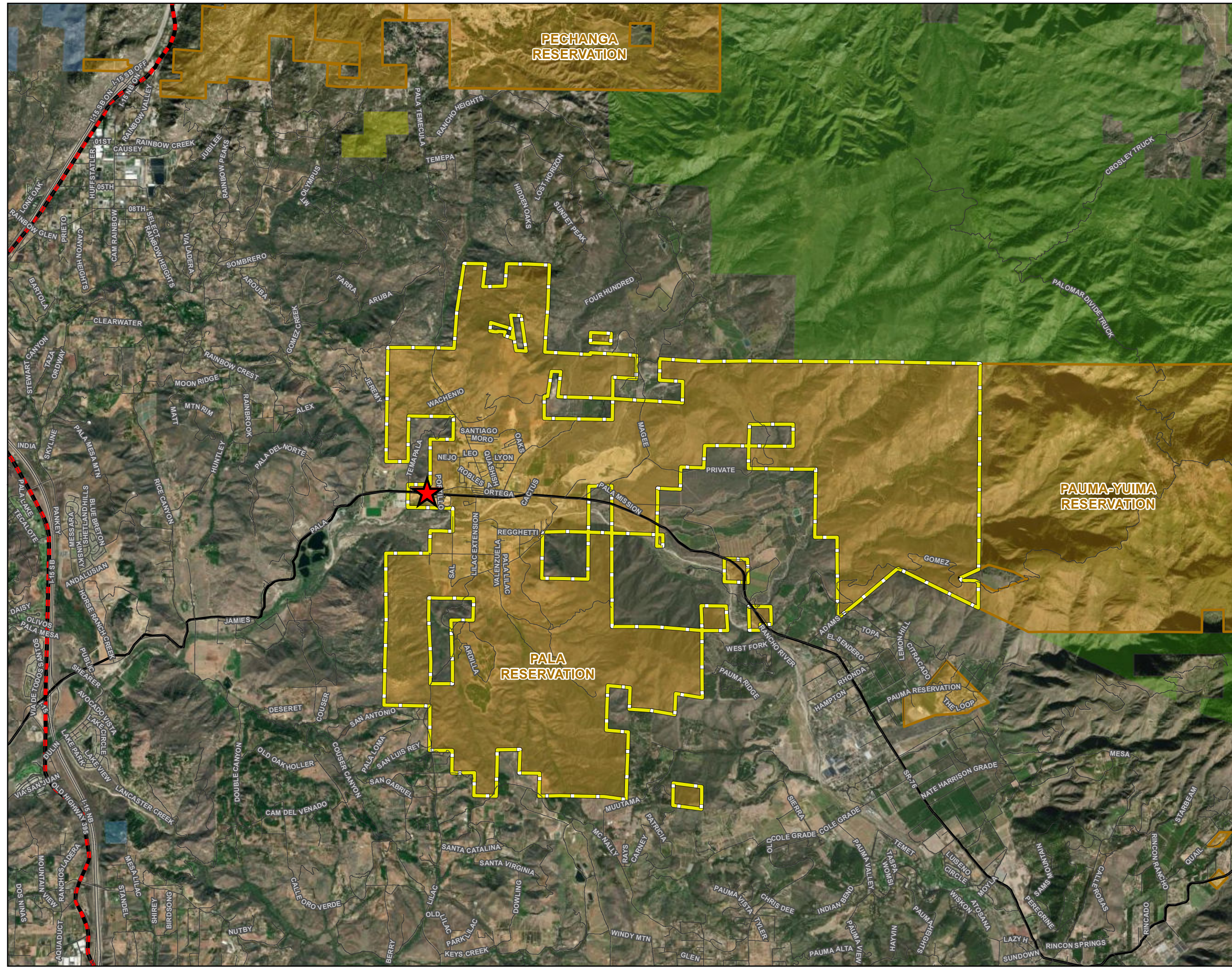
LEGEND

-  Project Location
 -  US Route, State and County Highway
 -  Local Road
 -  National Forest Boundary
 -  Reservation Boundary
 -  Pala Reservation Boundary
- #### Jurisdictional Land Ownership
-  Bureau of Land Management Land
 -  U.S. Forest Service Land
 -  Bureau of Indian Affairs Land
 -  State Land

MAP IS NOT SURVEY GRADE



Data Sources: BLM, CalTrans, ESRI, SANDAG, SanGIS, SDG&E, USDA.
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Attachment 2: Project Site Photographs



View of the Project Area - Looking West



View of the Project Area and Transformer D238765 - Looking East



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New Easement for Electric Facilities to Serve Pala Electric Vehicle 45 Mini Mart Chargers at 11152 Highway 76

Attachment 2a

Project Site Photographs



View of Project Area - Looking East



View of Project Area - Looking Northeast



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New Easement for Electric Facilities to Serve Pala Electric Vehicle 45 Mini Mart Chargers at 11152 Highway 76

Attachment 2b

Project Site Photographs





Environmental Evaluation: Easement for a New ROW for Electric Facilities to Serve the Pala EV 45 Mini Mart Chargers, Pala Indian Reservation, California (Tribal Tract T-1004)
Pala Indian Reservation

Attachment 3: Location Information for Project Site

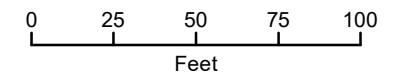
New Easement for Electric Facilities to Serve Pala Electric Vehicle 45 Mini Mart Chargers at 11152 Highway 76

Attachment 3 Location Information for Project Site

LEGEND

-  Existing Transformer Location
-  Existing Handhole Location
-  Distribution Circuit (New Underground)
-  Proposed Right of Way/APE

MAP IS NOT SURVEY GRADE



Data Sources: BLM, CalTrans, ESRI, SANDAG, SanGIS, SDG&E, USDA.  SDGE™
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