6.6 Paleontological Resources

6.6.1 Introduction

Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) proposes to build and operate a nominal 96-megawatt (MW) simple-cycle power plant on a 12-acre fenced site within the City of Riverside, California. This proposed facility is referred to as the Riverside Energy Resource Center (RERC) Project (Project). RPU will develop, build, own and operate the facility. RERC will supply the internal needs of the City of Riverside during summer peak electrical demands and will serve the City's minimum emergency loads in the event RPU is islanded from the external transmission system. No power from RERC will be exported outside of the city.

This section is evaluates the potential for Project impacts to paleontological resources during construction and operation. This document presents a summary of relevant laws, ordinances, regulations and standards (LORS), the Project's setting, potential environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures affecting these resources. Required permits and permitting agencies are also discussed.

6.6.1.1 Project Description

The proposed site is owned by the City of Riverside and is located adjacent to the City of Riverside's Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) in a light industrial/manufacturing area. The RERC will consist of two aero-derivative combustion turbine generators with SCRs, an on-site substation, approximately 1.75 miles of 69kV transmission line, natural gas and water supply interconnection, and on-site administration building and warehouse. The power plant and associated administration building and warehouse will occupy approximately 8 of 12 acres with the additional 4 acres reserved for equipment storage and construction parking. The entire plant perimeter will be fenced with a combination of chain-link fencing and architectural block walls.

This section of the Small Power Plant Exemption (SPPE) Application summarizes the potential environmental impacts on paleontological resources that may result from construction of the Project.

6.6.2 Laws, Ordinances, Regulations and Standards

Paleontological resources are classified as non-renewable scientific resources and are protected by several federal and state statutes (California Office of Historic Preservation, 1983; Marshall, 1976; Fisk and Spencer, 1994), most notably by the 1906 Federal Antiquities Act and other subsequent federal legislation and policies and by the State of California's environmental regulations (CEQA, Section 15064.5). Professional standards for assessment and mitigation of adverse impacts on paleontological resources have been established by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP 1995, 1996). Design, construction and operation of the proposed Project, including ancillary facilities, will be

conducted in accordance with LORS applicable to paleontological resources. Federal and state LORS applicable to paleontological resources are summarized and discussed briefly below, together with SVP professional standards.

6.6.2.1 Federal

Federal legislative protection for paleontological resources stems from the Antiquities Act of 1906 (PL 59-209; 16 United States Code 431 *et seq*.; 34 Stat. 225), which calls for protection of historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest on federally administered lands. Federal protection for significant paleontological resources would apply to the Project if any construction or other related project impacts occurred on federally owned or managed lands. No federal protection of paleontologic resources pertains to this Project.

6.6.2.2 State

With regard to paleontological resources, the CEC environmental review process under the Warren-Alquist Act is considered functionally equivalent to that of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Public Resources Code Sections 15000 et seq.) Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, as amended March 29, 1999 (Title 14, Chapter 3, California Code of Regulations: 15000 *et seq*.) define procedures, types of activities, persons and public agencies required to comply with CEQA, and include as one of the questions to be answered in the Environmental Checklist (Section 15023, Appendix G, Section XIV, Part a) the following: "*Will the proposed project directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?"*

Other state requirements for paleontological resources management are included in the Public Resources Code (Chapter 1.7), Section 5097.5 and 30244. These statutes prohibit the removal of any paleontological site or feature on public lands without permission of the jurisdictional agency, defines the removal of paleontological sites or features as a misdemeanor, and requires reasonable mitigation of adverse impacts to paleontological resources from developments on public (state) lands. These protections would apply to the proposed Project only if the state or a state agency were to obtain ownership of project lands during the term of the Project license.

6.6.2.3 County and City

Neither Riverside County nor the City of Riverside has regulations that specifically address potential adverse impacts to paleontological resources.

Professional Standards

The SVP has established standard guidelines (SVP, 1995, 1996) that outline professional protocols and practices for the conducting of paleontological resource assessments and surveys, monitoring and mitigation, data and fossil recovery, sampling procedures, and specimen preparation, identification, analysis and curation. Most practicing professional vertebrate paleontologists in the nation adhere closely to the SVP's assessment,

mitigation and monitoring requirements as specifically provided in its standard guidelines. Most state regulatory agencies with paleontological LORS accept and utilize the professional standards set forth by the SVP.

As defined by the SVP (1995, p. 26), significant nonrenewable paleontologic resources are defined as:

> *"fossils and fossiliferous deposits here restricted to vertebrate fossils and their taphonomic and associated environmental indicators. This definition excludes invertebrate or paleobotanical fossils except when present within a given vertebrate assemblage. Certain invertebrate and plant fossils may be defined as significant by a project paleontologist, local paleontologist, specialists, or special interest groups, or by lead agencies or local governments."*

As defined by the SVP (1995, p. 26), significant fossiliferous deposits are defined as:

> *"A rock unit or formation which contains significant nonrenewable paleontologic resources, here defined as comprising one or more identifiable vertebrate fossils, large or small, and any associated invertebrate and plant fossils, traces and other data that provide taphonomic, taxonomic, phylogenetic, ecologic and stratigraphic information (ichnites and trace fossils generated by vertebrate animals, e.g., trackways, or nests and middens which provide datable material and climatic information). Paleontologic resources are considered to be older than recorded history and/or older than 5,000 years, BP."*

Based on the significance definitions of the SVP (1995), all identifiable vertebrate fossils are considered to have significant scientific value. This position is adhered to because vertebrate fossils are relatively uncommon, and only rarely will a fossil locality yield a statistically significant number of specimens of the same genus. Therefore, every vertebrate fossil found has the potential to provide significant new information on the taxon it represents, its paleoenvironment and/or its distribution. Furthermore, all geologic units in which vertebrate fossils have previously been found are considered to have high sensitivity. Identifiable plant and invertebrate fossils are considered significant if found in association with vertebrate fossils, or if defined as significant by project paleontologists, specialists or local government agencies.

A geologic unit known to contain significant fossils is considered "sensitive" to adverse impacts if there is a high probability that earth-moving or ground-disturbing activities in that rock unit will either disturb or destroy fossil remains directly or indirectly. This definition of sensitivity differs fundamentally from that for archaeological resources as follows:

> *"It is extremely important to distinguish between archaeological and paleontological (fossil) resource sites when defining the sensitivity of rock units. The boundaries of archaeological sites define the areal extent of the resource. Paleontologic sites, however, indicate that the containing sedimentary rock unit or formation is fossiliferous. The limits of the entire rock formation, both areal*

and stratigraphic, therefore define the scope of the paleontologic potential in each case" (SVP, 1995).

Many archaeological sites contain features that are visually detectable on the surface. In contrast, fossils are contained within surficial sediments or bedrock, and are therefore not observable or detectable unless exposed by erosion or human activity. In summary, paleontologists cannot know either the quality or quantity of fossils prior to natural erosion or human-caused exposure. As a result, even in the absence of surface fossils, it is necessary to assess the sensitivity of rock units based on their known potential to produce significant fossils elsewhere within the same geologic unit (both within and outside of the study area), a similar geologic unit, or based on whether the unit in question was deposited in a type of environment which is known to be favorable for fossil preservation. Monitoring by experienced paleontologists greatly increases the probability that fossils will be discovered during ground disturbing activities and that, if these remains are significant, successful mitigation and salvage efforts may be undertaken in order to prevent adverse impacts to these resources.

6.6.3 Setting

Paleontology is a multidisciplinary science that combines elements of geology, biology, chemistry and physics in an effort to understand the history of life on earth. Paleontological resources, or fossils, are the remains, imprints or traces of once-living organisms preserved in rocks and sediments. These include mineralized, partially mineralized, or unmineralized bones and teeth, soft tissues, shells, wood, leaf impressions, footprints, burrows and microscopic remains. The fossil record is the only evidence that life on earth has existed for more than 3.6 billion years. Fossils are considered non-renewable resources because the organisms from which they derive no longer exist. Thus, once destroyed, a fossil can never be replaced. Fossils are important scientific and educational resources because they are used to:

- Study the phylogenetic relationships between extinct organisms, as well as their relationships to modern groups.
- Elucidate the taphonomic, behavioral, temporal and diagenetic pathways responsible for fossil preservation.
- Reconstruct ancient environments, climate change and paleoecological relationships.
- Provide a measure of relative geologic dating which forms the basis for biochronology and biostratigraphy, and which is an independent and supporting line of evidence for isotopic dating.
- Study the geographic distribution of organisms and tectonic movements of land masses and ocean basins through time
- Study patterns and processes of evolution, extinction and speciation.

- Identify past and potential future human-caused effects to global environments and climates.

Aspects of the regional and local geology that pertain to paleontological resources include the distribution, ages and types of sediments that occur within the proposed RERC site and transmission line right of way, and the known paleontological sensitivity of geologic units. This sensitivity forms the basis for the determination of the potential for adverse impacts to paleontological resources during construction.

The geology in the vicinity of the proposed Project site was mapped by Morton and Cox (1994, 2001) and 1:24,000 scale geologic maps are available for the area. The information contained within these and other research publications form the basis for the following discussion on the regional and site-specific geology of the Riverside Energy Resource Center and transmission line right of way.

The Riverside West quadrangle is near the northern end of the Perris Block, which lies within the geomorphic province known as the Peninsular Ranges Province. The Perris Block is a structurally stable, internally unfaulted mass of crustal rocks bounded on the west by the Elsinore-Chino fault zones, on the east by the San Jacinto fault zone, and on the north by the Cucamonga fault zone (Morton and Matti, 1989; Morton and Cox, 1994; Morton and Cox, 2001). On the south, the Perris Block is bounded by a series of sedimentary basins that lie between Temecula and Anza (Morton and Matti, 1989).

Almost all of the current landforms and geographic features in the vicinity of the proposed Project are only a few million years old, but the two dominant forces that have shaped the landscape - mountain building and fault movement - began about 90-120 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period. During a major episode of mountain building known as the Nevadan Orogeny, intrusive igneous rocks that make up the Sierra Nevada batholith were formed as molten magma cooled and hardened slowly below the surface. At about the same time, granitic rocks in the Peninsular Ranges were also forming. These rocks are generally less silicic and more calcic than typical Sierran granitics but still are similar in age and composition (Norris and Webb, 1990). The magma that fed these batholiths originated from melting of crustal material during subduction of the Pacific plate beneath the western edge of North America, similar to the current situation along the western coast of South America (Norris and Webb, 1990).

During the Miocene, about 25-29 million years ago, the Pacific plate became completely overridden by the North American plate. When the Pacific plate's mid-ocean ridge reached the subduction zone, tangential motion replaced convergent motion, and the ridge became a transform fault and shear boundary between the two plates (the San Andreas Fault). The Pacific plate is now moving northwest in relation to the North American plate, and it is believed that about 350 mi (560 km) of total displacement has occurred along the fault zone. The San Andreas plate boundary through California has been extensively studied but much is still unknown about the causes, timing and triggering of major earthquakes along this boundary.

About 5 million years ago, the Sierra Nevada, the Coast Ranges, the Transverse Ranges and the Peninsular Ranges began to be uplifted. Studies on the nature and distribution of clasts shed from the Transverse and Peninsular Ranges and deposited on the Perris Block area suggest that the Peninsular Ranges were formed much further south of their present location and have been moved by the San Andreas Fault (Morton and Matti, 1989).

The Project site is located on the northern portion of the Perris Block, which is a fault-bounded structural subprovince of the northern Peninsular Ranges Province. Across the Perris Block are a wide variety of plutonic rocks that are part of the Peninsular Range Batholith, including tonalite, quartz diorite, granodiorite, granite and sparse small bodies of gabbro and diorite (Morton and Cox, 2001). The alluvial units that were deposited over and around these granitoid bodies consist variously of fluvial sand, gravel and cobbles, and strongly eroded gravel and pebbly sand. In the Project vicinity, these sediments contain clasts of mylonite, quartzite and plutonic rocks derived form the western San Bernardino Mountains that have been interpreted as erosional remnants of a paleo-Santa Ana River that flowed further south than its present-day course (Morton and Cox, 2001).

6.6.4 Literature Review

The paleontological resources study was conducted by Ms. Della K. Snyder, Project Manager for Paleontological Resources at SWCA Environmental Consultants, Inc., under the supervision of Cara Corsetti, Program Director. It meets all CEC requirements (CEC, 2000), regulations, and the standard measures for mitigating adverse construction-related impacts to significant paleontological resources established by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (SVP, 1995).

Prior to the field survey, published and unpublished geological and paleontological literature was reviewed and evaluated to develop a baseline paleontological inventory of the RERC site and transmission line right of way and to assess the potential paleontological productivity of stratigraphic units present. The literature review was supplemented by museum locality and specimen database searches to 1) determine whether any previously documented significant fossil localities occur within the RERC site and transmission line right of way; 2) assess the potential for disturbance of these localities during construction; and 3) evaluate the paleontologic potential of the rock formations and/or surficial deposits underlying the Project site. The museums included in the record search were the San Bernardino County Museum and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. These methods are consistent with CEC (2000) and Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (1995) guidelines for assessing the importance of paleontological resources in areas of potential environmental impact.

6.6.4.1 Literature Review Results

As mapped by Morton and Cox (1994, 2001), two geologic units are located within the proposed Riverside Energy Resource Center Project site and transmission line right of way. These are Cretaceous quartz diorite (Kqd) and older alluvial fan deposits of middle

to late Pleistocene age (Qof/Qoa). In addition, artificial fill is documented below the power plant site by LOR Geotechnical Group (2004).

The quartz diorite unit is an intrusive igneous rock, light- to medium-gray, medium-grained, equigranular, with 10-15 percent quartz and 20 percent mafic minerals consisting of almost equal amounts of biotite and hornblende. Intrusive igneous rocks have no potential to contain fossils, and this unit has no paleontological sensitivity. Quartz diorite is exposed as hilly outcrops along much of the central portion of the transmission line right of way.

The Pleistocene-age older alluvial fan deposits consist of weakly to moderately indurated, yellowish-brown to reddish-brown, coarse-grained sandy alluvium. It typically contains abundant silt and clay. A records search at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the San Bernardino County Museum indicated that no previously recorded fossil localities occur in this unit within the Project boundaries. However, Pleistocene older alluvium of similar lithology elsewhere in Riverside County, the Inland Empire and southern California has been reported to contain locally abundant and scientifically significant vertebrate, invertebrate and plant fossils (Unpublished SBCM specimen and locality data; Pajak et al., 1996; Eisentraut and Cooper, 2002). Large mammal fossils include mammoth, mastodon, horse, bison, camel, ground sloth, antelope, and many smaller taxa. Because of the high potential for this geologic unit to contain paleontological resources, it is considered to have high paleontological sensitivity. This geologic unit is mapped below the power plant site; below the western end of the transmission line right-of-way from the power plant site south to Jurupa Avenue and east along Jurupa Avenue to the vicinity of Wilderness Avenue; and along the transmission line right of way east of Fremont Street.

According to a preliminary geotechnical investigation completed by LOR Geotechnical Group (2004), artificial fill is located in portions of the power plant site to a depth of 1.5 feet. This artificial fill consists of loose light brown silty sand, and appears to be the result of past grading activities at the site and site discing for weed abatement. The remainder of the power plant site was comprised of coarse-grained quartz diorite. Thus, the power plant site is underlain entirely by artificial fill and quartz diorite, which have no paleontological sensitivity. The preliminary geotechnical report did not discuss geologic conditions below the transmission line right-of-way.

6.6.5 Field Survey

A field survey for this project was conducted on January 8, 2004. This survey consisted of a 100 percent pedestrian inspection of the RERC site and transmission line right of way for 1) surface fossils, 2) exposures of potentially fossiliferous rocks or surficial sediments, and 3) areas in which fossiliferous rocks or potentially fossiliferous surficial deposits could be exposed or otherwise impacted during the proposed construction.

6.6.5.1 Field Survey Findings

No paleontological resources were found within the RERC site and transmission line right-of-way during the field survey. Additionally, it was found that much of the power plant site and transmission line right of way was previously developed or underlain by quartz diorite. However, Pleistocene alluvial fan deposits underlie portions of the transmission line right of way west of Wilderness Avenue and east of Fremont Street.

In conclusion, although no fossil occurrences have been reported from or are currently exposed within the Riverside Energy Resource Center site and transmission line right of way, significant paleontological resources are known to occur within Pleistocene older alluvium in Riverside County and elsewhere within the state of California. These occurrences indicate the potential for scientifically significant fossils to be present within the Pleistocene older alluvium underlying portions of the Project area, and consequently, the possibility that these resources could be adversely impacted during construction. Following SVP (1995) criteria, older (Pleistocene and early Holocene) alluvium has high paleontological potential, and thus is considered to have high paleontological sensitivity. Identifiable fossil remains salvaged during paleontological monitoring and mitigation for the proposed Project could represent new taxa and/or temporal range extensions or new biogeographic occurrences. Such fossils may also provide new data on the age of the sediments in which they were preserved, and the depositional, environmental and climatic history of this part of Riverside County.

6.6.6 Impacts

Potential impacts to paleontological resources resulting from construction of the proposed Project can be divided into construction-related impacts and operation-related impacts, and are primarily construction-related. Paleontological resources, including an undetermined number of fossil remains and unrecorded fossil sites; associated specimen data and corresponding geologic and geographic site data; and the fossil-bearing strata, could be adversely affected by ground disturbance and earth moving associated with construction of the Project. Direct impacts would result from vegetation clearing, grading, trenching for pipelines, augering for foundations for electrical towers or poles, or any other earth-moving activity within previously undisturbed paleontologically sensitive sediments, making those sediments and their paleontological resources unavailable for future scientific investigation. The potential environmental effects from construction and operation of the Project on paleontological resources are presented in the following subsections.

Table 6.6-1 is the CEQA Environmental Checklist for paleontological resources.

Table 6.6-1 CEQA Environmental Checklist – Paleontological Resources

Paleontological Resources - Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation	Less Than Significant	No Impact
a) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature		X		

6.6.6.1 Potential Impacts from Project Construction

The substrate below the RERC and transmission line right of way consists of Pleistocene older alluvial fan deposits, quartz diorite and artificial fill. The Pleistocene older alluvial fan deposits are considered to have high paleontological sensitivity because older alluvial deposits in Riverside County and the Inland Empire are known to contain scientifically significant vertebrate fossils. Quartz diorite and artificial fill have no paleontological sensitivity.

The surface of the Project area was subjected to a 100 percent pedestrian survey and was found to be previously disturbed by human activities and devoid of paleontological resources. Therefore, activities affecting only the surface are not expected to result in adverse impacts to paleontological resources. Direct impacts to potentially significant paleontological resources are expected to be construction-related and could result from grading or any ground disturbance within the paleontologically sensitive Pleistocene older alluvium. If subsurface fossils are present at the Project site, direct impacts would include damage or destruction of paleontological resources by construction excavations. No indirect adverse impacts to paleontological resources that are construction-related are expected.

The proposed power plant site is underlain by artificial fill and bedrock of quartz diorite (LOR Geotechnical Group, 2004). No paleontologically sensitive geologic units occur within the power plant site, or within the central portion of the transmission line right of way from Fremont Street to Wilderness Avenue. Thus, there will be no construction-related impacts to paleontological resources within these areas. However, construction of the transmission line may impact paleontologically sensitive Pleistocene alluvial fan deposits between the power plant site and Wilderness Avenue, and east of Fremont Street to the eastern end of the transmission line.

6.6.6.2 *Potential Impacts from Project Operation*

No impacts on paleontological resources are expected to occur from the continuing operation of the Project or any of its related facilities.

6.6.7 Cumulative Impacts

If paleontological resources were encountered during project construction, the potential cumulative impacts would be low, if mitigation measures are implemented to recover the

resources and associated data. The proposed mitigation measures below would effectively recover the value to science of any fossils impacted by project construction.

6.6.8 Mitigation Measures

This section describes recommended mitigation measures that should be implemented to reduce potential adverse impacts to significant paleontological resources resulting from project construction. Mitigation measures are necessary because of potential adverse impacts of project construction on significant paleontological resources within Pleistocene older alluvial fan deposits. The proposed mitigation measures would reduce, to a less than significant level, the direct, indirect, and cumulative adverse environmental impacts on paleontological resources that could result from project construction. The mitigation measures proposed below are consistent with SVP standard guidelines for mitigating adverse construction-related impacts on paleontological resources (SVP 1995, 1996).

- Prior to construction, a qualified paleontologist will be retained to design a monitoring and mitigation program and implement the program during project-related ground disturbance within Pleistocene older alluvial fan deposits. No mitigation would be necessary where project construction occurs within artificial fill or quartz diorite. Actual construction areas to be monitored can be determined by the qualified paleontologist at the onset of the Project.
- Prior to the start of construction, construction personnel involved with earth-moving activities will be informed on the appearance of fossils and proper notification procedures in the event of a discovery.
- Any subsurface excavations exclusive of exposures of quartz diorite or documented artificial fill will be monitored full-time. Paleontological monitoring will include inspection of exposed and excavated sediments for the presence of fossils. In the event that fossils are discovered during project construction, the paleontological monitor should have the authority to temporarily divert construction in order to collect the fossil specimen(s) and associated field data. If microfossils are present, the monitor may collect bulk matrix samples that will be processed by screenwashing to recover small fossils.
- All significant fossils recovered during project construction will be prepared to the point of curation, identified by qualified experts, and transferred to a designated repository, such as the San Bernardino County Museum or the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.
- A final report describing the results of the monitoring and mitigation program will prepared by the qualified paleontologist.

These mitigation measures are necessary where ground disturbance has the potential to impact paleontologically sensitive sediments. The only paleontologically sensitive sediments within the proposed power plant site and transmission line right of way are

Pleistocene alluvial fan deposits. The areas where Pleistocene alluvial fan deposits may be encountered during ground-disturbing activity are located along the transmission line right of way between the power plant site and Wilderness Avenue, and east of Fremont Street. No paleontologically sensitive geologic units occur within the power plant site, and no paleontological mitigation is necessary for construction within the power plant site.

6.6.9 Involved Agencies and Agency Contacts

There are no state or local agencies having specific jurisdiction over paleontological resources.

6.6.10 Permits Required and Permit Schedule

No state or county agency requires a paleontological collecting permit to allow for the recovery of fossil remains discovered because of construction-related earth moving on state or private land in a Project site.

6.6.11 References

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