

March 29, 2002

**Advice 2215-E**

(Pacific Gas and Electric Company ID U 39 E)

**Subject:     Vegetation Management Balancing Account  
                  2001 Balance**

Public Utilities Commission of the State of California

In accordance with Preliminary Statement, Part BU--*Vegetation Management Balancing Account (VMBA)*, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) submits for filing a summary of the entries made to the VMBA for the period January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2001. Also, upon approval of this filing, PG&E will transfer the year-end 2001 balance to the Transition Revenue Account (TRA), consistent with treatment of the 1999 and 2000 year-end VMBA balances authorized in D. 02-02-043, dated February 21, 2002, in PG&E's Attrition Rate Adjustment (Attrition) proceeding.<sup>1</sup>

**Background**

In PG&E's 1999 General Rate Case (GRC) decision (D. 00-02-046), the Commission adopted a one-way balancing account mechanism to track vegetation management expenditures during the time the 1999 GRC revenue requirement is in effect. The VMBA provides that PG&E will file an annual advice letter summarizing the entries to the VMBA for that year and a proposal for the disposition of any credit balance in the account.

On January 10, 2001, Administrative Law Judge Robert Barnett issued a ruling in PG&E's 2001 Attrition proceeding that bifurcated the proceeding into two phases and adopted the review of PG&E's vegetation management expenditures (for

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<sup>1</sup> PG&E reserves all legal rights to challenge the decisions or statutes under which it has been required to make this advice filing, and nothing in this advice filing constitutes a waiver of such rights. In particular, PG&E's implementation in this advice letter of the downward adjustment to its vegetation management expense ordered in Decision 01-10-031 (PG&E's 1999 GRC Rehearing Decision) should not be construed as a waiver or implied waiver of any arguments made in its petition for writ of review of Decision 01-10-031, which is currently pending before the California Court of Appeals, First Appellate District. Also, PG&E reserves any additional legal rights to challenge the requirement to make this advice filing by reason of its status as a debtor under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code, and nothing in this advice filing constitutes a waiver of such rights.

1999 and 2000) under Phase 1 of the proceeding. In D. 02-02-043, the Commission authorized PG&E to transfer the 1999 and 2000 VMBA balances to the TRA, as requested in Advice 2016-E and Advice 2139-E, respectively.

### **2001 VMBA Balance**

Entries made to the VMBA for the period January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2001, are shown in Table 1, below. The recorded expenses for 2001 totaled \$111,441,477. In accordance with VMBA accounting procedures, this amount excludes expenses relating to the vegetation management quality assurance program, shareholder-funded expenses as defined in D. 99-07-029 (Tree Trimming Oil Settlement), and vegetation management expenses allocated to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) jurisdiction.

Decision 00-02-046 adopted an estimated vegetation management expense of \$121,070,000 (in 1996 dollars) (\$130,518,843 in 1999 dollars). However, GRC Rehearing D. 01-10-031, dated October 10, 2001, modified the adopted amount to \$118,019,000 (in 1996 dollars) (\$127,229,729 in 1999 dollars).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, D. 02-02-043, dated February 21, 2002, adopted Attrition revenues for 2001. Thus, the vegetation management revenue requirement for 2001 is further revised to \$131,415,587 (in 2001 dollars).<sup>3</sup> Excluding the vegetation management quality assurance program and the allocated FERC jurisdiction amounts, the net adopted 1999 expense is \$129,328,489 (in 2001 dollars).

The difference between the amount adopted in D. 00-02-046, as modified, and the amount recorded for 2001 is \$17,887,012. This amount represents an overcollection, or credit balance, to the VMBA. PG&E is transferring this overcollection, including interest, to the TRA, consistent with treatment of the 1999 and 2000 VMBA overcollections authorized in D. 02-02-043.

This filing will not increase any rate or charge, cause the withdrawal of service or conflict with any other rate schedule or rule.

### **Protests**

Anyone wishing to protest this filing may do so by sending a letter by **April 18, 2002**, which is 20 days after the date of this filing. The protest must state the grounds upon which it is based, including such items as financial and service impact, and should be submitted expeditiously. Protests should be mailed to:

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<sup>2</sup> D. 01-10-031 changed the adopted Tree Removal expense from \$20.384 million to \$17.333 million resulting in a reduction of \$3.051 million from the original adopted vegetation management expense.

<sup>3</sup> D. 02-02-043, mimeo p. 18, footnote 2, adopted year 2001 escalation of 3.29%.

IMC Branch Chief  
Energy Division  
California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Avenue, Room 4002  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
Facsimile: (415) 703-2200

Copies should also be mailed to the attention of the Director, Energy Division, Room 4005 and Jerry Royer, Energy Division, at the address shown above. It is also requested that a copy of the protest be sent via postal mail and facsimile to Pacific Gas and Electric Company on the same date it is mailed or delivered to the Commission at the address shown below.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
Attention: Les Guliasi  
Director, Regulatory Relations  
77 Beale Street, Mail Code B10C  
P.O. Box 770000  
San Francisco, CA 94177  
Facsimile: (415) 973-7226

### **Effective Date**

PG&E requests that this advice filing become effective on **May 8, 2002**, which is forty days' regular notice from the date of this filing.

### **Notice**

In accordance with General Order 96-A, Section III, Paragraph G, a copy of this advice letter is being sent electronically and via U.S. mail to parties shown on the attached list, and the parties on the service list for Application (A.) 00-07-043. Address changes should be directed to Rose Abao at (415) 973-3529. Advice letter filings can also be accessed electronically at:

[http://www.pge.com/customer\\_services/business/tariffs/](http://www.pge.com/customer_services/business/tariffs/)

Vice President - Regulatory Relations

cc: Service List – Attrition A. 00-07-043

**Table 1****Decision Nos. 01-10-031 and 02-02-043****Vegetation Management  
Balancing Account Summary****January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2001**

1999 GRC Adopted Estimate	\$ 131,415,587
Less VMQABA*	(\$1,201,643)
Less FERC Allocation	(\$885,455)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>\$ 129,328,489</u>
2001 Recorded Expenses	\$ 113,090,592
Less VMQABA*	(\$886,125)
Less FERC Allocation	(\$762,990)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>\$ 111,441,477</u>
Over (Under) Expenditure	(\$17,887,012)
Interest (through February 2002)	(\$604,394)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>(\$18,491,406)</u>

\* Vegetation Management Quality Assurance Balancing Account