Proponent's Environmental Assessment for Southern California Edison Company's Eagle Mountain-Blythe 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project Volume 3

July 31, 2024 (PEA submittal date)

Remove existing subtransmission structures and conductors, install new subtransmission structures and conductors on existing distribution and subtransmission circuits.

The Eagle Mountain-Blythe 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project would be located in Riverside County and the City of Blythe within the State of California.

Application A.24-XX-XX to the California Public Utilities Commission

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Attachment 5.11 A Definitions of Land Use Designations

5.9 Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety

This section describes the hazards, hazardous materials, and public safety in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to hazards, hazardous materials, and public safety from construction and operation of the Project. Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor (DTSC 2023);
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker (SWRCB 2021);
- Environmental Data Resources, Inc. (EDR) Area/Corridor Report (EDR 2023), which has been included as Appendix F; and
- local agency planning documents.

5.9.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

The Project is not located within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school. The schools nearest to the Project Alignment are the Felix J. Appleby Elementary School, which is approximately 0.27 mile southwest of the Blythe Laydown Yard, and the Della S. Lindley Elementary School, which is approximately 1.5 miles west of the Mirage Laydown Yard.

5.9.1.1 Hazardous Materials Report

EDR performed a regulatory database search for known and potential release sites within a 1-mile radius of the Project Alignment (EDR 2023). State and federal databases were reviewed to identify hazardous materials and hazardous waste facilities, including federal Superfund sites, State Response sites, Voluntary Cleanup sites, School Cleanup sites, Permitted Operating sites, Corrective Action sites, and Tiered Permit sites within or adjacent to the Project Area. A database review identified five nearby sites, as listed in Table 5.9-1.

Based on a review of the DTSC EnviroStor and SWRCB GeoTracker databases, the Project Alignment traverses a concentrated series of 77 closed Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites associated with the former Blythe Lemon Ranch, which are all related to releases of gasoline into the soil. Figure 5.9-1 shows the locations of known release sites near the Project.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Table 5.9-1 Known Release Sites Identified within the Project Area

Map ID	Facility Name	Status[1]	Concerns	Approximate Distance to Nearest Project Component	Nearest Project Component/ Structure ID Number	Comments
A5	Blythe Lemon Ranch	Closed	TPH, VOCs	0.02 mile	230 feet from New Structure N4803696E_C4803697E_S4803698E	Cortese, LUST
1	MWD – Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant	Closed	TPH, VOCs, Diesel	0.17 mile	412 feet from New Structure 1604703E	Cortese, LUST
A212	Sun Desert	Closed	TPH, VOCs	0.02 mile	230 feet from New Structure 124607A_124607B	LUST, former Blythe Lemon Ranch
C291	Blythe Energy	N/A	Ash from coal gasification. Anhydrous ammonia release.[2]	0.04 mile	389 feet from New Structure 124602A_124602B	ERNS, HWTS, HAZNET, CERS
A237	Sunworld	Closed	TPH, VOCs	0.02 mile	230 feet from New Structure 124607A_124607B	LUST, former Blythe Lemon Ranch

Acronyms: MWD: Metropolitan Water District, TPH: Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons, VOC: Volatile Organic Compounds, Cortese: Hazardous Waste and Substances Sites List, LUST: Leaking Underground Storage Tank, ERNS: Emergency Response Notification System, HWTS: Hazardous Waste Tracking System, HAZNET: Data extracted from hazardous waste manifests received by the DTSC, CERS: California Environmental Reporting System

Notes:

1 Closed status indicates a closure letter or other formal closure decision document has been issued for the site.

2 No documented remediation efforts were provided in GeoTracker or EDR. The Blythe Energy facility is immediately adjacent to the Blythe Lemon Ranch Property. While no documented corrective action or remediation efforts were noted for this facility, for disclosure purposes it is hereby included.

Source: EDR 2023.

Figure 5.9-1 Known Release Sites in the Vicinity of the Project

Sun Desert and Sunworld are listed at 15550 West Hobsonway in Blythe; however, mapping prepared for the Blythe Mesa Solar Project indicates that these two sites are located on the former 80-acre Blythe Lemon Ranch property, which intersects the Project Alignment for approximately 0.22 mile near the eastern terminus of the Project (County of Riverside and United States Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management 2015).

Nevertheless, these listings are all designated as Completed – Case Closed; these statuses were assigned in 1996 and 1997 (SWRCB 2021). The Eagle Mountain Substation is immediately to the west of a listed LUST site at the MWD's Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant that has a status of Completed – Case Closed.

5.9.1.2 Airport Land Use Plan

The Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) is responsible for enforcing the Riverside County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) (Riverside County ALUC 2004), which guides development in areas surrounding 16 private, public, and military airports in the county's jurisdiction. The Riverside County ALUC implements policies from the plan to ensure the public is protected from potential hazards associated with airport operations.

Portions of the Project Alignment are located within the mapped areas for Blythe Airport and Desert Center Airport, which are included in the plan. Desert Center Airport is located 0.6 mile from the westernmost portion of the Project Alignment, near the juncture of State Route 177 and Interstate 10. Blythe Airport is 0.5 mile from the eastern portion of the Project. Table 5.9-2 provides a summary of the two airports and their locations in relation to the Project Area. Figure 5.9-2 shows the airport locations.

Table 5.9-2 Airports Located within 2 Miles of the Project

Airport Name	Address	Approximate Distance to Nearest Project Component	Nearest Project Component
Blythe Airport	17240 West Hobsonway, Blythe, CA	0.5 mile	New Structure N4803696E_C4803697E_S4803698E
Desert Center Airport	Rice Road, Desert Center, CA	0.6 mile	New Structure N4747658E_C4747659E_S4747660E

An approximately 1.7-mile portion of the existing EM-B subtransmission alignment is within the Desert Center Airport Compatibility Zones, while the existing Blythe Substation and an approximately 7.6-mile portion of the existing EM-B subtransmission alignment are within the Blythe Municipal Airport Compatibility Zones.

5.9.1.3 Fire Hazard

Wildfire hazards are discussed in Section 5.20, Wildfire, and summarized herein. Within California, fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs) are designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). CAL FIRE uses a five-tiered ranking system to assess the threat to the public based on fuel hazard, wildland fire potential, and housing density. Approximately 33 miles of the Project Alignment are located within Federal Responsibility Areas for which CAL FIRE has not assigned FHSZ classifications. The remaining portions of the Project Site are in Local Responsibility Areas that are not classified as Moderate, High, or Very High FHSZs (CAL FIRE 2024).

Figure 5.9-2 Airports in the Vicinity of the Project

5.9.1.4 Metallic Objects

The Project Alignment crosses existing metallic hazardous material pipelines along much of the Project Area, along Interstate 10 (California Governor's Office of Emergency Services [Cal OES] 2023). Figure 5.9-3 shows the location of hazardous material pipelines in relation to the Project Area. A review of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services Pipeline Mapping System database indicates there is one buried hazardous material pipeline facility in the Project vicinity.

5.9.1.5 Existing Building Materials

5.9.1.5.1 Lead-Based Paint/Roadway Paint Striping

Lead-based paint was banned for residential and consumer use in 1978, and lead solder used in plumbing was banned in 1988. Structures built before 1978 are likely to contain elevated concentrations of lead-based paint and the use of lead-based paint is still allowed for industrial purposes. Therefore, lead-based paint may be present on or in buildings and structures in the Project Area. The risk of lead toxicity in lead-based paint varies according to the condition of the paint and the year of its application. The types of structures of concern in the Project Area include residences painted prior to 1978, bridges, barns, sheds, commercial buildings, warehouses, industrial structures, equipment utility sheds, painted bridge surfaces, residue from yellow thermoplastic or yellow painted traffic stripes and pavement markings, and any other painted surfaces. Additionally, weathering and routine maintenance of paint on buildings may have contaminated nearby soils with lead.

5.9.1.5.2 Asbestos-Containing Materials

In December 1977, the United States (U.S.) Consumer Product Safety Commission restricted the use of asbestos-containing material (ACM), including patching compounds and artificial fireplace ash products. In 1989, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) restricted a number of other contaminated products, but this ruling was overturned in 1991. USEPA restrictions currently affect the ongoing use of asbestos in flooring felt, wallboard, certain types of papers, and any new uses of asbestos. Specifically, products can be made with asbestos if asbestos accounts for less than 1 percent of the product. Some of the asbestos-containing products that continue to be sold in the U.S. include brake pads, automobile clutches, roofing materials, vinyl tile, cement piping, corrugated sheeting, home insulation, and some potting soils. Therefore, although the use of asbestos in the manufacture of most building materials has not been fully prohibited by federal law, the use of asbestos in building materials has for the most part been discontinued since the late 1970s.

As such, many of the structures in the Project Area, including concrete bridge abutments, may have been built with materials that contain asbestos. It is likely that many structures in the Project Area were constructed prior to 1989. Therefore, ACM is likely present in many of the structures. The following ACM may be present:

- interior building materials such as floor tiles and mastic, wallboard and joint compound; wall, ceiling, and pipe insulation; and acoustic ceiling panels;
- exterior building materials such as stucco, siding, roofing materials, window sealants, patching material, concrete bridge construction materials, and pipe; and
- materials used in nearby roadway and railroad crossing structures that were built prior to the 1980s.

Figure 5.9-3 Hazardous Materials Pipelines in the Vicinity of the Project

5.9.1.5.3 Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Polychlorinated biphenyls may be encountered in fluorescent lighting ballasts, transformers, elevators, electrical substations, vehicle service lifts, and other areas where hydraulic equipment was used historically. The types of equipment of concern in the Project Area include pad-mounted transformers, pole-mounted transformers, stationary hydraulic equipment, and mobile hydraulic equipment, as well as fluorescent lighting.

5.9.1.5.4 Chemically Treated Wooden Utility Poles

Wooden utility poles have been treated with chemicals, including creosote, for preservation and durability since at least the early 1900s. Preservation products can be applied to the wood via petroleum products (North American Wood Pole Council 2022). Wooden utility poles are present throughout the Project Area.

5.9.1.6 Aerially Deposited Lead

Aerially deposited lead was historically generated by cars burning leaded gasoline and is often found in the soil adjacent to highways and roads. Elevated concentrations of aerially deposited lead may be present along existing roadways, including those throughout the Project Area. Soil in the Project Area may contain concentrations of lead exceeding state regulatory thresholds, and any waste generated from the disturbance of soil in these locations may be regulated as a non-hazardous or hazardous waste. Soil within the following Project Areas may be contaminated with aerially deposited lead due to the proximity of several highways within 0.25 mile of the Project Alignment:

- Interstate (I-) 10 is located along most of the Project Alignment and continues beyond the alignment terminus through Blythe.
- State Route 177 crosses under the western portion of Project Alignment.

5.9.1.7 Common Railroad Corridor Contaminants

Contaminants common in railway corridors include petroleum hydrocarbons, pesticides and herbicides, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and heavy metals such as arsenic and lead. Unused/abandoned railroad ties/timbers may also remain on site and may require special handling and disposal if encountered during construction and/or operation and maintenance (O&M) activities. One railway, the Arizona and California Railroad, is located approximately 4.5 miles east of the Project's eastern terminus.

5.9.1.8 Mines

The Eagle Mountain Mine area, designated by the Department of Conservation as Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ-) 2a,[2] is located approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project Site (DOC 2023). The Project does not cross any known active mining claims. Mines and mineral resources near the Project Alignment are further discussed in Section 5.12, Mineral Resources.

[2] MRZ-2a: Areas underlain by mineral deposits where geologic data show that significant measured or indicated resources are present (County of Riverside 2015).

5.9.1.9 Landfills

Municipal landfills have the potential to release methane gas that may present an explosion risk. The Riverside County Department of Waste Resources operates two active landfills in the Project vicinity, the Desert Center Landfill and the Blythe Landfill (EDR 2023). The Desert Center Landfill is approximately 0.8 mile from the westernmost portion of the Project Alignment, near the juncture of I-10 and State Route 177. The Blythe Landfill is located at 1000 Midland Road, approximately 7 miles northeast from the easternmost portion of the Project. Landfill locations are shown in Figure 5.9-4.

5.9.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.9.2.1 Federal

5.9.2.1.1 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (42 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] Section 9601 et seq.)

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) provides a federal Superfund to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites, as well as accidents, spills, and other emergency releases of pollutants and contaminants into the environment. Through CERCLA, USEPA has the power to seek out those parties responsible for a release and ensure their cooperation in the cleanup.

5.9.2.1.2 Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 Title III (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 68.110 et seq.)

The Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) amended CERCLA and established a nationwide emergency planning and response program. It also imposed reporting requirements for businesses that store, handle, or produce significant quantities of extremely hazardous materials. SARA requires states to implement a comprehensive system to inform local agencies and the public when a significant quantity of such materials is stored or handled at a facility. Additionally, SARA identifies requirements for planning, reporting, and notification concerning hazardous materials.

5.9.2.1.3 Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. Section 7401 et seq.)

The Clean Air Act (CAA) provides measures aimed at preventing the accidental release of hazardous materials into the atmosphere. Regulations implementing the CAA and governing hazardous materials emissions are provided in 40 CFR Section 68. Implementation of these regulations is intended to prevent the accidental release of hazardous materials into the environment.

5.9.2.1.4 Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. Section 1251 et seq.)

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is the principal federal statute protecting navigable waters and adjoining shorelines from pollution. The law was enacted with the intent of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of the U.S. Since its enactment, the CWA has formed the foundation for regulations detailing specific requirements for pollution prevention and response measures. The USEPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers implement provisions of the CWA through a variety of regulations, including the National Contingency Plan and the Oil Pollution and Prevention Regulations. Implementation of the CWA is the responsibility of each state.

Figure 5.9-4 Landfills in the Vicinity of the Project

5.9.2.1.5 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. Section 6901 et seq.)

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) regulates hazardous waste from the time that waste is generated, through to its management, storage, transport, and treatment, until its final disposal. The USEPA has authorized the DTSC in California to administer its respective RCRA programs.

5.9.2.1.6 Hazardous Materials Transportation Act (49 U.S.C. Section 5101 et seq.)

The U.S. Department of Transportation has the regulatory responsibility for the safe transportation of hazardous materials under the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act.

5.9.2.1.7 Code of Federal Regulation Title 14

All airports and navigable airspace not administered by the Department of Defense are under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). 14 CFR Part 77 establishes the standards and required notification for objects affecting navigable airspace. In general, construction projects exceeding 200 feet in height—or those extending at a ratio greater than 100 to 1 (horizontal to vertical) from a public or military airport runway more than 3,200 feet long, out to a horizontal distance of 20,000 feet—are considered potential obstructions and require FAA notification. In addition, construction projects extending at a ratio greater than 50 to 1 (horizontal to vertical) from a public or military airport runway measuring 3,200 feet or less, out to a horizontal distance of 10,000 feet, are considered potential obstructions and require FAA notification. 14 CFR Part 133 requires an operating plan to be developed in coordination with and approved by the local FAA Flight Standards District Office that has jurisdiction over when helicopter use would be required.

5.9.2.1.8 Occupational Safety and Health Administration (29 CFR Sections 1900-1910)

Established under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Act of 1970, OSHA regulates workplace safety and health. The agency's mission is to prevent work-related injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

5.9.2.1.9 Hazard Management and Resource Restoration Program

The Hazard Management and Resource Restoration Program is administered by the BLM. Its mission is to protect lives, resources, and property, and to improve the health of landscapes and watersheds by minimizing the environmental contamination on public lands, reducing and eliminating risk associated with physical and environmental hazards, restoring resources impacted by oil discharges and hazardous release, and administering CERCLA assessments.

5.9.2.1.10 Bureau of Land Management Instruction Memorandum Number No. 2022-036

BLM Instruction Memorandum No. 2022-036 provides guidance on the incorporation of appropriate fire prevention and control stipulations, as required by 43 CFR Section 2805.12(a)(4), for electric transmission and distribution ROW authorizations issued under Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The fire prevention and control stipulations are incorporated as standard stipulations into new authorizations, renewals, amendments, and assignments. This memorandum applies to electric transmission and distribution ROWs issued under Title V of FLPMA and clarifies terms and conditions required to prevent and suppress wildfires within, or in the immediate vicinity of, the ROW boundary. The memorandum states that incorporating fire prevention and control stipulations should be done in coordination with resource specialists (e.g., wildlife, fuels, cultural, National Environmental Policy Act

specialists) who participate on interdisciplinary teams formed to work on electric transmission and distribution ROWs.

5.9.2.2 State

5.9.2.2.1 California Emergency Management Agency

The California Emergency Management Agency was formed on January 1, 2009, as the result of a merger between Cal OES and the Office of Homeland Security. The agency's Hazardous Materials Unit is responsible for hazardous materials emergency planning and response, spill release and notification, and hazardous materials enforcement of the Unified Hazardous Waste and Hazardous Materials Management Regulatory Program (Unified Program).

5.9.2.2.2 California Environmental Protection Agency

The California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) is the California state agency responsible for developing, implementing, and enforcing the state's environmental protection laws that ensure clean air, water, and soil; safe pesticides; and waste recycling and reduction. The Cal/EPA oversees the DTSC and SWRCB. The Cal/EPA has implementation authority per California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 27, Division 1, Subdivision 4, Chapter 1.

5.9.2.2.3 Department of Toxic Substances Control

Under Government Code Section 65962.5(a), the DTSC is required to compile submit to the Secretary for Environmental Protection a list (the "Cortese List") of hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action pursuant to Section 25187.5 of the Health and Safety Code and all land designated as hazardous waste property or border zone property pursuant to Article 11 (commencing with Section 25220) of Chapter 6.5 of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code. The DTSC is required to update this list as appropriate, but at least annually.

5.9.2.2.4 Division of California Occupational Safety and Health

The Division of California Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) protects workers and the public from safety hazards, including ACMs and lead-based materials (CCR Title 8). Cal/OSHA assumes primary responsibility for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations. These regulations concern the use of hazardous materials in the workplace, including requirements for employee safety training; availability of safety equipment; accident and illness prevention programs; hazardous-substance exposure warnings; and preparation of emergency action and fire prevention plans.

Cal/OSHA also enforces hazard communication program regulations, including procedures for identifying and labeling hazardous substances, and requires that safety data sheets (formerly known as material safety data sheets) be available for employee information and training programs. Cal/OSHA standards are generally more stringent than federal regulations. Construction workers and operational employees within the Project Alignment would be subject to these requirements.

Cal/OSHA regulations on electrical safety require California employers to provide workers with a safe and healthful workplace. These regulations are contained in CCR Title 8. Most of the electrical health and safety regulations can be found in Chapter 4, Subchapter 5 in the Electrical Safety Orders, Sections 2299-2989.

Cal/OSHA regulations on electrical safety are grouped by electrical voltage. Regulations for low voltage (i.e., up to 600 volts [V]) are provided in Sections 2299-2599 and the regulations for high voltage (i.e., above 600V) are provided in Sections 2700-2989. Section 1518 addresses the safety requirements for the protection of workers and others from electric shock in construction.

5.9.2.2.5 California State Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2018 California State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) is the state's primary hazard mitigation guidance document. The 2018 California SHMP builds upon the state's commitment to reduce or eliminate potential risks and impacts of natural and human-caused disasters to help communities with mitigation and disaster resiliency efforts. The 2018 California SHMP includes an updated statewide risk assessment, disaster history, and statistics; recent mitigation progress, success stories, and best practices; updated state hazard mitigation goals, objectives, and strategies; and updated climate mitigation progress and adaptation strategies. The Federal Emergency Management Agency approved California's 2018 SHMP on September 28, 2018.

5.9.2.2.6 California State Water Resources Control Board

The SWRCB has jurisdiction throughout California. Created by the California State Legislature in 1967, the SWRCB protects water quality by setting statewide policy and coordinating and supporting regional efforts. As a result of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1970, the SWRCB was organized into nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) that exercise rulemaking and regulatory activities by basins. Together with the RWQCBs, the SWRCB is authorized to implement the federal CWA in California.

5.9.2.2.7 California Public Utilities Commission General Order 95

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) General Order (GO) 95 contains requirements and specifications for overhead electrical line construction. These requirements are intended to ensure the safety of workers engaged in the construction, O&M, and use of electrical facilities. The regulations are also intended to ensure the general reliability of the state's utility infrastructure and services. Rule 35 of GO 95 establishes minimum clearances between line conductors and nearby vegetation for fire prevention purposes. These minimum clearances must be maintained through tree trimming prior to construction and throughout O&M of utility facilities.

5.9.2.2.8 California Public Utilities Commission General Order 166

The purpose of the standards contained in CPUC GO 166 is to ensure that jurisdictional electric utilities are prepared for emergencies and disasters in order to minimize damage and inconvenience to the public which may occur as a result of electric system failures, major outages, or hazards posed by damage to electric distribution facilities. The standards require that each jurisdictional electric utility prepare an emergency response plan and update the plan annually, conduct annual emergency training and exercises using the utilities emergency response plan, and coordinate emergency plans with state and local public safety agencies.

5.9.2.2.9 Public Resources Code Sections 4292-4293

Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4292 requires a 10-foot clearance of any tree branches or ground vegetation from around the base of power poles carrying more than 110 kV. The firebreak clearances

required by PRC Section 4292 are applicable within an imaginary cylindrical space surrounding each pole or tower on which a switch, fuse, transformer, or lightning arrester is attached and surrounding each dead-end or corner pole. PRC Section 4293 presents guidelines for line clearance, including a minimum of 10 feet of vegetation clearance from any conductor operating at 110 kV or higher.

5.9.2.2.10 Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board

As a result of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1970, the Colorado River Basin RWQCB is the regulatory oversight agency for hazardous material release cases that impact groundwater in Riverside County, which includes Blythe and the Project Area.

5.9.2.2.11 California Public Utilities Commission Fire Safety Rulemaking Background

In October 2007, devastating wildfires driven by strong Santa Ana winds burned hundreds of square miles in Southern California. Several of the worst wildfires were reportedly ignited by overhead utility power lines and aerial communication facilities in close proximity to power lines. In response to these wildfires, the CPUC initiated Rulemaking (R.) 08-11-005 to consider and adopt regulations to protect the public from potential fire hazards associated with overhead power line facilities and nearby aerial communication facilities.

Beginning in 2009, the CPUC issued several decisions in R.08-11-005 that together adopted dozens of new fire safety regulations. Most of the adopted fire safety regulations consisted of new or revised rules in GO 95. Several of the adopted fire safety regulations apply only to areas, referred to as "high fire-threat areas," where there is an elevated risk for power line fires igniting and spreading rapidly. These high fire-threat areas are designated by several maps that were adopted on an interim basis. Each of the interim maps covers a different part of the state and uses its own methodology for identifying high fire-threat areas, presenting consistency and potential enforcement issues. To address these issues, the CPUC also commenced the development of a single statewide fire-threat map to designate areas where (1) there is an elevated risk for destructive power line fires, and (2) stricter fire safety regulations should apply.

In May 2015, the CPUC closed R.08-11-005 and initiated successor rulemaking R.15-05-006 to complete the outstanding tasks in R.08-11-005. The general scope of R.15-05-006 was to address the following matters carried over from the scope of R.08-11-005: (1) develop and adopt a statewide fire-threat map that delineates the boundaries of a new High Fire Threat District (HFTD) where the previously adopted regulations would apply, (2) determine the need for additional fire safety regulations in the HFTD, and (3) revise GO 95 to include a definition and maps of the HFTD, as well as any new fire safety regulations. The scope and schedule for R.15-05-006 was divided into two parallel tracks. One track focused on the development and adoption of a statewide fire-threat map. The second track focused on the identification, evaluation, and adoption of fire safety regulations in the HFTD.

On December 21, 2017, the CPUC issued Decision 17-12-024 adopting regulations to enhance fire safety in the HFTD, effectively completing the second track of R.15-05-006 described above. On January 19, 2018, the CPUC adopted, via Safety and Enforcement Division's disposition of a Tier 1 Advice Letter, the final CPUC Fire-Threat Map. The adopted CPUC Fire-Threat Map, together with the map of Tier 1 High Hazard Zones (HHZs) on the U.S. Forest Service-CAL FIRE joint map of tree mortality HHZs, comprise the HFTD Map where stricter fire safety regulations apply.

5.9.2.2.12 Public Resources Code Sections 4201-4204

PRC Sections 4201-4202 have the following requirements:

- The classification of lands within state responsibility areas in accordance with the severity of fire hazard present for the purpose of identifying measures to be taken to retard the rate of spreading and to reduce the potential intensity of uncontrolled fires that threaten to destroy resources, life, or property.
- The classification of lands within state responsibility areas into fire hazard severity zones. Each zone shall embrace relatively homogeneous lands and shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors present, including areas where winds have been identified by the department as a major cause of wildfire spread.
- The designation of fire hazard severity zones and assignation to each zone a rating reflecting the degree of severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in the zone.
- The periodic review of zones designated and rated pursuant to this article and, as necessary, the revision of zones or their ratings or repeal the designation of zones.

5.9.2.2.13 California Health and Safety Code Section 13009

California Health and Safety Code Section 13009 permits CAL FIRE to file civil actions to recover fire suppression costs from a party who causes a fire negligently or in violation of a law or an order to correct a fire hazard. CAL FIRE established a Civil Cost Recovery Program to satisfy the statute's intent to assign financial responsibility to culpable parties and to prevent fires through deterrence.

5.9.2.2.14 Red Flag Fire Warning and Weather Watches

Like PRC Sections 4292 and 4293, Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches aim to prevent fire events and reduce the potential for substantial damage. When extreme fire weather or behavior is present or predicted in an area, a Red Flag Warning or Fire Weather Watch may be issued to advise local fire agencies that these conditions are present. The National Weather Service issues Red Flag Warnings and Fire Weather Watches and CAL FIRE have provided safety recommendations for preventing fires, including clearing and removing vegetation and ensuring the proper use of equipment.

5.9.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC GO 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and city regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.9.2.3.1 Certified Unified Program Agency

The Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) is the agency certified by the DTSC to conduct the Unified Program. The program consists of hazardous waste generator and on-site treatment programs, aboveground and underground storage tank programs, Hazardous Materials Management Plans (HMMPs), Business

Plans, Inventory Statements, and the Risk Management and Prevention Program. The Riverside County Department of Environmental Health is the CUPA responsible for administering hazardous materials and wastes programs within Riverside County.

5.9.2.3.2 County of Riverside General Plan

The Safety Element of the County of Riverside General Plan identifies the natural and human-caused hazards that affect existing and future development and provides guidelines for protecting residents, employees, visitors, or other community members from injury and death. The Safety Element includes policies to protect the public from the following hazards: seismic and geologic hazards; flood and inundation hazards; fire hazards; hazardous waste and materials; disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; and additional climate change-related hazards. As stated in the Safety Element Vision Statements (County of Riverside 2015):

- "We acknowledge security of person and property as one of the most basic community needs and commit to designing our communities so that vulnerability to natural and human made hazards, as well as criminal activities, is anticipated and kept to a minimum."
- "Considerable protection from natural hazards such as earthquakes, fire, flooding, slope failure, and other hazardous conditions is now built into the pattern of development authorized by the General Plan."

5.9.2.3.3 Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission Land Use Compatibility Plan

The Riverside County ALUC is responsible for enforcing the Riverside County ALUCP (Riverside County ALUC 2004), which guides development in areas surrounding 16 private, public, and military airports in the county's jurisdiction. The Riverside County ALUC implements policies to ensure the public is protected from potential hazards associated with airport operations.

Portions of the Project Site are located within the mapped areas for Blythe Airport and Desert Center Airport, which are included in the plan. The Riverside County ALUC would review one proposed replacement structure, N4803684E_C4803685E_S4803686E, that would be located within Blythe Airport Zone D.

5.9.2.3.4 South Coast Air Quality Management District

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) is the regulatory agency responsible for improving air quality for most of Riverside County, including the Project Area. The SCAQMD develops and adopts an Air Quality Management Plan to ensure business and industry development is in compliance with federal and state clean air standards (SCAQMD 2023).

5.9.2.3.5 Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District

The Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District is responsible for attaining and maintaining National Ambient Air Quality Standards and State Ambient Air Quality Standards and regulating stationary sources of air pollution in the eastern portion of Riverside County, including the Project Area.

5.9.2.3.6 County of Riverside Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan

The County of Riverside and several participating jurisdictions, including the City of Blythe, prepared a Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan in July 2018 (County of Riverside 2018). The purpose of this

plan is to guide hazard mitigation planning to better protect the people and property of the County from the effects of natural disasters and hazard events, such as severe weather, floods, and earthquakes. The plan demonstrates the commitment of each participating jurisdiction to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a tool to help decision makers direct mitigation activities and resources.

5.9.2.3.7 City of Blythe General Plan

The Safety Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains policies and programs that seek to reduce the potential for the loss of life, injuries, and property damage associated with natural and man-made hazards, such as flooding, geologic hazards, wildland and urban fire, crime, hazardous materials, and airport hazards. The following policies (City of Blythe 2007) are applicable to the Project:

Policy 23 Minimize the impact of transportation related accidents involving hazardous materials.

Policy 25 Ensure that hazardous obstructions to the navigable airspace do not occur.

5.9.2.4 Touch Thresholds

Applicable standards for protection of workers and the public from shock hazards are described in Sections 5.9.4.1.12 and 5.9.4.5.

5.9.3 Impact Questions

5.9.3.1 Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For hazards and hazardous materials, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the Project:

- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?
- Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?
- Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?
- Be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous material sites, compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, and as a result would create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?
- For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, the project would result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?
- Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death in-volving wildland fires?

5.9.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

The CPUC has identified additional CEQA significance criteria. According to these additional CEQA significance criteria, a project causes a potentially significant impact if it would:

- Create a significant hazard to air traffic from the installation of new power lines and structures?
- Create a significant hazard to the public or environment through the transport of heavy materials using helicopters?
- Expose people to a significant risk of injury or death involving unexploded ordnance?
- Expose workers or the public to excessive shock hazards?

5.9.4 Impact Analysis

5.9.4.1 Hazards and Hazardous Materials Impact Analysis

5.9.4.1.1 Hazards and Hazardous Materials Methodology

Impacts from hazards and hazardous materials within the Project Area are determined using data from Cal OES databases and maps, statewide Cortese List databases, the EDR corridor report, and Project information provided by SCE.

5.9.4.1.2 Would the Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Hazardous materials refer generally to hazardous substances that exhibit corrosive, poisonous, flammable, and/or reactive properties and have the potential to harm human health and/or the environment. During construction, the Project would involve the transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials, including hazardous liquid materials (i.e., fuel), in quantities that would not pose a significant threat to the environment or people. Laydown yards and work areas may include fueling stations, generators, trash containers, and portable toilets/restrooms. Normal maintenance and refueling of construction equipment would be conducted at the laydown yards and work areas. Petroleum products (e.g., gasoline, diesel fuel, crankcase oil, hydraulic oil, lubricating grease, automatic transmission fluid, lubricants, and cleaning solvents) would be used during construction to fuel, lubricate, and clean vehicles and equipment, and would be transported in specialty trucks or in other approved containers. Additionally, the Project would involve the removal of existing wood poles. Depending on the type, condition, and original chemical treatment, any wood poles removed would be returned to a laydown yard and either reused by SCE, returned to the manufacturer, or disposed of in a Class I hazardous waste landfill or RWQCB-approved Class III landfill or equivalent facility.

Hazardous materials would be properly stored in secondary containment to prevent drainage or accidental discharge of these materials onto the ground or into drainage areas. The transport, use, and disposal of these hazardous materials would comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines designed to prevent accidents, injury, or other potential impacts to the public or the environment. All construction waste (e.g., trash and litter, garbage, other solid wastes, concrete washout, petroleum products, and other potentially hazardous materials) would be disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations. Sanitation waste (i.e., human-generated waste) would be disposed of in accordance with sanitation waste management practices.

Minor spills or releases of hazardous materials could occur due to improper handling and/or storage of hazardous materials during construction. However, any potential impacts during construction activities

would be minimized through implementation of the required Project-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) (as discussed in Section 5.10, Hydrology and Water Quality) and applicant proposed measures (APMs) HAZ-1, which requires preparation of a HMMP, and HAZ-2, which ensures hazardous waste materials would be safely disposed of offsite by requiring that an USEPA Identification Number be obtained prior to transport. The HMMP would include safety information regarding the requirements for transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials in compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations. As stated in Chapter 3, Proposed Project Description, SCE is currently performing O&M activities, including inspections, along the subtransmission lines that would be worked on as part of the Project. Conformance with applicable regulations and implementation of APMs HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, and associated BMPs related to fueling and/or handling, use, and storage of hazardous materials would ensure the Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Impacts related to the routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.3 Would the Project create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Accidental release of hazardous materials can occur from a variety of causes including vehicle accidents, inadvertent spills or releases. As discussed in Section 5.9.4.1.2 above, construction and operation of the Project would not involve the use of substantial quantities of hazardous materials and would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment. Construction of the Project would involve the use of hazardous materials such as lubricants, oils, cleaning solvents, and fuels, and would potentially generate limited quantities of hazardous waste during construction and demolition of existing facilities. However, construction of the Project would not involve the use of substantial quantities of hazardous materials and would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment.

All refueling, maintenance activities, and storage of hazardous materials would be conducted in accordance with the Project-specific SWPPP, APM HAZ-1 (which would require the preparation and implementation of a HMMP), and with federal and State regulations. The transport and disposal of hazardous waste would also be conducted in accordance with APM HAZ-2 (which requires that an USEPA Identification Number be obtained prior to transport of hazardous waste offsite for disposal) and State and federal regulations. Compliance with the Project-specific SWPPP, APMs HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, applicable plans, and federal and State regulations would reduce or eliminate the risk of construction hazards to the public, workers, and environment to a level that is less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.4 Would the Project emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school?

No Impact. The Project is not located within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school. The schools nearest to the Project Alignment are Felix J. Appleby Elementary School, which is approximately 0.27 mile southwest of the Blythe Laydown Yard, and Della S. Lindley Elementary School, which is approximately 1.5 miles west of the Mirage Laydown Yard. Therefore, the Project would not emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 0.25 mile of an existing or proposed school, and no impact would occur and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.5 Would the Project be located on a site that is included on a list of hazardous material sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Although several LUST and Cleanup Program sites described in Section 5.9.1.1 are located within 0.25 mile of the Project, all but one of these sites have a status of Completed – Case Closed, which means the site is no longer considered an environmental or health threat. In addition, the one site with a status of Open – Inactive is within 0.25 mile of the Blythe Laydown Yard, where only minor grading, fencing, and rocking is proposed.

Although several LUST and Cleanup Program sites are located within 0.25 mile of the Project, all but one of these sites have a status of Completed – Case Closed. Because these closed sites require no further regulatory action and/or subsurface constituents of concern have been reported to be below applicable regulatory criteria, these sites are not anticipated to pose a risk during construction activities. Although these sites in the Project vicinity have a status of Completed – Case Closed, it is possible that unanticipated soil contamination could be encountered; however, implementation of APM HAZ-1 and APM HAZ-3, which require development and implementation of a Hazardous Materials Management Plan and Soil Management Plan, would ensure that unanticipated soil contamination is appropriately handled and disposed of. Therefore, the Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment due to its location on a site included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to California Government Code Section 65962.5 and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.6 For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the Project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project area?

Less than Significant Impact. Airports within 2 miles of the Project Alignment include Blythe Airport, Desert Center Airport, and the Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant Airstrip (privately owned by MWD). Portions of the Project are located within the mapped airport influence areas for Blythe Airport and Desert

Center Airport as designated in the Riverside County ALUCP (Riverside County ALUC 2004). The airport influence areas are divided into Compatibility Zones A though E, which specify the land uses that are compatible within each zone. The Project Alignment traverses Compatibility Zone E for Desert Center Airport and Compatibility Zones C, D, and E for Blythe Airport. The FAA states that proposed objects taller than 70 feet in Compatibility Zones C and D and taller than 100 feet in Compatibility Zone E present potential airspace obstruction issues. Objects that exceed these heights in these zones require review by the ALUC. The Project would not include replacement structures exceeding 100 feet. One proposed replacement structure (No. 350), N4803684E_C4803685E_S4803686E, would be located within Blythe Airport Compatibility Zone D and would be approximately 72 feet tall, which is 7 feet taller than the existing structure it would replace. Because this structure would exceed 70 feet in Compatibility Zone D, it would require review by the Riverside County ALUC as a potential airspace obstruction. Additionally, prior to construction, SCE would submit the required Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration to the FAA pursuant to Title 14, Section 77.9 of the CFR. SCE would file FAA notifications for structures installed as part of the Project, as required. With respect to structures, the FAA would conduct its own analysis and may recommend no changes to the design of the proposed structures; or may recommend redesigning any proposed structures near an airport to reduce the height of such structures; or marking the structures, including the addition of aviation lighting; or placement of marker balls on wire spans.

SCE would evaluate the FAA recommendations for reasonableness and feasibility, and in accordance with Title 14, Part 77 of the CFR, SCE may petition the FAA for a discretionary review of a determination to address any issues with the FAA determination. FAA agency determinations for permanent structures typically are valid for 18 months, and, therefore, such notifications would be filed upon completion of final engineering and before construction commences. The entirety of the Project would be built within an existing ROW designated for utility line use for SCE. All construction activities would be performed at a distance from airport activity sufficient to minimize safety concerns to construction personnel.

All other proposed replacement structures within Blythe Airport Compatibility Zones C and D would not exceed the 70-foot height limit that would trigger ALUC review. SCE would submit a notification to the FAA in accordance with Federal Aviation Regulations Part 77 for this structure and would provide a copy of the notification and the FAA's response to the ALUC for its review. Any potential safety hazard would be addressed through coordination with the FAA and the ALUC. Therefore, the Project would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the Project Area. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.7 Would the Project impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. The County of Riverside Emergency Management Department has adopted an emergency operations plan to address responses to disasters (County of Riverside 2019). The City of Blythe does not have an adopted emergency response plan.

The Project involves work on existing electrical equipment. While crews and construction equipment would travel on paved public roads and a network of existing, unpaved, SCE-maintained access roads along the existing ROW, Project construction activities would occur within defined work areas within or immediately adjacent to the Project ROW. The Project may require temporary road and/or lane closures on public roads

and would involve the movement of oversized vehicles that could affect emergency vehicle access to and along the Project Alignment. Temporary activities across roadways could disrupt the operations of emergency service providers. However, SCE would prepare and implement required traffic control plans in accordance with required encroachment permits. With encroachment permit implementation, potential hazards from road closures would be minimal and the Project would not impair or interfere with emergency response or evacuation. Further, the Project would not be expected to increase demands on existing emergency response services during temporary construction activities. In the event that construction activities would require temporary closures of road lanes that may be used by emergency responders, SCE would coordinate that activity with the local emergency response agencies. Furthermore, as noted in APM TRA-1, SCE would notify emergency service providers prior to construction activities and would ensure all roads remain accessible to emergency service vehicles at all times. In addition, guard structures would be set up next to major highway and road crossings such that Project construction activities at these locations would not impede emergency access. Therefore, the Project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.8 Would the Project expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Wildfire hazards are discussed in Section 5.20, Wildfire, and summarized herein. The Project is located within a Local Responsibility Area and a Federal Responsibility Area, but not within a State Responsibility Area (SRA). The nearest SRA is located approximately 45 miles southwest of the Project. The development and implementation of a Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan, as required by APM HAZ-4, would reduce the risk of fire ignition and spread on the Project Alignment during construction. As a result, the Project would not expose people or structures—either directly or indirectly—to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.9 Would the project create a significant hazard to air traffic from the installation of new power lines and structures?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project includes the replacement of existing power lines and structures in the same general locations as existing facilities. However, one proposed structure, an approximately 72-foot-tall replacement structure would be installed within Blythe Airport Compatibility Zone D, which is 7 feet taller than the existing structure it would replace. Because this structure would exceed 70 feet in Compatibility Zone D, it would require review by the Riverside County ALUC as a potential airspace obstruction. No other proposed replacement structures within Blythe Airport Compatibility Zones C and D would exceed the 70-foot height limit that would trigger Riverside County ALUC review. As such, prior to construction, SCE would submit the required Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration to the FAA pursuant to Title 14, Section 77.9 of the CFR. SCE would evaluate the FAA recommendations for reasonableness and feasibility, and in accordance with Title 14, Part 77 of the CFR, SCE may petition the

FAA for a discretionary review of a determination to address any issues with the FAA determination. FAA agency determinations for permanent structures typically are valid for 18 months, and, therefore, such notifications would be filed upon completion of final engineering and before construction commences. The entirety of the Project would be built within an existing ROW designated for utility line use for SCE. The Project would not create a significant hazard to air traffic from the installation of new power lines or structures. As a result, impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.10 Would the project create a significant hazard to the public or environment through the transport of heavy materials using helicopters?

No Impact. Helicopters would not be used during construction of the Project. As such, the Project would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment through the transport of heavy materials using helicopters, and no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.11 Would the project expose people to a significant risk of injury or death involving unexploded ordnance?

No Impact. No portion of the Project overlies a formerly used defense site. Further, no sites with unexploded ordnance were identified in the EDR report. Therefore, there would be no impact under this criterion.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.1.12 Would the project expose workers or the public to excessive shock hazards?

No Impact. The design of Project components and the construction of those components would be compliant with all applicable federal and State regulations and standards. To reduce shock hazards and avoid electrocution of workers or the public, SCE would comply with the provisions found in CCR Title 8, particularly the electrical health and safety regulations found in Chapter 4, Subchapter 5 in the Electrical Safety Orders, Sections 2700-2989, which are relevant to high-voltage work. As a result, no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.9.4.2 Hazardous Materials

The hazardous materials (i.e., chemicals, solvents, lubricants, and fuels) that would be used during construction and operation of the Project, and an estimate of the quantity of each hazardous material that would be stored on site during construction, are presented in Table 5.9-3.

5.9.4.3 Air Traffic Hazards

Discussions of how the Project would not conflict with height restrictions identified in the airport land use plan and how the Project would comply with any FAA requirements for the above ground facilities are presented in Section 5.9.4.1.6.

5.9.4.4 Accident or Upset Conditions

A description of how the Project components would be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to minimize potential hazard to the public from the failure of Project components as a result of accidents or natural catastrophes is presented in Section 5.9.4.1.3.

Table 5.9-3 Types, Uses, and Volumes of Hazardous Materials

Hazardous Material Type	Use	Volume (gallons)
Diesel	Engine fuel	335,137
Gasoline	Engine fuel	612,750
Lubricants/Hydraulic Fluids	Engine and equipment lubrication/Powering hydraulic equipment	47,394
Miscellaneous Construction Fluids (solvents, etc.)	Cleaning/lubricating hardware, etc.	2,370

Notes:
Diesel and gasoline volumes developed through air quality modeling analysis.
Lubricants/hydraulic fluids consumption assumed at 5 percent of fuel consumption.
Miscellaneous construction fluid volumes assumed at 5 percent of Lubricants/Hydraulic Fluids volume.

5.9.4.5 Shock Hazard

There is no infrastructure along the Project Alignment that may be susceptible to new induced current from the installation of components of the Project. Where infrastructure that may be susceptible to induced current from components of the Project is present, this infrastructure is generally crossed by the Project Alignment, rather than running in parallel. The strategies that would be employed to reduce shock hazards and avoid electrocution of workers and the public are presented in Section 5.9.4.1.12.

5.9.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety.

5.9.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.9.5.1.1 Hazards APMs

The following APMs would be implemented to reduce hazards or hazardous materials impacts associated with the Project:

- **HAZ-1: Hazardous Materials Management Plan.** SCE shall prepare and implement a Hazardous Materials Management Plan (HMMP) during Project construction. The plan shall outline proper hazardous materials handling, use, storage and disposal requirements as well as hazardous waste management procedures. This plan shall be developed to ensure that all hazardous materials and wastes would be handled and disposed of according to applicable rules and regulations. The HMMP shall address the types of hazardous materials to be used during the project, hazardous materials storage, employee training requirements, hazard recognition, fire safety, first aid/emergency medical procedures, hazardous materials release containment/control procedures, hazard communication training, personal protective equipment (PPE) training, and release reporting requirements.
- **HAZ-2: U.S. EPA Identification Number.** SCE shall obtain a U.S. EPA Identification Number prior to transport of hazardous waste offsite for disposal. Prior to the start of construction, SCE shall also determine whether the treatment or the handling or the storing of hazardous materials will require authorization of the local Certified Unified Program Agency.
- **HAZ-3: Soil Management Plan.** A Soil Management Plan shall be developed and implemented for the Project. The Soil Management Plan shall provide guidance for the proper handling, on-site management, and disposal of impacted soil that may be encountered during construction activities.
- **HAZ-4: Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan.** A Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan shall be developed to ensure the health and safety of construction workers, SCE personnel, and the public during Project construction. The Plan shall cover:
  - The purpose and applicability of the plan
  - Responsibilities and duties
  - Project areas where the plan applies
  - Procedures for incorporating Red Flag Warnings, Fire Potential Index (FPI), Project Activity Level (PAL), and equivalent indicators in determining fire weather related work restrictions.
  - Procedures for fire reporting, response, prevention, and evacuation routes
  - Coordination procedures with federal and local fire officials
  - Crew training, including fire safety practices and restrictions
  - Fire suppression and communication equipment required to be on hand during construction
  - Method for verification that Plan protocols and requirements are being followed

  The Project-specific Construction Fire Management Plan for construction of the project shall be prepared by SCE and submitted to the CPUC and BLM as well the Riverside County Fire Department and Blythe Fire Department for review at least 30-days prior to the initiation of construction. SCE shall address all comments received from reviewing agencies and provide the final Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan to reviewing agencies for approval prior to initiating construction activities.

5.9.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

The following APM relevant to a different impact category would also reduce hazards or hazardous materials impacts associated with the project:

- **TRA-1: Construction Traffic Management Plan.** Southern California Edison shall prepare and implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan subject to approval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the County of Riverside, and the City of Blythe. The approved Traffic Management Plan and documentation of agency approvals shall be submitted to CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities. The plan shall:
  - Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;
  - Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
  - Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging area and take only necessary Project vehicles to the work sites;
  - Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways will be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
  - Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area. Emergency service providers will be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads will remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
  - Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) will be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.
  - Construction activities completed within public street rights-of-way will require the use of a traffic control service, and all lane closures will be conducted in accordance with applicable requirements. These traffic control measures will be consistent with those published in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as written and amended by the California Department of Transportation for the State of California and using standard templates from the California Temporary Traffic Control Handbook (California Inter-Utility Coordinating Committee 2018) as applicable.

5.10 Hydrology and Water Quality

This section describes the hydrology and water quality in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to hydrology and water quality from construction and operation of the Project.

Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 minute quadrangle maps
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory
- USGS National Hydrography Dataset
- 2023 Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan)
- 2020-2022 California Integrated Report (Clean Water Act [CWA] Section 303(d) List/305(b) Report)
- Aerial photographs
- Local agency planning documents

5.10.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

The Project transects the Sonoran Desert Geomorphic Province. The elevation of the Project ranges from approximately 1,000 feet near the west terminus of the alignment in Eagle Mountain to approximately 500 feet above mean sea level near the eastern terminus of the alignment in the City of Blythe. Section 3 Hydrology and Drainage of the Blythe 2025 General Plan estimates the average annual rainfall at the Blythe Airport to be 3.61 inches. Along the Project Alignment, surface water generally flows from west to east, toward the Colorado River and/or Colorado River Aqueduct (RWQCB 2023).

5.10.1.1 Waterbodies

The Project Site is within RWQCB Region 7 (Colorado River Basin Region) and is within two Hydrologic Units, the Chuckwalla Hydrologic Unit (west of the McCoy Mountains) and the Colorado Hydrologic Unit (east of the McCoy Mountains). In the Chuckwalla Hydrologic Unit, most of the Project Site is within the Palen and Ford hydrologic areas. In the Colorado Hydrologic Unit, the Project Site is within the Palo Verde hydrologic area (RWQCB 2023). Figure 5.10-1 presents a map of the hydrologic units and waterbodies within the Project vicinity. Aside from some artificial surface water features near the Eagle Mountain

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Substation associated with the Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant and in the agricultural areas near the Blythe Substation, there are no permanent surface waters in the vicinity of the Project Site. Surface water features crossed by the Project consist of dry lakes and desert washes that are either ephemeral (i.e., flowing only in response to rainfall) or intermittent watercourses. Major watercourses crossed by the Project include Lower Pinto Wash, Eagle Creek, Big Wash, Corn Springs Wash, Palen Lake (dry lake), Ford Dry Lake, and Ship Creek.

5.10.1.2 Water Quality

Beneficial uses of the unlisted perennial and intermittent streams in the Colorado River Basin Region include municipal and domestic supply (MUN), groundwater recharge (GWR), recreation (water contact [REC1] and non-contact [REC2]), warm freshwater habitat (WARM), wildlife habitat, and preservation of rare, threatened, or endangered species (RARE) (RWQCB 2023). In the Colorado River Basin, agricultural use (AGR) is the predominant beneficial use of water with irrigated acreage located in the Palo Verde Valley at the east end of the Project Site (RWQCB 2023). There are no watercourses in the vicinity of the Project Site that are classified as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

5.10.1.2.1 Impaired Waterbodies

The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and RWQCB assess water quality data for California's waters every 2 years to determine if they contain pollutants at levels that exceed protective water quality criteria and standards. This biennial assessment is required under Section 303(d) of the federal CWA. According to the California 2020-2022 Integrated Report, there are no downstream waters that are on the state 303(d) list (SWRCB 2022).

5.10.1.3 Groundwater Basins

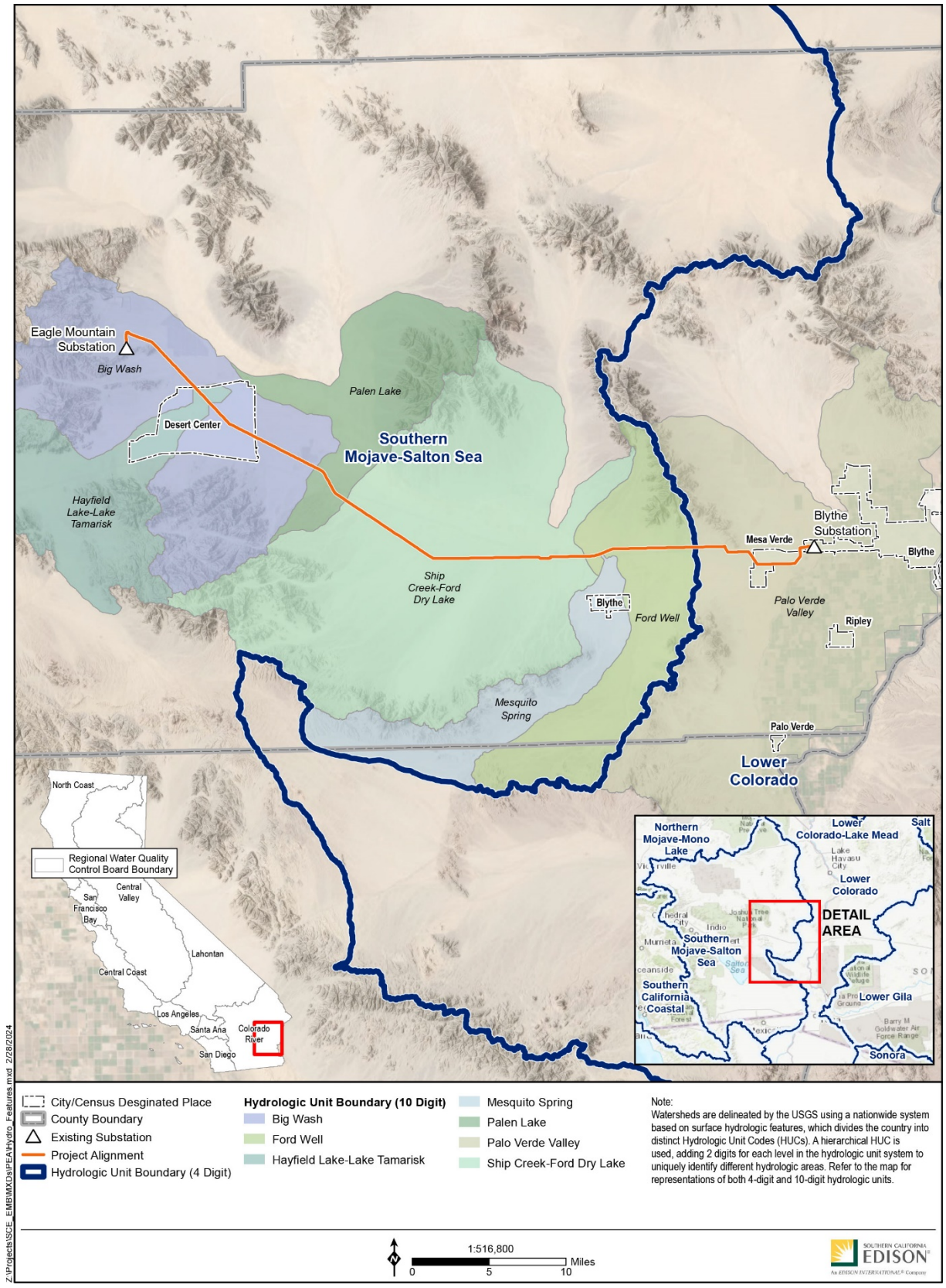
Groundwater resources (basins) are delineated by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). A basin is defined as an alluvial aquifer or a stacked series of alluvial aquifers with reasonably well-defined boundaries in a lateral direction and having a definable bottom. Groundwater in the region is used primarily for domestic water supply and agricultural purposes. The groundwater basins crossed by the Project Alignment include the Palo Verde Mesa Groundwater Basin and the Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin (DWR 2023a).

The depth to groundwater across the Project Alignment varies geographically and temporally. While shallow groundwater may be found near drainages and other features (see discussion in Section 5.7, Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources), the depth to groundwater across the alignment generally exceeds 100 feet below ground surface.

5.10.1.3.1 Palo Verde Mesa Groundwater Basin

This basin underlies Parker Valley in eastern Riverside County. The basin is bounded by non-water-bearing rocks of the Big Maria and Little Maria Mountains on the north, of the McCoy and Mule Mountains on the west, of the Palo Verde Mesa on the east, and of the Palo Verde Mountains on the south. The northwest boundary and parts of the western boundary are drainage divides. The valley is drained by McCoy Wash to the Colorado River. The basin has an estimated storage capacity of approximately 6.8 million acre-feet. Groundwater quality is characterized by moderate to high levels of total dissolved solids (TDS), ranging from approximately 590 to 1,790 mg/L and averages approximately 1,089 mg/L. The groundwater is calcium-sodium chloride or calcium-sodium sulfate in character (DWR 2004b).

Figure 5.10-1 Hydrologic Features



5.10.1.3.2 Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin

This basin underlies the Palen and Chuckwalla Valleys dominantly in eastern Riverside County. The basin is bounded by consolidated rocks of the Chuckwalla, Little Chuckwalla, and Mule Mountains on the south, of the Eagle Mountains on the west, and of the Mule and McCoy Mountains on the east. Rocks of the Coxcomb, Granite, Palen, and Little Maria Mountains bound the valley on the north and extend ridges into the valley. The smaller intervening valleys are contiguous with and tributary to the main part of Chuckwalla Valley. The basin has an estimated storage capacity of approximately 9.1 million acre-feet. Groundwater to the south and west of Palen Lake is typically sodium chloride to sodium sulfate-chloride in character. TDS content across the basin ranges from 274 to 12,300 mg/L. The lowest TDS concentration is found in the western portion of the basin, where TDS content ranges from 275 to 730 mg/L (DWR 2004b).

5.10.1.4 Groundwater Wells and Springs

Review of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW's) Terrestrial Significant Habitats dataset indicates that there are no springs within 150 feet of any Project component (CDFW 2023). The water well locations in the vicinity of the Project as reported by the DWR are shown on Figure 5.10-2 (DWR 2023b).

5.10.1.5 Groundwater Management

There are no Groundwater Sustainability Agencies with jurisdiction over the groundwater basins underlying the Project Alignment. Further, no Groundwater Sustainability Plans pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act have been adopted for the basins underlying the Project.

The City of Blythe oversees and monitors groundwater extraction from the Palo Verde Mesa Groundwater Basin, while the County of Riverside manages the Chuckwalla Valley Groundwater Basin. The groundwater basins are shown on Figure 5.10-3. Water from the groundwater basins identified in the Groundwater Basins section above may be utilized during construction of the Project. Any such water would be obtained by Southern California Edison (SCE) from commercial or municipal purveyors; no groundwater extraction wells would be developed as part of the Project.

5.10.1.6 Floodplains

Based on Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), there are no 100-year or 500-year flood zones within the vicinity of the Project (FEMA 2023).

5.10.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.10.2.1 Federal

5.10.2.1.1 Clean Water Act

Enacted in 1972, the federal CWA (33 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 1251 *et seq*.) and subsequent amendments outline the basic protocol for regulating discharges of pollutants to waters of the U.S. It is the primary federal law applicable to water quality of the nation's surface waters, including lakes, rivers, and coastal wetlands. Enforced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), it was enacted "…to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." The CWA

authorizes states to adopt water quality standards and includes programs addressing both point and non-point pollution sources. The CWA also established the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and provides the USEPA the authority to implement pollution control programs, such as setting wastewater standards for industry and water quality standards for surface waters (see below for a discussion of the NPDES program).

In California, programs and regulatory authority under the CWA have been delegated by USEPA to the SWRCB and its nine RWQCBs. Under Section 402 of the CWA, as delegated to the state, a discharge of pollutants to navigable waters is prohibited unless the discharge complies with an NPDES permit. The SWRCB and RWQCBs have developed numeric and narrative water quality criteria to protect beneficial uses of state waters and waterways.

Section 303(d), Impaired Waterbodies, and Total Maximum Daily Loads

Section 303(d) of the CWA requires states to identify waters where adopted water quality standards and beneficial uses are still unattained. These lists of prioritized impaired waterbodies, known as the "303(d) lists," are submitted to the USEPA every 2 years.

The law requires the development of total maximum daily load (TMDL) criteria to improve water quality of impaired waterbodies. TMDLs are the quantities of pollutants that can be assimilated by a waterbody without violating water quality standards. States develop TMDLs for impaired waterbodies to maintain beneficial uses, achieve water quality objectives, and reduce the potential for future water quality degradation. A TMDL must account for point and non-point sources as well as background (natural) sources and is implemented by allocating the total allowable pollutant loading among dischargers. The USEPA defines point source pollution as any contaminant that enters the environment from an easily identified location, such as a discharge pipe or drainage ditch. A non-point source is a diffuse source of pollution that occurs over a wider area or when a specific location of a discharge or release of a contaminant cannot be identified, such as through storm runoff.

Section 404, Placement of Dredge or Fill Material into Waters of the U.S., including Wetlands

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is responsible for issuing permits under CWA Section 404 for placement of dredge or fill material into waters of the U.S. Generally, waters of the U.S. can include oceans, bays, rivers, streams (including non-perennial streams with a defined bed and bank), lakes, ponds, and seasonal and perennial wetlands. CWA Section 404 requires Project proponents to obtain a permit from the USACE for all discharges of fill or dredged material into waters of the U.S. before proceeding with a proposed activity. The USACE may issue either an individual permit or a general permit.

Section 401, Water Quality Certification

Section 401 of the CWA specifies that the SWRCB or applicable RWQCB must certify that any federal action meets with state water quality standards, (23 California Code of Regulations § 3830, et seq.). Under California's policy of no net loss of wetlands, the SWRCB and RWQCBs require mitigation for dredge and fill impacts to wetlands and waterways (see Section 5.4, Biological Resources). Dredge and fill activities in wetlands and waterways that impact waters of the U.S. require a CWA Section 404 permit from the USACE. A CWA Section 401 water quality certification must be obtained from the affected state prior to issuance of a Section 404 permit.

Figure 5.10-2 Water Wells in the Vicinity of the Project

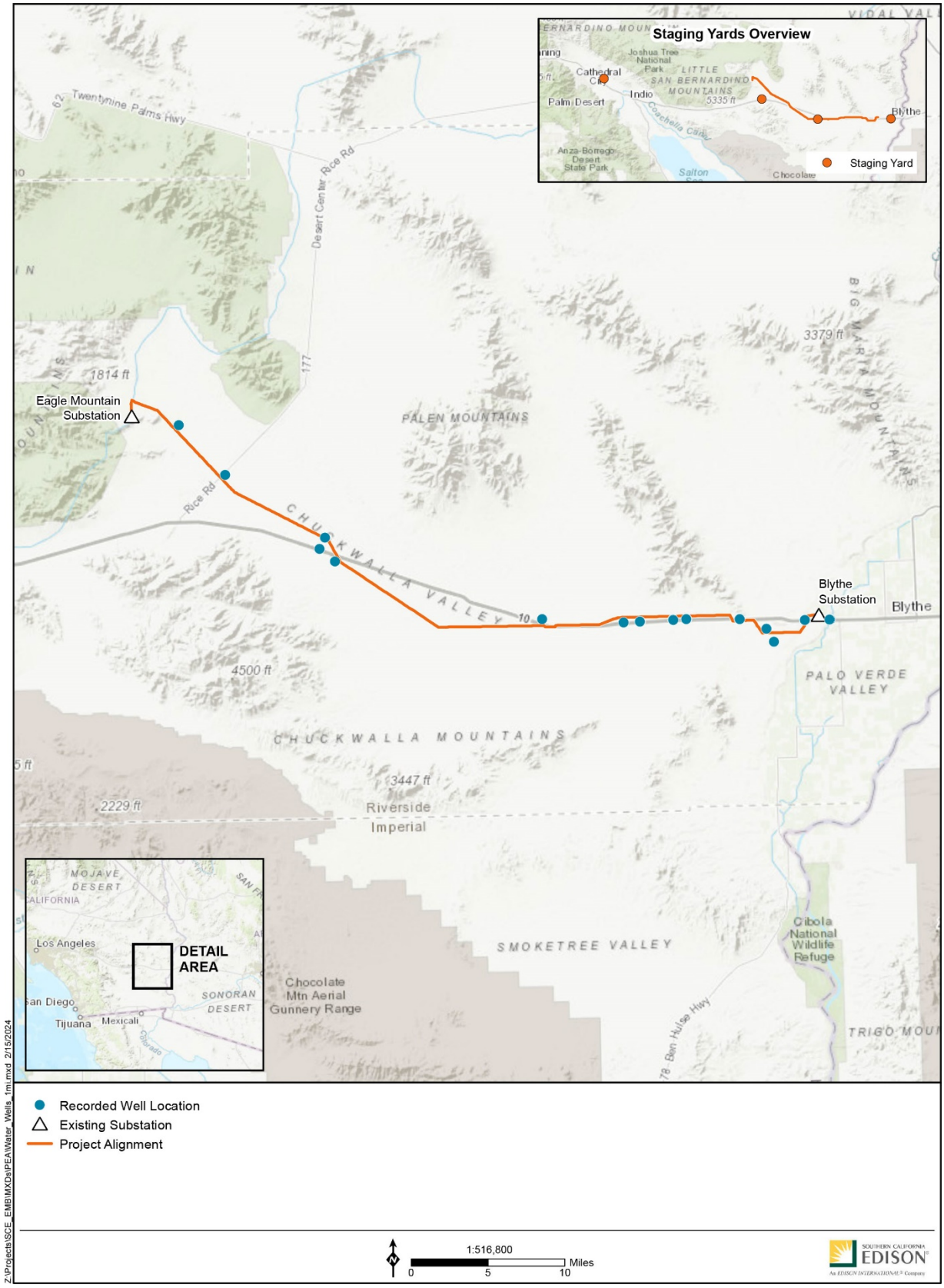
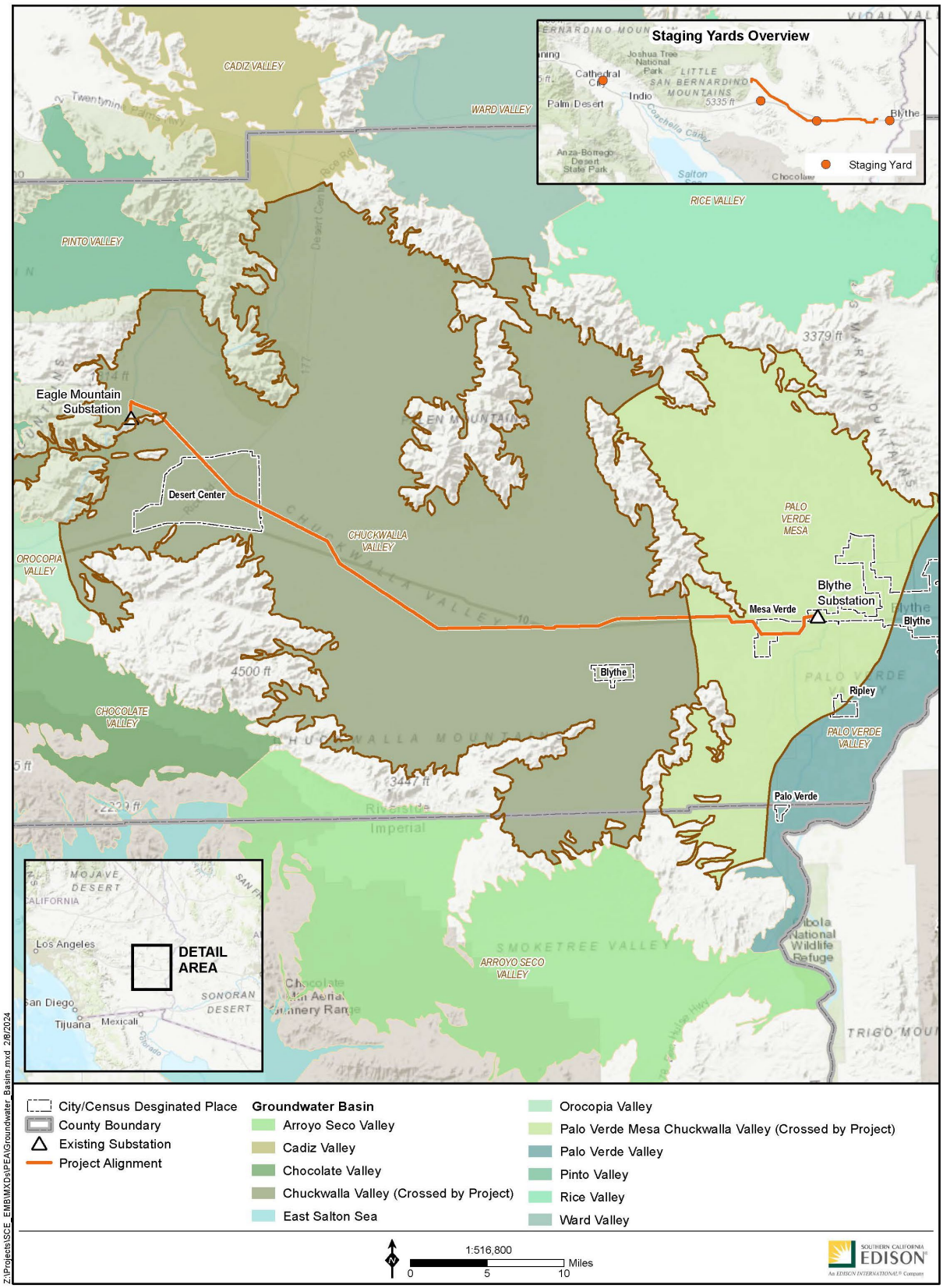


Figure 5.10-3 Groundwater Basins in the Vicinity of the Project



Section 402, National Pollution Discharge Elimination System

The SWRCB and the RWQCBs implement and enforce the federal NPDES program in California. Established in 1972, the NPDES regulations initially focused on municipal and industrial wastewater discharges, followed by stormwater discharge regulations that became effective in December 1990. NPDES permits provide two levels of control: technology-based limits and water quality-based limits. Technology-based limits are based on the ability of dischargers to treat wastewater, while water quality-based limits are required if technology-based limits are not sufficient to protect the waterbody. Additionally, stormwater permitting for construction site discharges is described below under state regulations.

Dischargers with water quality-based effluent limitations must achieve water quality standards in the receiving water. Published by the USEPA on May 18, 2000, the California Toxics Rule (CTR) largely reflects the water quality criteria contained in the USEPA's Section 304(a) Gold Book (USEPA 1986) and the later National Recommended Water Quality Criteria (USEPA 2006). With promulgation of the CTR, the federal water quality criteria are legally applicable in California to inland surface waters, enclosed bays, and estuaries for all purposes and programs under the CWA. NPDES permits must also incorporate TMDL waste load allocations when they are developed.

5.10.2.2 State

5.10.2.2.1 Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code Section 13000 et seq.)

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act) is the principal law governing water quality regulation in California. The Porter-Cologne Act established the SWRCB and divided California into nine regions, each overseen by a RWQCB. The SWRCB is the primary state agency responsible for protecting the quality of the state's surface and groundwater supplies and has delegated primary implementation authority to the nine RWQCBs. The Porter-Cologne Act assigns responsibility to the SWRCB and the nine RWQCBs for implementing portions of the CWA, including Sections 401 through 402 (see above).

The nine RWQCBs also implement CWA Section 303(d). Under Section 303(d), the RWQCBs identify streams and waters that have "Water Quality Limited Segments," or portions that do not meet water quality standards even after point sources of pollution have installed the minimum required levels of pollution control technology. Pursuant to the CWA, the SWRCB establishes priority rankings for water on the lists and develops TMDL criteria (i.e., the maximum quantity of a particular contaminant that a waterbody can assimilate without experiencing adverse effects) to improve water quality.

Under the Porter-Cologne Act and the NPDES, the SWRCB administers California's stormwater permitting program. This program requires construction projects that will disturb more than 1 acre of land to obtain permit coverage (General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities, Water Quality Order 2022-0057-DWQ) and implement stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) to manage discharge of sediments and stormwater. The permit requires preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and implementation of BMPs, stormwater sampling, and reporting.

The SWRCB and the RWQCBs are responsible for regulating dredge and fill impacts to wetlands and waterways in California to support the state goal of no net loss of wetlands. The SWRCB and the RWQCBs are responsible for issuing CWA Section 401 water quality certifications for federal actions that result in

dredge and fill activities in federally jurisdictional wetlands and waterways. Dredge and fill activities in non-federally jurisdictional wetlands and waterways must be authorized under a waste discharge requirement (WDR) issued by the SWRCB or applicable RWQCB. In April 2019, the SWRCB adopted the State Wetland Definition and Procedures for Discharges for Dredged or Fill Materials to Waters of the State (Procedures), which expanded the statewide definition of "wetlands" subject to dredge or fill regulations and permits to include all waters of the state. Water Code section 13050(e) defines "waters of the state" as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state," which captures more types of water resources than are regulated as "waters of the U.S." under the CWA. The Procedures became effective on May 28, 2020, but were challenged in California Superior Court. The court found that the SWRCB exceeded its authority in implementing the Procedures as applied via the Water Quality Control Plan for Inland Surface Waters and Enclosed Bays and Estuaries (the ISWEBE Plan) to waters of the state that are not also waters of the U.S. The court found that, under the Porter-Cologne Act, primary authority to adopt regional water quality control plans (Basin Plans) for waters of the state resides with the RWQCBs (see Water Code section 13240), while the SWRCB's authority to adopt statewide water quality control plans is limited to regulating waters of the U.S. (see Water Code section 13170). In response to the court's ruling, on April 6, 2021, the SWRCB adopted Resolution 2021-0012 and revised the Procedures to clarify that the Procedures were adopted under the SWRCB's authority under Water Code section 13140 to adopt state policy for water quality control. The Procedures, therefore, apply to waters of the U.S. via the ISWEBE Plan and California Ocean Plan, as well as to all waters of the state as state water quality control policy.

The Porter-Cologne Act requires the development and periodic review of water quality control plans (Basin Plans) that designate beneficial uses of California's major rivers and groundwater basins and establish narrative and numerical water quality objectives for those waters, provide the technical basis for determining WDRs, identify enforcement actions, and evaluate clean water grant proposals. The Basin Plans are updated every 3 years.

5.10.2.2.2 Colorado River Basin Region

The Project Alignment falls within the jurisdiction of the Colorado River Basin RWQCB. The water quality objectives for the Colorado River Basin Region include measures to reduce the potential for contaminants. The Colorado River Basin Region Plan lists restrictions on waste discharges and sediment and erosion control requirements. The Plan proposes implementation measures to control waste discharge from point and nonpoint sources and actions that promote the attainment of TMDLs in the Colorado River Basin Region. The Colorado River Basin Region Plan describes a comprehensive surveillance and monitoring program that ensures the region's water resources are protected (RWQCB 2023).

5.10.2.2.3 California Fish and Game Code Section 1600-1617

California Fish and Game Code section 1600 *et seq.* sets forth guidelines for the protection and conservation of fish and wildlife, including habitat. The law requires any person, state or local governmental agency, or public utility to provide written notification to CDFW before beginning an activity that would substantially modify the bank or bed of a river, stream, or lake (i.e., prior to causing any potential hydrological impacts), and enter into Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement with CDFW that includes measures to protect fish and wildlife resources. Refer to Section 5.4, Biological Resources, for additional information.

5.10.2.3 Local

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.10.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

The Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan contains policies and programs that are designed to protect and conserve environmental resources in Riverside County while encouraging economic development and growth and setting the direction for the framework of its transportation system. The Multipurpose Open Space Element includes the protection and preservation of natural resources including the following key resources: water, biological, forest, vegetation, agriculture and soils, open space, parks and recreation, regional aesthetics, cultural and paleontological, renewable resources, and non-renewable resources (County of Riverside 2015).

The Multipurpose Open Space Element addresses policies to protect water resources in Riverside County. These Project-applicable policies include:

OS 3.3 Minimize pollutant discharge into storm drainage systems, natural drainages, and aquifers (AI 3).

OS 3.4 Review proposed projects to ensure compliance with the NPDES Permits and require them to prepare the necessary SWPPP (AI 3).

5.10.2.3.2 City of Blythe General Plan

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains policies and programs that encourage sustainable development and seek to balance growth and conservation in Blythe, California. The Open Space and Conservation Element aims to preserve and enhance the natural environment through the implementation of policies for open space lands and the conservation of natural resources. The following Project-applicable policies (City of Blythe 2007) include:

Policy 21 Comply with the RWQCB's regulations and standards to maintain and improve groundwater quality in the Planning Area.

5.10.3 Impact Questions

5.10.3.1 Hydrology and Water Quality Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For hydrology and water quality, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?
- Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?
- Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on-site or off-site; substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site; create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or impede or redirect flood flows?
- In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?
- Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

5.10.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.10.4 Impact Analysis

5.10.4.1 Hydrology and Water Quality Impact Analysis

5.10.4.1.1 Hydrology and Water Quality Methodology

Hydrology and water quality data for the Project vicinity were obtained from multiple federal, State, and local sources. Data was collected in or converted to a geographic information system-compatible format, and the Project components were overlain to determine the potential impacts to these resources. Aerial photographs were also utilized to assist with this analysis.

5.10.4.1.2 Would the Project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less than Significant Impact. Surface water features crossed by the Project consist of dry lakes and desert washes that are either ephemeral (i.e., flowing only in response to rainfall) or intermittent watercourses. Major watercourses crossed by the Project include Lower Pinto Wash, Eagle Creek, Big Wash, Corn Springs Wash, Palen Lake (dry lake), Ford Dry Lake, and Ship Creek. Beneficial uses of the unlisted perennial and intermittent streams in the Colorado River Basin Region include municipal and domestic supply, groundwater recharge, recreation (water contact and non-contact), warm freshwater habitat, wildlife habitat, and preservation of rare, threatened, or endangered species (RWQCB 2023). In the Colorado River Basin, agricultural use is the predominant beneficial use of water with irrigated areas located in the Palo Verde Valley at the east end of the Project Alignment (RWQCB 2023). There are no watercourses in the

vicinity of the Project Alignment that are classified as impaired under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (SWRCB 2022).

Ground-disturbing activities associated with Project construction could expose soils to erosion. Disturbed soil sediment could enter surface watercourses, resulting in increased turbidity and alteration of waterbody characteristics that could affect beneficial uses. Construction may involve the use of hazardous materials (e.g., vehicle fuel, hydraulic fluid, oil, grease, solvents, paint, drilling muds, and concrete) that could contaminate surface water or groundwater in the Project Area if spilled or otherwise discharged by accident to the ground surface. Project construction activities that could affect water quality due to erosion and siltation associated with ground disturbance would occur within delineated structure replacement work areas, wire-setup sites, and guard structure sites. However, because these areas are estimated to be larger than required to give construction crews flexibility in where they conduct their activities, the entirety of this estimated work area would not be disturbed during construction activities. Nevertheless, more than 1 acre would be disturbed during Project construction; therefore, the Project would be required to obtain coverage under the NPDES Construction General Permit (CGP) (Order No. 2022-0057-DWQ). The CGP requires that stormwater discharges and authorized non-stormwater discharges must not contain pollutants that cause an exceedance of any applicable water quality standards. The CGP also requires the development of a Project-specific SWPPP that includes non-stormwater controls and waste and materials management BMPs. These BMPs would be based on the list of construction activities with a potential for non-stormwater discharges and would consist of implementing procedural and structural measures for handling, storing, and using construction materials to prevent the release of those materials into stormwater discharges.

Prior to construction, SCE would file a Notice of Intent with the Colorado River Basin RWQCB specifying that construction activities would comply with the NPDES CGP. The permit would require the development and implementation of the aforementioned Project-specific SWPPP to ensure no degradation of water quality from construction activities. Any ground-disturbing construction activities proposed for the Project would be outlined in the SWPPP. The SWPPP would include erosion and sediment control measures to minimize siltation, as well as practices to minimize the potential for accidental releases of hazardous substances associated with the operation of construction equipment. In addition, the Project would adhere to all other applicable water quality standards set forth by the Colorado River Basin RWQCB. As a result, impacts from the construction phase of the project would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operation and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.3 Would the Project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the Project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Less than Significant Impact. West of the McCoy Mountains, the Project Alignment overlies the Chuckwalla Valley groundwater basin, and east of the McCoy Mountains, the Project Alignment overlies the Palo Verde Mesa groundwater basin (DWR 2023a). Neither of these groundwater basins are designated by the California DWR as "high or medium-priority basins," and as such, Groundwater Sustainability Plans are not required (DWR 2023a). Groundwater in the Chuckwalla and Colorado Hydrologic Units is generally unconfined. Some subsurface inflow may travel eastward from the Chuckwalla Hydrologic Unit into the Palo Verde hydrologic area of the Colorado Hydrologic Unit. Beneficial uses of groundwater in the Project Area include municipal and domestic, industrial service, and agricultural supplies (RWQCB 2023).

According to the Geotechnical Investigation Report conducted for the Project, groundwater was not detected in any of the borings, which ranged from 20 to 50 feet in depth (Geotechnical Solutions Inc. 2023; Appendix K). Therefore, dewatering activities are unlikely to be required during Project excavation for replacement structures, which would be 8 to 15 feet deep for lightweight steel (LWS) poles and 18 to 32 feet deep for tubular steel pole (TSP) foundations.

Water use for Project activities would mainly be for dust suppression and concrete pouring during construction. Water use is estimated at 14,038 gallons per day on average which, over the 8-month construction period, would amount to a total of 9.6 acre-feet (see Appendix M). Construction crews would obtain water from local municipal sources, which may supply either groundwater or surface water, or a combination of both, depending on the water agency. Water used during construction would be obtained from existing hydrants and wells operated by utilities, including the City of Blythe (6,900 acre-feet of capacity per year), County of Riverside County Service Area (CSA) 51 (1,276 acre-feet of capacity per year), County of Riverside CSA 122 (300 acre-feet of capacity per year), and the Palo Verde Irrigation District (716 acre-feet of capacity per year) (City of Blythe 2020; Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission 2019). Each water agency is responsible for managing groundwater resources to ensure sufficient water supply is available. Because water supplies would be provided by local water purveyors, the Project would not require direct extraction of groundwater.

The addition of impervious surfaces has the potential to interfere with groundwater recharge within the Project Area. Current impervious surfaces associated with the Project Alignment consist of concrete foundations for steel poles. The Project would entail removing existing concrete foundations and wood poles and replacing them with larger concrete foundations for TSPs and direct-bury LWS poles. The net increase in impervious surfaces resulting from these removals and replacements would be approximately 4,160 square feet, or 0.1 acre (i.e., 17 new TSPs and 16 three-pole TSP structures, each with a foundation up to 64 square feet in size). This minimal increase in impervious surfaces would be spread along the approximately 53-mile-long Project Alignment and would not increase impervious surfaces to the extent that the Project would interfere with groundwater recharge. In addition, these small areas of new impervious surfaces would be surrounded by permeable undeveloped land where the minor amount of surface water runoff from the new impervious surfaces could drain into the ground. Furthermore, the proposed laydown yards are either existing SCE facilities or new locations with pervious surfaces that would be graveled prior to use; therefore, use of these yards would not result in the addition of impervious surfaces at these locations.

Given that the Project would not require groundwater dewatering, would not require the use of a substantial quantity of groundwater supplies, and would not add a significant area of impervious surfaces along the Project Alignment, the Project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that it may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.4 Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project would result in minor changes to the existing drainage pattern of the Project Alignment and surrounding area due to the removal of structures at certain locations and the installation of replacement structures at other locations. However, each area of impact would be up to 64 square feet and would be spread along the approximately 53-mile Project Alignment. The net increase in impervious surfaces resulting from these removals and replacements would be approximately 0.1 acre. As a result, the increase in impervious surfaces resulting from the Project would represent a minor alteration in the existing drainage pattern and would not result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site. In addition, the proposed laydown yards are either existing SCE facilities or new locations with pervious surfaces that would be graveled prior to use; therefore, use of these yards would not result in the alteration of existing drainage patterns at these locations. Therefore, the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would result in substantial erosion or siltation on or off site. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.5 Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project would result in minor changes to the existing drainage pattern of the Project Alignment and surrounding area due to the removal of structures at certain locations and the installation of replacement structures at other locations. The net increase in impervious surfaces resulting from these removals and replacements would be approximately 0.1 acre along the approximately 53-mile Project Alignment. As a result, the increase in impervious surfaces resulting from the Project would represent a minor alteration in the existing drainage pattern and would not substantially increase the rate or amount of runoff in these areas. In addition, the proposed laydown yards are either existing SCE facilities or new locations with pervious surfaces that would be graveled prior to use; therefore, use of these yards would not result in the alteration of existing drainage patterns at these locations. Therefore, the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff and result in flooding on or off site. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.6 Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project would result in minor changes to the existing drainage pattern of the Project Alignment and surrounding area due to the removal of structures at certain locations and the installation of replacement structures at other locations. The net increase in impervious surfaces resulting from these removals and replacements would be approximately 0.1 acre, along the approximately 53-mile Project Alignment. As a result, the increase in impervious surfaces resulting from the Project would represent a minor alteration in the existing drainage pattern and would not create or contribute a volume of runoff water that would have the potential to exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff in these areas. In addition, the proposed laydown yards are either existing SCE facilities or new locations with pervious surfaces that would be graveled prior to use; therefore, use of these yards would not result in the alteration of existing drainage patterns at these locations. Therefore, the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would create or contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.7 Would the Project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project would result in minor changes to the existing drainage pattern of the Project Alignment and surrounding area due to the removal of structures at certain locations and the installation of replacement structures at other locations. The Project would not involve the alteration of the course of a stream or river. As described previously, minor increases in impervious surfaces (approximately 0.1 acre) along the 53-mile Project Alignment would represent a minor alteration in the existing drainage pattern and would not significantly impede or redirect flood flows in these areas. In addition, the proposed laydown yards are either existing SCE facilities or new locations with pervious surfaces that would be graveled prior to use; therefore, use of these yards would not result in the alteration of existing drainage patterns or the course of a stream or river at these locations. Therefore, the Project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area in a manner that would impede or redirect flood flows. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.8 In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the Project risk release of pollutants due to Project inundation?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project Alignment is not adjacent to a lake or ocean where a seiche or tsunami could occur. The existing Mirage Laydown Yard is located within the 100-year flood hazard zone as designated by FEMA (DWR 2021a). The remainder of the Project is within FEMA Zone D. Zone D includes areas where possible, but undetermined flood hazards or unstudied areas exist (FEMA 2008).

Although the Mirage Laydown Yard is located within a 100-year flood hazard zone, it is an existing, established laydown yard currently used by SCE for staging equipment. The laydown yard is fenced and covered in gravel to prevent erosion. Moreover, project construction activities that are potential sources of pollutant releases would not occur during flooding conditions because such conditions would be unsafe for crews to continue construction activities. In addition, the Project-specific SWPPP would include BMPs (e.g., elevating materials off the ground and covering with tarps or similar) designed to limit the potential for construction materials to come into contact with stormwater, including floodwaters. These BMPs would minimize the potential for releases of any hazardous substance to occur in the event that construction sites or laydown yards are inundated by flood waters. Therefore, the Project would not risk release of pollutants due to inundation. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.1.9 Would the Project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

No Impact. No sustainable groundwater management plans have been adopted for the Chuckwalla Valley groundwater basin or the Palo Verde Mesa groundwater basin, both of which underlie the Project Alignment (California DWR 2021b). The applicable water quality control plan is the Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin Region (2023), adopted by the Colorado River Basin RWQCB. There are no watercourses in the vicinity of the Project that are classified as impaired under Section 303(d) of the CWA (SWRCB 2022).

Prior to construction, SCE would file a Notice of Intent with the SWRCB specifying that construction activities would comply with the NPDES CGP. The permit would require the development and implementation of the aforementioned Project-specific SWPPP to ensure no degradation of water quality from construction activities. Any ground-disturbing construction activities planned for the Project would be outlined in the SWPPP. The SWPPP would include erosion control measures to minimize siltation, as well as practices to minimize the potential for accidental releases of hazardous substances associated with the operation of construction equipment. In addition, the Project would adhere to all other applicable water quality objectives set forth by the Colorado River Basin RWQCB. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.10.4.2 Hydrostatic Testing

Hydrostatic testing is not included as part of the Project.

5.10.4.3 Water Quality Impacts

Potential water quality impacts associated with the Project are addressed in the impact analysis above, under Section 5.10.4.1.

5.10.4.4 Impermeable Surfaces

Impacts related to impermeable surfaces associated with the Project are addressed in the impact analysis above, under Section 5.10.4.1.3.

5.10.4.5 Waterbody Crossings

As described previously, the Project crosses seven major watercourses, none of which are listed as impaired for any contaminants pursuant to the most current 303(d) list (SWRCB 2022). Based on current design, the Project would utilize existing access roads to cross these watercourses. While placement of work areas and pole structures would avoid waterbodies to the degree feasible, the Project involves the removal of existing structures and reconductoring an existing line. As a result, complete avoidance may not be feasible. No laydown yards are currently proposed near these crossings. No water diversions of these watercourses would be required during construction because they would be crossed such that the direction or flow of the watercourse would not be altered. Dewatering may occur during construction depending on groundwater elevations at the time of construction; however, limited volume of dewatering effluent is anticipated due to the size and nature of the Project and the anticipated depth to groundwater along the Project Alignment. If needed, excavations would be dewatered using one or more pumps and the water would be either discharged on-site to the surface (if so permitted) or would be stored in Baker tanks or similar equipment prior to disposal off-site. Baker tanks or similar equipment would be placed on the temporary work pad established for new structure installation. Dewatering water may also be used for dust control. The restoration methods to be employed in the areas near waterbody crossings are addressed in Section 5.4, Biological Resources.

5.10.4.6 Groundwater Impacts

No Groundwater Sustainability Plans pursuant to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act have been adopted for any of the basins that underlie the Project. The Project would not change the existing operational water demand. Construction water demand is estimated at approximately 9.6 acre-feet. Construction water demand would not result in depletion of groundwater supplies or interfere with sustainable groundwater management of any of the underlying groundwater basins.

5.10.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for hydrology and water quality.

5.10.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

Impacts to hydrology and water quality from the Project would be less than significant. As such, there are no applicant proposed measures.

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5.11 Land Use and Planning

This section describes the land uses and planning in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to land use and planning from construction and operation of the Project.

Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP)
- Riverside County General Plan
- City of Blythe General Plan

5.11.1 Environmental Setting

5.11.1.1 Land Use

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the BLM or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

Figure 5.11-1 depicts the consolidated land use designations within 1 mile of the Project Alignment and Table 5.11-1 summarizes the consolidated general plan land use designations within 1 mile of the Project Alignment as defined by each county or city in its current general plan. Figure 5.11-2 depicts the zoning designations within 1 mile of the Project Alignment that have been consolidated into broader categories. Table 5.11-2 summarizes the specific zoning designations within 1 mile of the Project Alignment as defined by each county or city. The Chuckwalla Laydown Yard is on land designated as Open Space Rural and zoned as a Controlled Development Area (W-2). The Mirage Laydown Yard is on land designated as Public Facilities and zoned as General Residential (R-3). The Desert Center Laydown Yard is on land designated as Rural Residential and zoned as W-2 (Riverside County 2021). The Blythe Laydown Yard is on land designated as General Industrial and zoned General Industrial (I-G) (City of Blythe 2007). Definitions of the specific land use designations the Project Alignment crosses or Project laydown yards are located on have been included in Attachment 5.11-A.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Figure 5.11-1 Land Use Designations

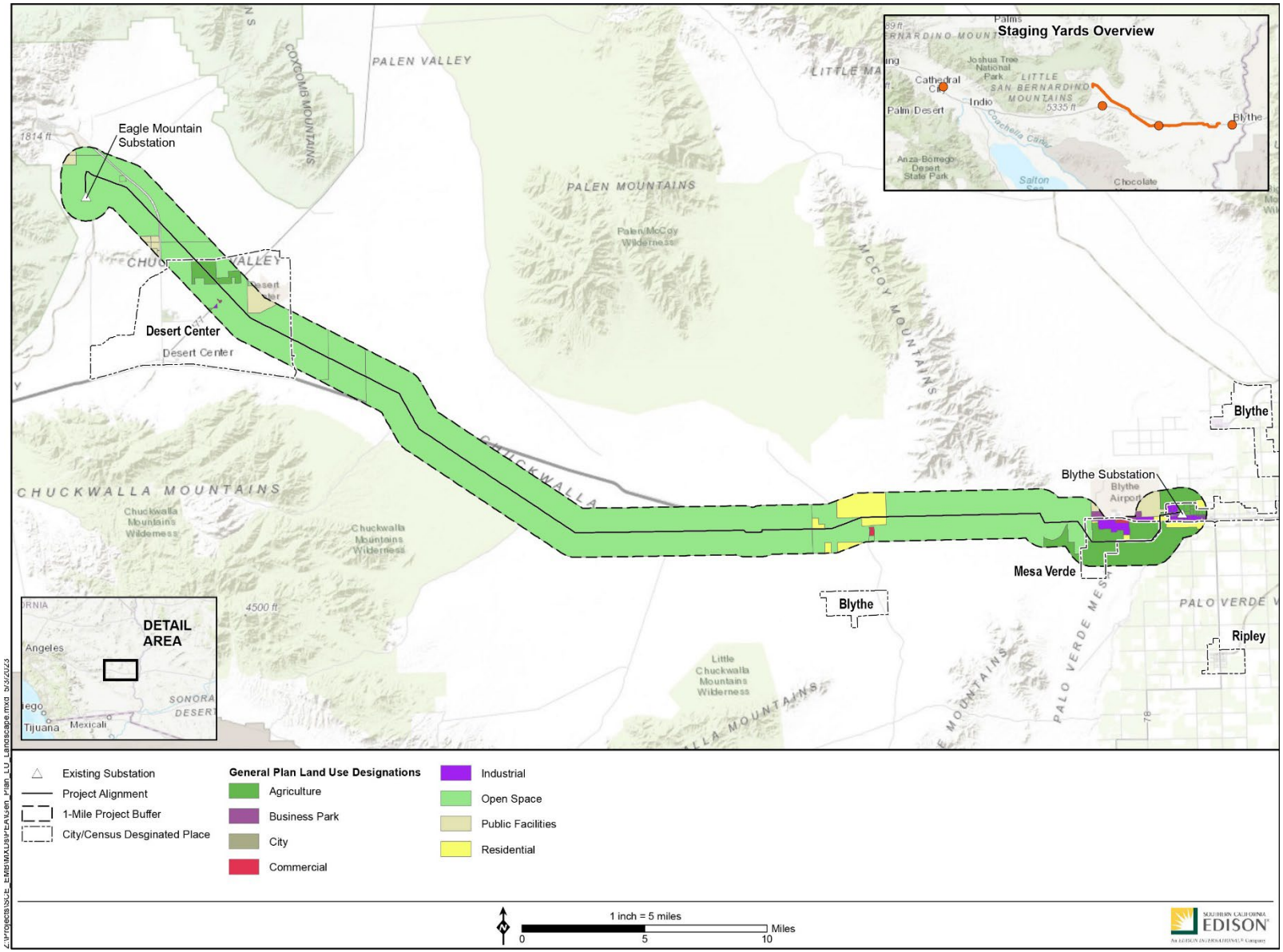


Figure 5.11-2 Zoning Designations

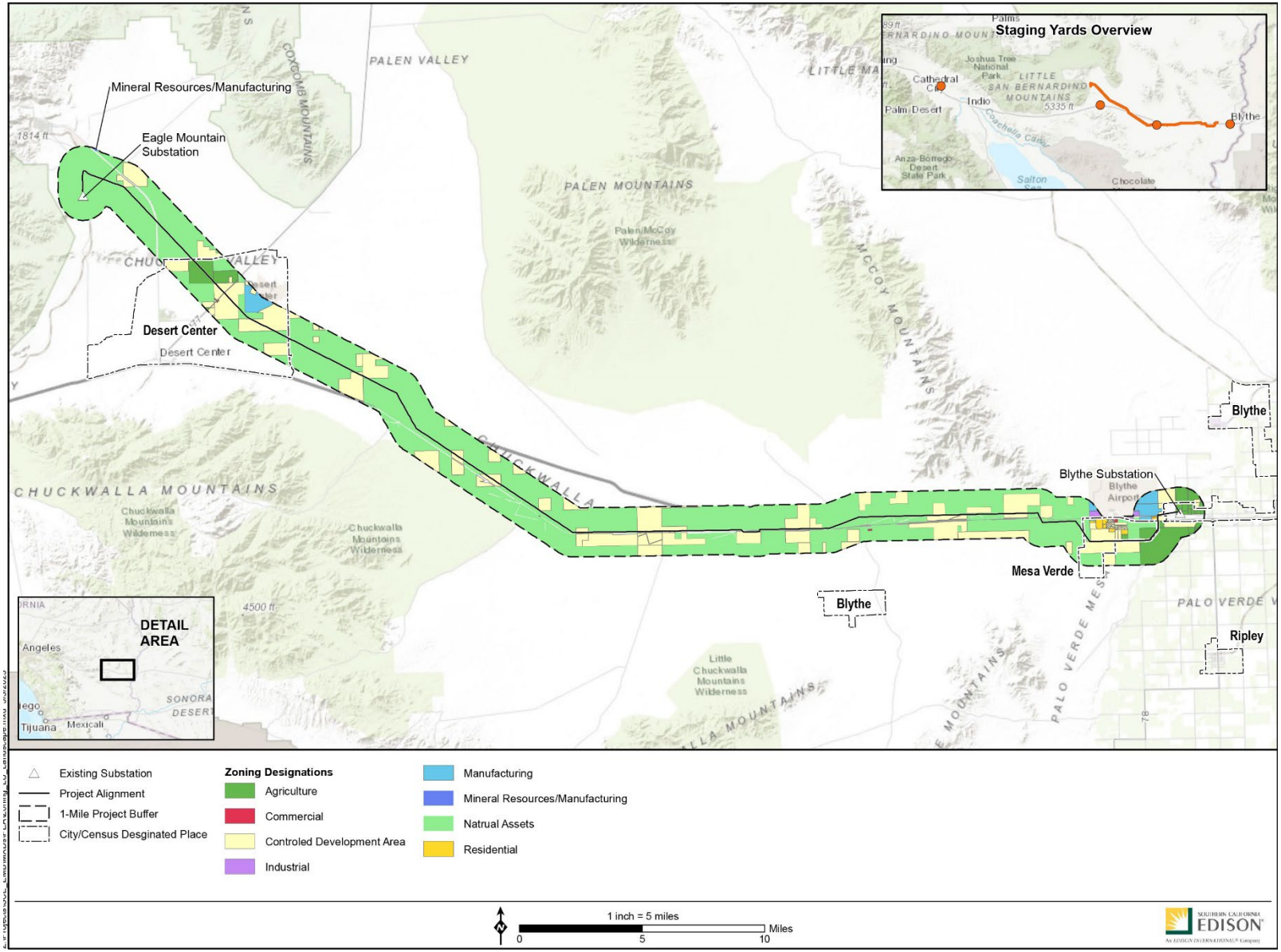


Figure 5.11-3 Land Ownership

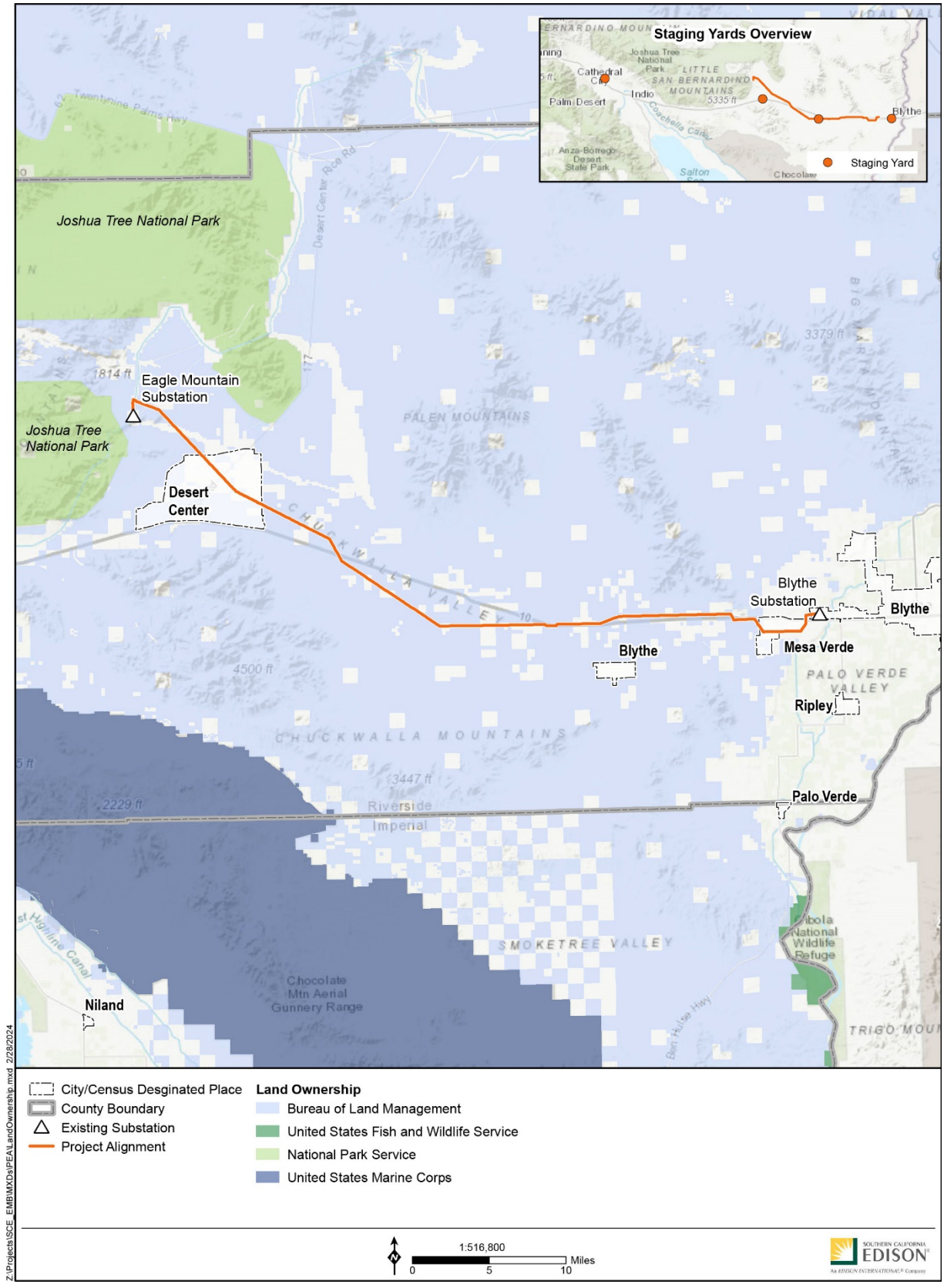


Table 5.11-1 Land Use Designations within 1 Mile of the Project

County/City	Land Use Designation[1]	Approximate Distance Crossed by the Project (Miles)
Riverside County	Agriculture	4.9
	Business Park	0
	Commercial	0
	Industrial	0.5
	Open Space	45.3
	Public Facilities	0.1
	Residential	0.2
	Rural	1.5
City of Blythe	Agriculture	0.2
	Industrial	0.5

Sources: Riverside County 2021, City of Blythe 2007

[1] These designations have been consolidated from those reported in each county and city general plan. Attachment 5.11-A lists the specific land use designations from the general plan.

Table 5.11-2 Zoning Designations within 1 Mile of the Project

County/City	Zoning Designation	Approximate Distance Crossed by the Project (Miles)
Riverside County	Light Agriculture (A-1)	2.6
	Heavy Agriculture (A-2)	0
	Controlled Development Area (W-2)	12.9
	Controlled Development Areas with Mobilehomes (W-2-M)	0
	Industrial Park (I-P)	0
	Manufacturing (M-H)	0.1
	Mineral Resources and Related Manufacturing (M-R-A)	0
	Manufacturing – Service Commercial (M-SC)	0
	Mobilehome Subdivision – Rural (R-T-R)	0
	Natural Assets (N-A)	35.4
	Residential Agricultural (R-A)	0
	Rural Residential (R-R)	0
	Scenic Highway Commercial (C-P-S)	0
	Tourist Commercial (C-T)	0
City of Blythe	Agriculture (A)	0.2
	General Industrial (I-G)	0.5

Sources: Riverside County 2021, City of Blythe 2007

Note: Zoning data in Riverside County and the City of Blythe is not contiguous (e.g., road rights-of-way). As a result, the total distance crossed by the Project is less than the total length of the Project Alignment.

5.11.1.2 Special Land Uses

5.11.1.2.1 Lands Administered by Federal, State, or Local Agencies

Although the Project Area includes lands owned by BLM, counties, cities, and private parties, the entirety of the Project is located within the BLM-managed California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) and is covered by the DRECP. Portions of the Project within the CDCA and DRECP also cross private and municipal lands. Figure 5.11-3 depicts the land ownership in the vicinity of the Project.

Bureau of Land Management

The BLM oversees management of the National Landscape Conservation System, which contains federally recognized conservation lands, such as the following:

- National monuments
- National conservation areas
- Wilderness areas
- Wilderness study areas
- Wild and scenic rivers
- National scenic and historic trails
- Conservation lands of the California desert

CALIFORNIA DESERT CONSERVATION AREA

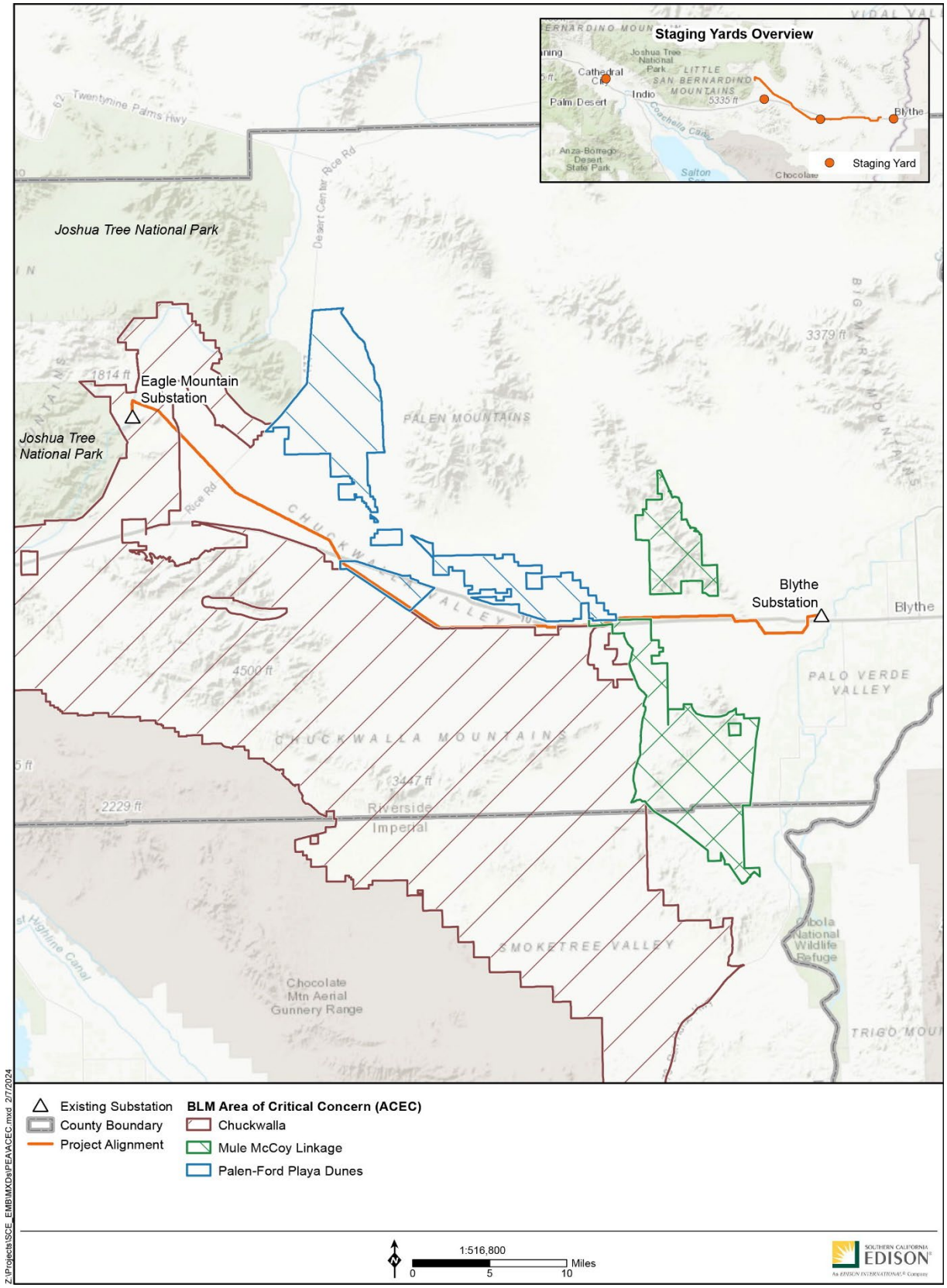
The entirety of the Project is located within the CDCA. The CDCA Conservation Plan establishes actions and methodologies for utility development activities within protected areas of the California Desert to meet the growing needs of the California population while protecting natural resources. Additional information about the CDCA is provided in Section 5.11.2.1.2. Further clarification on actions and methodologies for utility development activities on BLM-administered land in the CDCA is provided in the DRECP Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA), which is described in the following subsection.

DESERT RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSERVATION PLAN, LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

The entirety of the Project is located on lands managed under the DRECP. Approximately 35.6 miles of the Project are located on BLM land managed by the DRECP LUPA. The DRECP LUPA establishes Conservation and Management Actions (CMAs) that designate allowable and non-allowable actions for siting, design, pre-construction, construction, maintenance, implementation, operation, and decommissioning activities on BLM-managed land. Additional details regarding the DRECP LUPA are provided in Section 5.11.2.1.3 and Section 5.11.2.1.4.

The BLM designates Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) as special management areas to protect significant resources in the DRECP LUPA. As shown in Figure 5.11-4, portions of the Project cross the Chuckwalla ACEC, Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC, and Palen-Ford Playa Dunes ACEC, which are all within the Colorado Desert subregion (BLM 2016). The Chuckwalla ACEC and Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC are managed by the Palm Springs-South Coast and El Centro offices of the BLM, and the Palen-Ford Playa Dunes ACEC is managed by the Palm Springs-South Coast office. The Chuckwalla ACEC covers approximately 648,960 acres. Approximately 4.8 miles of the Project overlap with this ACEC at the western end of the alignment (including the Eagle Mountain Substation). The Palen-Ford Playa Dunes

Figure 5.11-4 ACEC Crossed by the Project



ACEC covers approximately 54,924 acres. Approximately 5.7 miles of the Project overlap with this ACEC in the central portion of the alignment. The Mule-McCoy ACEC covers approximately 60,280 acres. Approximately 1.7 miles of the Project overlap with this ACEC in the eastern portion of the alignment.

5.11.1.2.2 Designated Coastal Zone Management Areas

No portion of the Project is located in a designated coastal zone management area.

5.11.1.2.3 Designated or Proposed Candidate National or State Wild and Scenic Rivers

No portion of the Project crosses or is proximate to a designated or proposed candidate national or state wild and scenic river.

5.11.1.2.4 National Landmarks

The Project is not located near any national landmarks.

5.11.1.3 Habitat Conservation Plan

The Project does not cross any areas covered by a habitat conservation plan (HCP).

5.11.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.11.2.1 Federal

The Project is located within the CDCA and DRECP managed by the BLM.

5.11.2.1.1 Federal Land Policy and Management Act

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) provides a regulatory framework for the management of BLM land and its use of resources. An important aspect of the FLPMA is that it supports multiple uses on public lands. The BLM also regulates ROWs for electrical power generation, transmission and distribution systems, systems for the transmission and reception of electronic signals and other means of communication, pipelines (other than oil and gas), railroads, highways, and other facilities or systems developed in the interest of the public under the FLPMA.

5.11.2.1.2 California Desert Conservation Area Plan

The CDCA is an expanse of land covering approximately 26 million acres in Southern California that was designated by Congress in 1976 through the FLPMA, of which approximately 10.4 million acres are administered by the BLM. The CDCA Plan is a comprehensive, long-range plan for the management, use, development, and protection of lands within the CDCA; it is required as part of the FLPMA and implemented by the BLM. The BLM adopted a LUPA, which amended the CDCA Plan in September 2016 as part of Phase I of the DRECP. The DRECP and the BLM LUPA are discussed in the following sections.

5.11.2.1.3 Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The DRECP is a multi-phase collaborative planning effort between the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), BLM, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service

developed under the California Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA) that is meant to accomplish the following:

- Advance federal and state natural resource conservation goals and other federal land management goals;
- Meet the requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, NCCPA, and FLPMA; and
- Facilitate the timely and streamlined permitting of renewable energy projects in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran desert regions of Southern California.

The DRECP identifies existing utility corridors and recognizes CMAs, which restrict siting and construction activities to those existing utility corridors to minimize resource impacts by reducing the need for new, unplanned transmission infrastructure. The DRECP covers approximately 22.5 million acres in the desert regions of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties.

5.11.2.1.4 Bureau of Land Management Land Use Plan Amendment

The BLM LUPA establishes management direction for the permitting of renewable energy and transmission development on approximately 10 million acres of BLM-managed lands in the DRECP area. The LUPA Decision Area includes conservation designations and recreation designations throughout the CDCA, including California Desert National Conservation Lands, ACECs, and Wildlife Allocations.

5.11.2.2 State

5.11.2.2.1 California Public Utilities Commission, General Order 131-D

Pursuant to General Order (GO) 131-D, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has sole and exclusive jurisdiction over the siting and design of electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities in California. Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CPUC is the lead agency with respect to such Project elements within California.

5.11.2.2.2 California Fish and Game Code Wildlife and Natural Areas Conservation Act

The California Fish and Game Code regulates the majority of the CDFW's jurisdiction. Pursuant to section 2700 of the California Fish and Game Code, a public database was established for California natural areas containing valuable wildlife habitat that supports many of the diverse wildlife communities throughout the state. These areas, while not specifically protected under the California Fish and Game Code, were compiled into a publicly accessible database to increase public awareness of Significant Natural Areas, which are further described in section 1932 of the California Fish and Game Code.

5.11.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC GO 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.11.2.3.1 County of Riverside

County of Riverside General Plan: Land Use Element

The Land Use Element of the County of Riverside General Plan establishes goals and policies that provide a framework for development in the county. The Project is located within the Desert Center Region, Eastern Riverside County Desert Areas, and Palo Verde Valley Region (Riverside County 2021). The Land Use Element contains the following policies pertaining to utilities:

LU 5.2 Monitor the capacities of infrastructure and services in coordination with service providers, utilities, and outside agencies and jurisdictions to ensure that growth does not exceed acceptable levels of service. (AI, 3, 4, 32, 74)

LU 5.4 Ensure that development and conservation land uses do not infringe upon existing essential public facilities and public utility corridors, which include county regional landfills, fee owned rights-of-way and permanent easements, whose true land use is that of public facilities. This policy will ensure that the public facilities designation governs over what otherwise may be inferred by the large-scale general plan maps. (AI 3)

LU 31.1 Accommodate the development of public facilities in areas appropriately designated by the General Plan and area plan land use maps. (AI 1, 2, 6)

LU 31.5 Require that public facilities be designed to consider their surroundings and visually enhance, not degrade, the character of the surrounding area. (AI 3)

LU 31.6 Ensure that development and conservation land uses do not infringe upon existing essential public facilities and public utility corridors, which include Riverside County regional landfills, fee owned rights-of-way and permanent easements, whose true land use is that of Public Facilities. This policy will ensure that the public facilities designation governs over what otherwise may be inferred by the large-scale General Plan maps. (AI 3)

LU 31.7 Due to the scale of General Plan and Area Plan maps and the size of the county, utility easements and linear rights-of-way that are narrow in width are not depicted on General Plan and Area Plan maps. These features need to be taken into consideration in the review of applications to develop land and proposals to preserve land for conservation.

County of Riverside Zoning Ordinance

The County of Riverside Ordinance No. 348 provides the uses permitted in the zones the Project Alignment traverses through and where the laydown yards are located (Riverside County 2024). Details are provided below:

- Light Agriculture (A-1) Section 13.1.B.5.: Public utility facilities are permitted subject to the approval of a plot plan pursuant to Section 18.30 of this ordinance.
- Manufacturing – Heavy (M-H) Section 12.2.B.1.o.3.: Public utility substations and storage yards are permitted.
- Natural Assets (N-A) Section 15.200.B.1.: Public utility substations are permitted, upon approval of a plot plan pursuant to Section 18.30, on parcels of land not less than 7,200 square feet in size, with a minimum front yard depth of 20 feet and minimum side and rear yard depth of 10 feet.
- Controlled Development Area (W-2) Section 15.1.E: Public Utilities Uses are permitted.
- General Residential (R-3): Utility services not detailed; however, the outside storage of materials are mentioned.

5.11.2.3.2 City of Blythe

City of Blythe General Plan 2025: Land Use Element

The Land Use Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 establishes the policies that guide development and "shape the City's direction and strategy for relating residential, commercial, industrial, open space and public uses with their locational and public service needs" (City of Blythe 2007). This element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 does not contain specific land use policies relevant to the Project.

City of Blythe Zoning Ordinance

Per Section 17.08.010 of the City of Blythe Zoning Ordinance, Utility Operations Facilities are permitted in the Industrial – General Zone (City of Blythe 2024).

Per Section 17.46.010 of the City of Blythe Zoning Ordinance:

- The provisions of this title shall not be construed as to limit or interfere with the construction, installation, operation and maintenance of any use coming under the jurisdiction of the public utilities commission, which uses are related to public utility purposes, of water and gas pipes, mains and conduits, electric light and power transmission and distribution lines, telegraph and telephone lines, sewers and sewer mains and incidental appurtenances. The location of such lines, mains and conduits shall be subject to city council review and approval.

5.11.3 Impact Questions

5.11.3.1 Land Use and Planning Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. For land use and planning, the CEQA Checklist asks if the project would:

- Physically divide an established community?

- Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

5.11.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.11.4 Impact Analysis

5.11.4.1 Land Use and Planning Impact Analysis

5.11.4.1.1 Land Use and Planning Methodology

Land use and planning impacts within the Project Area were determined by collecting all applicable data available through the Riverside General Plan and the City of Blythe General Plan. The Project was then overlain on this data to determine the potential impacts. Aerial photographs were also used to analyze existing land conditions in the vicinity of the Project.

5.11.4.1.2 Would the Project physically divide an established community?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on existing electrical infrastructure within an existing public utility ROW and at existing and/or proposed Southern California Edison (SCE) laydown yards located in unincorporated Riverside County and the City of Blythe. No new ROWs would be acquired, and access to businesses and other uses in the area surrounding the Project Alignment would be generally maintained during the construction phase. Additionally, any lane and/or road closures would be temporary and short term, and flaggers and other traffic controls would be utilized, as described in Section 5.17, Transportation. Existing access roads would be used to the extent feasible for construction of the Project; where needed, these roads would be improved to allow the safe use of construction equipment. In locations where access roads are not available, trucks would travel overland to reach poles or towers. No new permanent access roads or subtransmission infrastructure are proposed that would act as a physical barrier between nearby communities. Therefore, the Project would not physically divide an established community. No impacts would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operation and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.11.4.1.3 Would the Project cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

No Impact. In California, the CPUC's jurisdiction over electric power line projects and substations exempts the Project from local land use regulations under GO 131-D.

The Project would involve work on existing electrical infrastructure located within an existing public utility ROW and the associated use of existing and/or proposed SCE laydown yards. No new ROWs would be acquired. The Project would not result in any land use changes within the ROW or at the laydown yards. Wire setup sites would be used temporarily during construction, and no permanent change in land use associated with the use of the wire setup sites would occur. Therefore, the Project would not conflict with

any local land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted by the County of Riverside or City of Blythe for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

Project activities located on BLM-managed lands in California are subject to and would comply with all applicable requirements of the DRECP, FLPMA, and CDCA. As discussed in Section 5.4, Biological Resources, the Project would not conflict with the provisions of any applicable local, regional, or State HCP, and would not prevent the associated agencies from meeting the conservation goals and objectives of such plans.

Therefore, with compliance with applicable plans, policies, and regulations, as well as implementation of the Project applicant proposed measures (APMs) outlined in Table 3-9 in Chapter 3, Proposed Project Description, no impacts related to conflicts with local land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect would occur. No mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.11.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No CPUC Draft Environmental Measures have been identified for land use and planning.

5.11.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

No impacts to land use and planning would occur as a result of the Project. As such, there are no APMs.

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ATTACHMENT 5.11-A: DEFINITIONS OF LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

Consolidated Land Use Designation	General Plan Land Use Designation	Land Use Definition
Riverside County		
Agriculture	AG	**Agriculture (AG).** Established to help conserve productive agricultural lands within the county. These include row crops, nurseries, citrus groves and vineyards, dairies, ranches, poultry and hog farms, and other agricultural related uses. Areas designated for Agriculture generally lack an infrastructure that is supportive of urban development. Residential density is permitted at one dwelling unit per parcel provided that the parcel is 10 acres in size or larger. An additional dwelling unit may be allowed for each additional 10 acres being farmed for use by the owner, operator or employees, up to five total dwelling units per parcel.
Business Park	BP	**Business Park (BP).** Employee intensive uses, including research and development, technology centers, corporate offices, clean industry and supporting retail uses.
Commercial	CR	**Commercial Retail (CR).** Local and regional serving retail and service uses.
	CT	**Commercial Tourist (CT).** Tourist related commercial including hotels, golf courses, and recreation/amusement activities.
Industrial	HI	**Heavy Industrial (HI).** Allows for intense industrial activities that may have significant impacts (noise, glare, odors) on surrounding uses.
	LI	**Light Industrial (LI).** Allows for a wide variety of industrial and related uses, including assembly and light manufacturing, repair and other service facilities, warehousing, distribution centers, and supporting retail uses.
Open Space	OS-R	**Open Space-Recreation (OS-R).** Allows for active and passive recreational uses such as parks, trails, camp grounds, athletic fields, golf courses, and off-road vehicle parks. Ancillary structures may be permitted for recreational opportunities. Actual building or structure size, siting, and design will be determined on a case by case basis.
	OS-RUR	**Open Space-Rural (OS-RUR).** Applied to remote, privately owned open space areas with limited access and a lack of public services. Single-family residential uses are permitted at a density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres.

Consolidated Land Use Designation	General Plan Land Use Designation	Land Use Definition
Public Facilities	PF	**Public Facilities (PF).** Provides for the development of various public, quasi-public, and private uses with similar characteristics, such as governmental facilities, utility facilities including public and private electric generating stations and corridors, landfills, airports, educational facilities, and maintenance yards. Due to the varied nature of this category, building intensity and design criteria for uses in this designation shall generally comply with those standards and policies most similar to the intended use. Airports, utility facilities, other than electric generating stations, and landfills generally have low Floor to Area Ratios (FARs). Actual FAR will vary for other uses and the appropriate FAR will, therefore, be determined in the zoning ordinance.
Rural	RD	**Rural Desert (RD).** Allows for single family residences, limited agriculture and animal keeping uses, with a maximum residential density of 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres. Limited recreational uses; renewable energy uses including solar, geothermal and wind energy uses, as well as associated uses required to develop and operate these renewable energy sources; compatible resource development (which may include the extraction of mineral resources with approval of a surface mining permit); governmental and utility uses are also allowed within this designation. This designation is generally applied to remote desert areas characterized by poor access and a lack of water and other services. Neighborhood-serving small-scale commercial uses that are compatible with the surrounding uses are allowed.
	RR	**Rural Residential (RR).** Allows one single family residence per five acres, as well as limited animal-keeping and agricultural activities. Limited recreational uses, compatible resource development (not including the commercial extraction of mineral resources) and associated uses, and governmental uses are allowed within this designation. Neighborhood-serving small-scale commercial uses that are compatible with the surrounding uses are allowed.

Consolidated Land Use Designation	General Plan Land Use Designation	Land Use Definition
Residential	RC-EDR	**Estate Density Residential (RC-EDR).** Provides for the development of detached single family residential dwelling units and ancillary structures on large parcels. Equestrian and other animal-keeping uses are expected and encouraged. Agriculture and small scale commercial uses are permitted in this designation. The density range is from 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres to 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres
	RC-LDR	**Low Density Residential (RC-LDR).** provides for the development of detached single family residential dwelling units and ancillary structures on large parcels. Equestrian and other animal - keeping uses are expected and encouraged. Agriculture and small scale commercial uses are permitted in this designation. The density range is from 2 dwelling units per acre to 1 dwelling unit per acre.
	MDR	**Medium Density Residential (MDR).** Provides for the development of conventional single family detached houses and suburban subdivisions. Limited agriculture and animal-keeping uses, such as horses, are also allowed within this category. The density range is 2.0 to 5.0 dwelling units per acre, which allows for a lot size that typically ranges from 5,500 to 20,000 square feet.
City of Blythe		
Agriculture	A	**Agriculture (A).** Includes orchards and cropland, grasslands, and very low residential areas, not to exceed one housing unit per 5-acres, provided that one housing unit may be built on each existing parcel. Agricultural processing facilities also are allowed, subject to performance and access standards intended to minimize potential adverse environmental effects and ensure compatibility with adjacent uses. This classification will also accommodate any greenbelts and/or urban buffer areas that may be designated in the future.
Industrial	I-G	**General Industrial (I-G).** Provides and protects industrial lands for the full range of manufacturing, agricultural and industrial processing, general service, and distribution uses.

Source: Riverside County 2021, City of Blythe 2007

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5.12 Mineral Resources

This section describes the mineral resources in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to mineral resources from construction and operation of the Project.

According to the United States (U.S.) Geological Survey (USGS), a mineral resource is defined as a concentration of naturally occurring solid, liquid, or gaseous materials in or on the earth's crust in such a form and quantity, and of such a grade or quality, that it has reasonable prospects for economic extraction, either currently or in the future. Mineral resources include oil, natural gas, and metallic and non-metallic deposits. Mineral resources data were obtained from the following sources:

- USGS
- California Department of Conservation (DOC)
- California Geological Survey (CGS)
- City of Blythe General Plan
- Riverside County General Plan

5.12.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas[1]. The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

Most of the ROW and adjacent areas are undeveloped desert areas. Small portions of the ROW cross both inactive and active agricultural use areas. Between Desert Center and Blythe, the Project Alignment is within the Chuckwalla Valley and roughly parallels Interstate (I-) 10. No active mines are in the Project Area. The largest mineral mining operation in the area is located at the Eagle Mountain Mine, approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project Site. No active mines are located in the Project Site vicinity (DOC 2023a and USGS 2022).

The Eagle Mountain Mine area, designated by the DOC as Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ)-2a, is located approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project Site. The Project Site overlies areas of unknown mineral resource significance (MRZ-4) with largely alluvium geology.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

5.12.1.1 Mineral Resources

The Project is located within the Mojave Geomorphic Province (CGS 2002). The Mojave Geomorphic Province has historically produced mineral resources, such as gold, copper, and zinc. Several mineral surveys have been conducted within this province.

The DOC, Division of Mines and Geology, and the California State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB) are responsible for the administration of the classification designation process for inventorying mineral lands. Areas are classified based on geologic factors without regard to existing land use and land ownership. The following are the six Mineral Resource Zone (MRZ) categories defined by the SMGB (SMGB 1988):

- MRZ-1: An area where adequate information indicates that no significant mineral deposits are present, or where it is judged that little likelihood exists for their presence.
- MRZ-2a: An area where adequate information indicates that significant measured or indicated mineral reserves are present.
- MRZ-2b: An area where geologic information indicates that significant inferred resources or demonstrated subeconomic resources are present.
- MRZ-3a: An area likely to contain undiscovered mineral deposits similar to known deposits in the same producing district or region (hypothetical resources).
- MRZ-3b: An area judged to be a favorable geologic environment for mineral resource occurrences, but where mineral discoveries have not been made in the region (speculative resources).
- MRZ-4: An area where geologic information does not rule out either the presence or absence of mineral resources.

The DOC Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) oversees the drilling, operation, maintenance, and plugging and abandonment of oil, natural gas, and geothermal wells in California, and tracks all known oil and gas wells. Based on a review of data from the DOC CalGEM, there are no wells located within 1 mile of the Project.

The following subsections describe mineral resources in the vicinity of the Project in more detail.

5.12.1.1.1 Riverside County

The Riverside County 2025 General Plan's Multipurpose Open Space Element designates specific mineral resource zones for active extraction or resource conservation. Riverside County has extensive deposits of clay, limestone, iron, sand, and aggregates. Mineral deposits in the county are important to many industries, including construction, transportation and chemical processing. The Project is in an area mapped MRZ-4: Areas where there is not enough information available to determine the presence or absence of mineral deposits.

5.12.1.1.2 City of Blythe

According to the City of Blythe's General Plan's Conservation Element, no active mines are within the Planning Area, however, areas along Midland Road were historically mined for gypsum and gravel. The City's General Plan does not provide a mineral deposit map; however, it defers to DOC Mineral Resource Zone mapping, which indicates the Project is in an area mapped MRZ-4: Areas where there is not enough information available to determine the presence or absence of mineral deposits.

5.12.1.1.3 Active Mining Claims

There are no active mining claims within 1 mile of any portion of the Project. The largest mineral mining operation in the area is located at the Eagle Mountain Mine, approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project Site. No active mines are located in the Project Site vicinity (USGS 2022 and County of Riverside Mapping Portal). The Project does not cross any known active mining claims.

5.12.1.1.4 Active Mines

The DOC's Office of Mine Reclamation provides oversight for local governments as they administer the California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA) within each local government jurisdiction. Based on a review of published sources and data from the USGS Mineral Resources Data System, the largest mineral mining operation in the area is located at the Eagle Mountain Mine, approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project Site. No active mines are located in the Project Site vicinity (USGS 2022).

Additionally, the USGS Mineral Resources Data System (USGS 2022) identifies three sites with either mineral resource producers, past producers, or prospects within 1 mile of the Project, as detailed in Figure 5.12-1 and Table 5.12-1.

Table 5.12-1 Mineral Resources Producers, Past Producers, and Prospects Within 1 Mile of the Project

Mineral Prospect/ Past Mining Activity	Status[1]	Commodity	Approximate Distance to Nearest Project Component (miles)	Nearest Project Component
Gravel Pit	Past Producer	Sand and Gravel	0.2	Structure N124646AE_S124646BE
Nicholls Warm Spring	Producer	Geothermal	0.6	Structure 124627AE_124627BE
H & K Mine	Past Producer	Talc-Soapstone	2.9	Structure N124905AE_S124905BE

Source: USGS Mineral Resources Data System 2022.

Mineral Prospect/Past Mining Activity status is determined by the USGS and reported in its Mineral Resources Data System. This data system describes metallic and non-metallic mineral resource deposits and their status at the time the data were added to the Mineral Resources Data System. The status terms include:

- Occurrence: Ore mineralization found in outcrop, shallow pits, or isolated drill hole. Grade, tonnage, and extent of mineralization are unknown. No production and little or no activity since discovery other than routine claim maintenance.
- Prospect: Development beyond the occurrence stage (e.g., surface trenching, adits, shafts, drill holes, geophysics, geochemistry, or geological mapping) where enough data has been gathered to estimate grade and tonnage.
- Producer: A mine that was in production at the time the data were entered, including intermittent and seasonal producers.
- Past Producer: A former producer that was closed at the time of data entry with no known plans to re-open.
- Plant: A mineral processing plant such as a smelter, refiner, or beneficiation plant that is active or inactive.
- Unknown: The grade, tonnage, and extent of the mineralization are unknown, and there has been no production and little or no activity since discovery (other than routine claim maintenance).

5.12.1.1.5 Resource Recovery Sites

Several mineral resource recovery sites are located within 1 mile of the Project Alignment; these include active, decommissioned, and abandoned mines, as detailed in Figure 5.12-1 and Table 5.12-1.

As described in Section 5.12.1.1, the DOC CalGEM oversees the drilling, operation, maintenance, and plugging and abandonment of oil, natural gas, and geothermal wells in California; it also tracks all known oil and gas wells. Based on a review of data from the DOC CalGEM, there are no wells located within 1 mile of the Project. The Project Alignment does not cross any resource recovery sites in Riverside County or the City of Blythe (DOC 2023b).

5.12.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.12.2.1 Federal

5.12.2.1.1 Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (30 U.S.C. §§ 1201-1328) established a program for regulating surface coal mining and reclamation activities. It also established mandatory, uniform standards for these activities on state and federal lands, including a requirement that adverse impacts on fish, wildlife, and related environmental values be minimized. Additionally, it created the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund for use in reclaiming and restoring land and water resources adversely affected by mining practices.

5.12.2.2 State

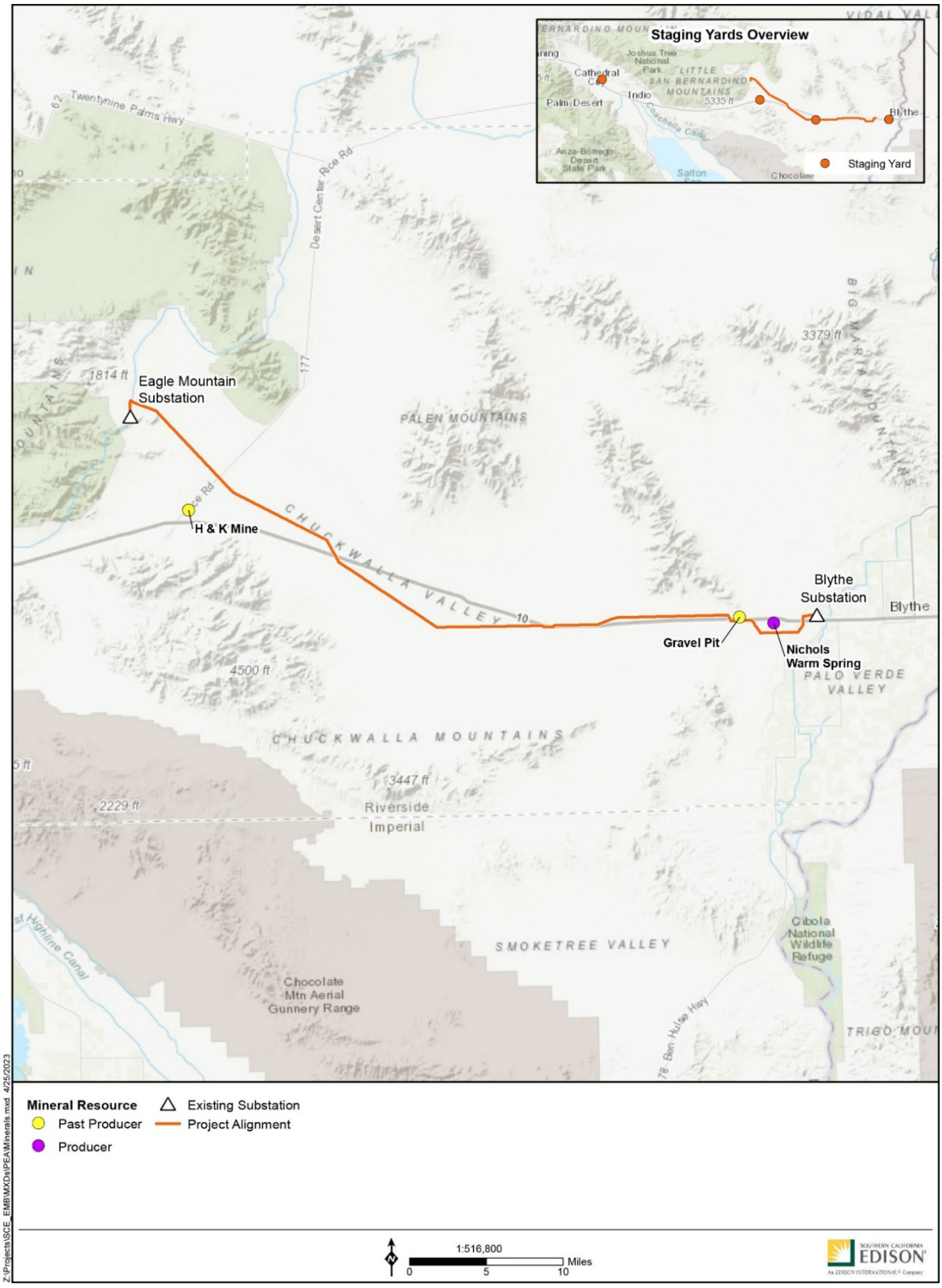
5.12.2.2.1 California Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (Public Resources Code Section 2710 et seq.)

The protection of regionally significant mineral resource deposits is one of the main emphases of SMARA. The law specifically mandates a two-phased process, commonly referred to as classification and designation, for mineral resources. The CGS is responsible under SMARA for carrying out the classification phase of the process.

SMARA requires the State Geologist (who is the chief administrator of CGS) to classify lands into MRZs based on the known or inferred mineral resource potential of that land. The classification process is based solely on geology, without regard to land use or ownership. The primary goal of mineral land classification is to help ensure that the mineral resource potential of land is recognized and considered in the land use planning process. MRZ definitions are provided in Section 5.12.1.1.

The SMGB is responsible for the second phase, which allows it to identify areas within a production-consumption region that contain significant deposits of certain mineral resources that may be needed to meet the region's future demand.

Figure 5.12-1 Mineral Resources Producers, Past Producers, and Prospects within 1 Mile of the Project



5.12.2.3 Local

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.12.2.3.1 Riverside County General Plan

The Multipurpose Open Space Element of the *County of Riverside General Plan* contains policies and programs that are designed to protect and conserve environmental resources in Riverside County while encouraging economic development and growth and setting the direction for the framework of its transportation system. The Multipurpose Open Space Element includes the protection and preservation of natural resources including the following key resources: water, biological, forest, vegetation, agriculture and soils, open space, parks and recreation, regional aesthetics, cultural and paleontological, renewable resources, and non-renewable resources, including mineral resources (County of Riverside 2015). This element of the Riverside County General Plan contains the following policy related to mineral resources:

> **OS 14.2** Restrict incompatible land uses within the impact area of existing or potential surface mining areas.

City of Blythe General Plan

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the *City of Blythe General Plan 2025* contains policies and programs that encourage sustainable development and seek to balance growth and conservation in Blythe, California. The Open Space and Conservation Element aims to preserve and enhance the natural environment through the implementation of policies for open space lands and the conservation of natural resources, including mineral resources (City of Blythe 2007). This element of the *City of Blythe General Plan 2025* does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

5.12.3 Impact Questions

5.12.3.1 Mineral Resources Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For mineral resources, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?
- Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

5.12.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.12.4 Impact Analysis

5.12.4.1 Mineral Resources Impact Analysis

5.12.4.1.1 Mineral Resources Methodology

Mineral resources data in the Project vicinity were obtained from multiple federal, State, and local sources. The data were collected in or converted to a geographic information system-compatible format and the Project components were overlain to determine the potential impacts to these resources. Aerial photographs were also utilized to assist with this analysis.

5.12.4.1.2 Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact. The eastern Riverside County region contains areas of significant mineral value. The Eagle Mountain Mine area, designated by the California DOC as MRZ-2a, is located approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project. The MRZ-2a designation is applied when areas are underlain by mineral deposits where geologic data indicate that significant measured or indicated resources are present. However, the Project Alignment itself overlies areas of unknown mineral resource significance (MRZ-4) with largely alluvium geology.

The USGS Mineral Resources Data System (USGS 2022) identifies three sites with mineral resource producers, past producers, or prospects within 1 mile of the Project, as detailed in Table 5.12-1.

Project construction would require removal of existing structures, which would be 8 to 15 feet deep for lightweight steel poles and 18 to 32 feet deep for tubular steel pole foundations. The extent of soil removal would be within an existing utility ROW where the potential for mineral extraction is already limited by the existing Project Alignment. Given the Project is not located within areas of known mineral resources and the existing ROW limits the ability to extract minerals, no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operations and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.12.4.1.3 Would the Project result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?

No Impact. The Project involves work on existing utility infrastructure, and the Project Alignment does not intersect with a mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan. The largest mineral mining operation in the area is located at the Eagle Mountain Mine, approximately 3 miles north of the western extent of the Project. No active mines are located in the Project vicinity (USGS 2022). As a result, Project construction would not interfere with mineral resource recovery operations, and no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.12.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for the Mineral Resources resource area.

5.12.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

No impacts to mineral resources would occur as a result of the Project. As such, there are no applicant proposed measures.

5.13 Noise

This section describes noise in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to noise from construction and operation of the Project. Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual* (FTA 2018),
- aerial photography, and
- local agency planning documents.

5.13.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

5.13.1.1 Noise-Sensitive Land Uses

As described previously, the Project is located in unincorporated Riverside County and the City of Blythe. Project-related construction and operation activities would occur mainly along existing roadways and open space areas; however, some Project activities would be conducted in the vicinity of residences in the unincorporated Riverside County and the City of Blythe. Existing noise sources in proximity to these potentially noise-sensitive receptors include traffic on roadways and highways, industrial operations, and airport operations.

The definition of a sensitive receptor varies by jurisdiction. For the purposes of this analysis, the defined sensitive receptors and noise-sensitive land uses contained in the *Riverside County General Plan* (County of Riverside 2015) and *City of Blythe General Plan 2025* (City of Blythe 2007) are used. These sensitive receptors include:

- residences,
- schools,
- hospitals and retirement homes,
- houses of worship, and
- parks and recreational facilities.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Few sensitive receptors are located along the Project Alignment. No hospitals, nursing homes, or libraries are located within 1,000 feet of the Project. Within 1,000 feet of the Project, there are approximately 27 residences and one park. Sensitive receptor locations within 1,000 feet of the Project are depicted on Figure 5.13-1.

5.13.1.2 Noise Setting

5.13.1.2.1 Noise Background

Noise is defined as an unpleasant or unwanted sound. Whether a sound is considered unpleasant depends on the individual who hears the sound, as well as the setting and circumstance under which the sound is heard. The unit of sound measurement is the decibel (dB). The dB scale is a logarithmic measure used to quantify sound power or sound pressure. A number of factors affect the perception of sound, including the actual level of noise, the frequencies involved, the period of exposure to the sound, and changes or fluctuations in the sound level during exposure. The human ear is not uniformly sensitive to all noise frequencies. To measure sound in a manner that accurately reflects human perception, several measuring systems or scales have been developed. The "A-weighting" scale, which is the most commonly used scale, was devised to correspond with the ear's sensitivity. The A-weighting scale uses sound pressure levels from 31.5 hertz to 8 kilohertz for the purpose of determining the human response to sound. The resulting unit of measure is the A-weighted decibel (dBA). However, the relative loudness of a noise source is correlated with human perception and is usually different than what is measured. Generally, a 3 dBA increase in ambient noise levels is considered the minimum threshold at which most people can detect a change in the noise environment; a 5 dBA increase in community noise is considered perceptible by the average human ear; and an increase of 10 dBA is perceived as a doubling of the ambient noise level. As a point of reference, a conversation between two people would typically measure 60 to 65 dBA, and prolonged noise levels above 85 dBA can cause hearing loss.

Ambient noise levels from various sources vary over time, so they are generally expressed as an equivalent noise level (Leq) over a specified period of time as the noise level varies. Leq values are commonly expressed for 1-hour periods, but different averaging times may be specified.

For the evaluation of community noise effects, the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) is often used. The CNEL represents the average dBA level during a 24-hour day with a 5 dB penalty for the period from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., and a 10 dB penalty for the period from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Another noise descriptor termed the Day-Night Average Sound Level (Ldn) is also used. The Ldn is a calculated 24-hour weighted average, where sound levels during nighttime hours from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. have an added 10 dB weighting. The Ldn is similar to the CNEL, except there is no penalty for the noise level occurring during the nighttime hours.

5.13.1.2.2 Existing Noise Levels

The Project Alignment is generally located in uninhabited areas with few stationary anthropogenic noise sources. The primary existing source of noise in the Project Area is vehicular traffic on highways and local streets, including Interstate 10.

Where the alignment runs parallel to or crosses roadways, ambient noise greater than 65 dBA CNEL can be expected within approximately 275 feet of the roadway; beyond this distance, ambient noise levels would be less than 65 dBA CNEL. Additional noise sources include aircraft traffic from Desert Center Airport and Blythe Airport.

Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet

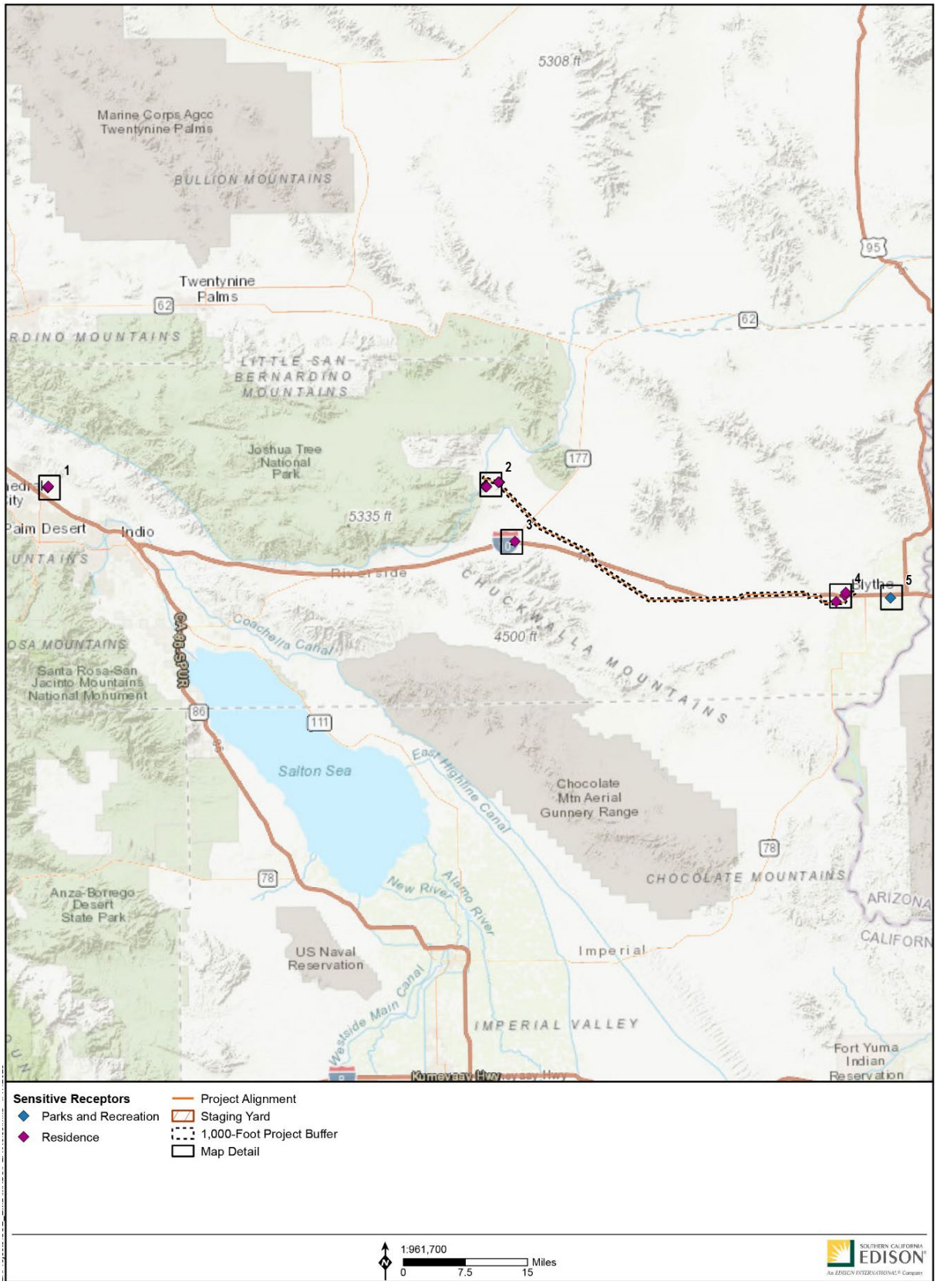


Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet Map 1 of 5

Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet Map 2 of 5

Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet Map 3 of 5

Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet Map 4 of 5

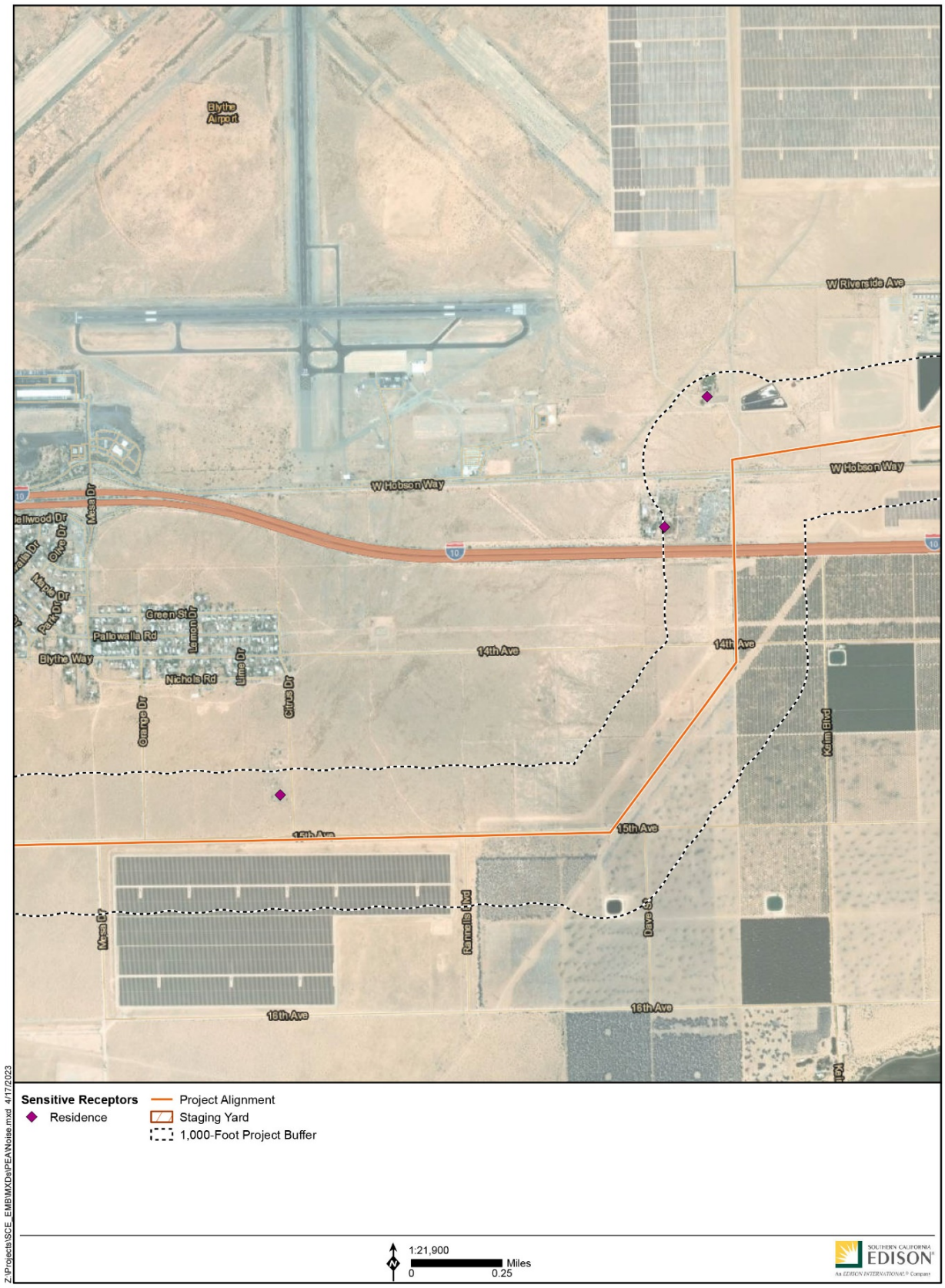


Figure 5.13-1 Noise-Sensitive Receptors within 1,000 Feet Map 5 of 5

5.13.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.13.2.1 Federal

5.13.2.1.1 Environmental Protection Agency

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has developed and published criteria for environmental noise levels with a directive to protect public health and welfare with an adequate margin of safety (USEPA 1974). The *Information on Levels of Environmental Noise Requisite to Protect Public Health and Welfare with an Adequate Margin of Safety* was developed to be used as an acceptable guideline when no other local, county, or state standard has been established. However, the USEPA criterion is not meant to substitute for agency regulations or standards in cases in which states and localities have developed criteria according to their individual needs and situations.

5.13.2.1.2 Federal Transit Administration

The FTA has developed vibration impact thresholds for noise-sensitive buildings, residences, and institutional land uses (FTA 2018). These thresholds are 80 vibration dB (VdB) at residences and buildings where people normally sleep (e.g., nearby residences and daycare facilities) and 83 VdB at institutional buildings (e.g., schools and churches). These thresholds apply to conditions where there are an infrequent number of events per day. The FTA has also identified construction vibration damage criteria to differing types of buildings and structures as shown in Table 5.13-1.

Table 5.13-1 Construction Vibration Damage Criteria

Building/Structural Category	Peak Particle Velocity (Inches per Second)	Vibration Level*
I. Reinforced concrete, steel, or timber (no plaster)	0.5	102
II. Engineered concrete and masonry (no plaster)	0.3	98
III. Non-engineered timber and masonry buildings	0.2	94
IV. Buildings extremely susceptible to vibration damage	0.12	90

Source: FTA 2018
* Note: Root mean square velocity is measured in dB, and VdB are 1 micro-inch per second.

5.13.2.2 State

5.13.2.2.1 California Noise Control Act

The California Noise Control Act states that excessive noise is a serious hazard to public health and welfare, and that exposure to certain levels of noise can result in physiological, psychological, and economic damage. It also recognizes that continuous and increasing bombardment of noise exists in urban, suburban, and rural areas. This act declares that the State of California has the responsibility to protect the health and welfare of its citizens by the control, prevention, and abatement of noise. The Office of Noise Control in the Department of Health Services provides assistance to local communities developing local noise control programs and works with the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to provide guidance for the preparation of the required noise elements in city and county general plans.

5.13.2.3 Local

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has sole and exclusive jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order (GO) 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but county and city regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.13.2.3.1 Riverside County

Riverside County General Plan

The Noise Element in the Riverside County General Plan (County of Riverside 2015) contains specific goals and policies for evaluating a project's compatibility with surrounding land uses. The following goals and policies related to noise are relevant to the Project:

Policy N 4.1 Prohibit facility-related noise, received by any sensitive use, from exceeding the following worst-case noise levels:

- 45 dBA-10-minute Leq between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- 65 dBA-10-minute Leq between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Policy N 4.2 Develop measures to control non-transportation noise impacts.

Policy N 4.3 Ensure any use determined to be a potential generator of significant stationary noise impacts be properly analyzed, and ensure that the recommended mitigation measures are implemented.

Policy N 4.4 Require that detailed and independent acoustical studies be conducted for any new or renovated land uses or structures determined to be potential major stationary noise sources.

Policy N 4.5 Encourage major stationary noise-generating sources throughout Riverside County to install additional noise buffering or reduction mechanisms within their facilities to reduce noise generation levels to the lowest extent practicable prior to the renewal of Conditional Use Permits or business licenses or prior to the approval and/or issuance of new Conditional Use Permits for said facilities.

Policy N 13.1 Minimize the impacts of construction noise on adjacent uses within acceptable practices.

Policy N 13.2 Ensure that construction activities are regulated to establish hours of operation in order to prevent and/or mitigate the generation of excessive or adverse noise impacts on surrounding areas.

Policy N 13.4 Require that all construction equipment utilizes noise reduction features (e.g., mufflers and engine shrouds) that are no less effective than those originally installed by the manufacturer.

Riverside County Code of Ordinances

Riverside County regulates noise in Ordinance 847 of Riverside County Code of Ordinances (County of Riverside 2007). Ordinance 847 defines a sensitive receptor as a land use that is sensitive to noise, which includes (but is not limited to) residences, schools, hospitals, churches, rest homes, cemeteries, or public libraries.

Maximum noise levels for stationary noise sources created by a person to the property line of a sensitive receptor (e.g., residences, schools, and hospitals) are to remain below 45 dBA during nighttime hours (10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.) and are not to exceed 55 dBA during daytime hours (7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.).

The Riverside County Code of Ordinances also restricts the creation of special sound sources (e.g., power tools and equipment). The operation of power tools and equipment is restricted from occurring between 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. when the power tools or equipment are audible to the human ear inside an inhabited dwelling, other than a dwelling in which the power tools or equipment are located. In addition, operation of power tools or equipment is restricted from occurring at any other time when they are audible to the human ear at a distance greater than 100 feet from the power tools or equipment.

Noise from private construction is exempt from the provisions of Ordinance 847 if the construction activities occur 0.25 mile or more from an inhabited dwelling or the activities occur between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of June through September, or between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of October through May.

5.13.2.3.2 City of Blythe

City of Blythe General Plan 2025

The Noise Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 (City of Blythe 2007) contains the following policy applicable to the Project focused on protecting citizens from exposure to excessive noise:

S-1 Areas shall be recognized as noise impacted if exposed to existing or projected future noise levels at the property line which exceed 65 dB Ldn (or CNEL).

City of Blythe Code of Ordinances

The City of Blythe's Code of Ordinances (City of Blythe 2022) does not establish any noise standards or restrictions that would be applicable to the Project.

5.13.3 Impact Questions

5.13.3.1 Noise Impact Questions

The significance criteria for assessing the impacts from noise are determined from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For noise, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the Project result in:

- Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?
- Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?
- For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the Project Area to excessive noise levels?

5.13.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional California Environmental Quality Act impact questions.

5.13.4 Impact Analysis

5.13.4.1 Noise Impact Analysis

5.13.4.1.1 Noise Methodology

Potential noise levels from Project construction were evaluated by calculating the average Leq for each phase of construction and comparing them to applicable thresholds. The results of these calculations are presented in Section 5.13.4.2 and detailed further in Appendix I. Existing literature was reviewed to identify potential vibration levels for construction equipment use. Aerial imagery was reviewed to identify potential noise-sensitive receptors.

5.13.4.1.2 Would the project result in generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?[2]

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. No local land use plans, policies, or regulations requiring discretionary approval would apply to the Project because, pursuant to GO 131-D, the CPUC has sole and exclusive jurisdiction over the siting and design of such facilities. As a result, the following local noise policy and ordinance consistency analysis is provided for informational purposes only.

Construction activities would require the temporary use of various types of noise-generating construction equipment; Table 5.13-2 provides a list of the typical construction equipment that would be involved in Project activities. These noise levels were applied to the construction equipment lists included in Appendix B, and composite noise levels for each activity were generated. A detailed list of the assumptions used is provided in Appendix I. The resulting activity-specific noise contours distances are presented in Table 5.13-3.

To the extent feasible, construction activities would generally occur between 6:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. from Monday through Saturday or during the hours established in local ordinances and/or in any ministerial permits obtained. The anticipated work schedule may also vary in winter months when construction activities are generally concluded prior to sunset. However, at limited times, some construction along the Project may be required or completed outside these hours. In these instances, SCE would notify the appropriate local agency

[2] This impact analysis focuses on noise impacts to humans. For a discussion of the potential noise impacts on special-status species, refer to Section 5.4, Biological Resources.

or agencies and inform them of the description of the work, location, and anticipated construction hours as described in applicant proposed measure (APM) NOI-1. The dates and locations of such work have not been determined at this time.

Table 5.13-2 Typical Construction Equipment Noise Levels

Equipment	Noise Level (dBA) at 50 feet
Backhoe	80
Concrete mixer	85
Crane, mobile	85
Dozer	85
Excavator	85
Generator	82
Grader	85
Man lift	85
Loader	80
Roller	85
Scraper	85
Trucks	55 to 84

Source: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 2006.

Table 5.13-3 Construction Activity Noise Generation

Construction Activity	Approximate Contour Distance (feet)					Distance to Nearest Receptor (feet)	Noise at Nearest Receptor (dBA Leq)
	75 dBA Leq	70 dBA Leq	65 dBA Leq	60 dBA Leq	55 dBA Leq		
TSP Foundation	157	280	498	885	1,574	330	68.6
TSP Installation	107	190	337	600	1,067	330	65.2
LWS Installation	93	166	295	524	935	1,000	54.4
Structure Removal (TSP Foundation Only)	149	266	473	840	1,494	330	68.1
Reconductor (Clipping/Unclipping)	53	94	167	297	529	330	59.1
Line Sleeves	–*	64	114	202	360	330	55.8
Guard Site Installation	79	140	249	443	787	900	53.8
Guard Site Removal	59	105	187	333	591	900	51.4
Pulling	134	238	423	753	1,339	290	68.3
Splicing	–*	64	114	202	360	290	56.9
SWPPP Implementation	–*	71	126	224	399	290	57.8

*Note: "--" indicates that the average noise level of the construction operation is lower than the associated noise contour value.

Riverside County has not established a numerical threshold for noise generated from private construction activities if the construction activities occur 0.25 mile or more from an inhabited dwelling or the activities occur between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of June through September, or between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of October through May. As described previously, construction would generally occur within the allowable hours within Riverside County. SCE would also implement APM NOI-1. This measure would require that SCE adhere to the applicable construction time restrictions identified by each jurisdiction or notify the appropriate jurisdiction if work would occur outside the specified time frames. Should construction activities occur within Riverside County and within 0.25 mile of an occupied residence, they would not begin before the allowable times without notifying Riverside County prior to the work and therefore would not conflict with Riverside County noise regulations.

The City of Blythe has not established any applicable thresholds or restrictions on noise related to construction. In the absence of a numerical threshold, a temporary increase in existing ambient conditions by 10 dBA would be considered potentially significant. The primary source of noise in the City of Blythe is I-10. Noise measurements within 300 feet of I-10 range from 65 dBA Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL)[3] to levels exceeding 82 dBA CNEL (City of Blythe 2007). As shown in Table 5.13-3, the anticipated noise levels at the nearest noise-sensitive receptors would be below an Leq of 69 dBA; therefore, construction activities within Blythe would not temporarily increase existing typical ambient noise levels by more than 10 dBA.

With the implementation of APM NOI-1, SCE would confine construction activities to the hours established by Riverside County. Should activities be required outside of these hours, SCE would notify the appropriate local agencies of the planned work activities. With these restrictions in place, construction activities would not conflict with or exceed applicable standards and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.13.4.1.3 Would the project result in generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less than Significant Impact. There are no standards related to construction-generated groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels in Riverside County or the City of Blythe.

Construction activities associated with the Project would not expose persons to or generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels because they would be below applicable thresholds that are considered excessive. Excavators, augers, dump trucks, backhoes, and other general construction equipment would generate infrequent and temporary groundborne vibration during construction activities. The threshold of vibration perception for most humans is around 65 VdB, levels below 80 VdB would be acceptable at residences and other buildings where people normally sleep and levels below 83 VdB would be acceptable for institutional land uses with primarily daytime use (FTA 2018).

For human annoyance, there is some relationship between the number of events and the degree of annoyance caused by the vibration. More frequent vibration events, or events that last longer, would be more annoying to building occupants. To account for this effect, the FTA's guidance manual (FTA 2018) includes higher VdB impact thresholds for infrequent events, noting that vibration of 80 VdB is "acceptable

[3] The Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) is the 24-hour average noise level with a +5 dBA penalty for noise occurring from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and a +10 dBA penalty for noise occurring from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. (Caltrans 2013).

only if there are an infrequent number of events per day." Based on the approach set forth in the FTA guidelines, and because activities at any single construction work area would be infrequent and temporary, this analysis adopts a threshold of significance of 83 VdB for groundborne vibration impacts for work in Riverside County and the City of Blythe, neither of which have established a threshold of significance.

Vibration impacts associated with construction would primarily affect those receptors located closest to pole installation sites, and those located near conductor installation locations. Vibration calculations based on the FTA guidelines are provided in Table 5.13-4.

Table 5.13-4 Vibration Source Levels for Typical Construction Equipment

Equipment	Vibration Level at 25 feet (VdB)
Large bulldozer	87
Caisson drilling	87
Loaded trucks	86
Jackhammer	79
Small bulldozer	58

Source: FTA 2018.

Construction activities within unincorporated Riverside County and the City of Blythe would occur as near as approximately 330 feet to an occupied residence situated near SCE's existing Eagle Mountain Substation. Screening-level calculations indicate that vibration levels associated with these activities would attenuate to a level of less than 54 VdB at the nearest potentially inhabitable structure given the intervening distance.[4] This analysis shows that vibration levels at all identified sensitive receptors in Riverside County and the City of Blythe would be below the threshold of 83 VdB.

The Transportation and Construction Vibration Guidance Manual (Caltrans 2013) prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) correlates the use of construction equipment with vibration amplitudes as a function of distance. As identified in Table 5.13-1, buildings that are extremely susceptible to vibration damage could be affected if the peak particle velocity at the building exceeds 0.12 inches per second. Throughout the Project, the nearest noise-sensitive receptor to construction activities would be residences located approximately 330 feet from construction activities near Eagle Mountain Substation. At this distance, a vibratory roller would generate vibration levels of approximately 0.015 inch per second, which is below the 0.12 inch-per-second threshold from the FTA. Because all construction vibration levels would be below applicable thresholds, impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

[4] The following equation estimates the vibration level Lv at any distance (D): Lv(D) = Lv(25 feet) – 30Log(D/25), where: Lv(D) = vibration level at a given distance D (in feet). For a distance of 330 feet, Lv(D) = 87 – 30Log(330/25) = 87 – 33.6 = 53.4 VdB.

5.13.4.1.4 For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No Impact. Airports within 2 miles of the Project include Blythe Airport, Desert Center Airport, and the Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant Airstrip (privately owned by MWD). Portions of the Project are located within the mapped airport influence areas for Blythe Airport and Desert Center Airport as designated in the Riverside County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) (Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission 2004). The Project is not located within the 55 dBA CNEL noise contour for Blythe Airport and Desert Center Airport (Riverside County Airport Land Use Commission 2004). As a result, Project construction workers would not be exposed to excessive noise from aircraft operations. Therefore, the Project would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the Project Area. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.13.4.2 Noise Levels

5.13.4.2.1 Noise Levels for Each Piece of Equipment

Table 5.13-5 identifies each phase of construction, the equipment used in each construction phase, and the length of each phase at any single location.

5.13.4.2.2 Estimated Cumulative Equipment Noise Levels

Estimated cumulative equipment noise levels are presented in Table 5.13-5.

5.13.4.2.3 Phases of Operation

The EM-B circuit is currently operated by SCE. The Project would not change the operating voltage of the line and in some locations the conductors would be located further from the ground than current conditions. As a result, the corona associated with the operation of the lines would remain similar following the completion of construction.

5.13.4.2.4 Manufacturer's Specifications for Equipment

The specific models of construction equipment to be used during construction and operation of the Project are not known at this time; therefore, the manufacturer's specifications for such equipment cannot be provided. Equipment would be operated using manufacturer-installed noise-control devices. If requested by the CPUC, SCE would provide the manufacturer's specifications for specific models of construction equipment at the time such construction equipment is identified.

5.13.4.2.5 Approaches to Reduce Impacts from Noise

SCE has designed and incorporated APM NOI-1 into the Project to minimize potential impacts to noise-sensitive receptors.

Table 5.13-5 Construction Noise Levels

Equipment Required (Quantity)	Equipment Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Duration at Each Location (Days)	Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor	Noise Level at Nearest Receptor (Leq dBA)	Exceeds Noise Standard at Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor?	Distance to Not Exceed Standard (Feet)
TSP Foundation							
LoDrill (1)	78.0	85.0	7 to 14	Residence approximately 330 feet from TSP installation work near Eagle Mountain Substation	68.6	No	Not Applicable (N/A)
Crane (1)	74.8						
Flatbed Truck (1)	73.0						
Concrete Truck (3)	81.8						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Ready Mix Truck (3)	75.8						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
TSP Installation							
Flatbed Truck (1)	73.0	81.6	1 to 2	Residence approximately 330 feet from TSP installation work near Eagle Mountain Substation	65.2	No	N/A
Crane (1)	77.0						
Bucket or Boom Truck (1)	78.0						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
LWS Installation							
Line Truck (1)	68.0	80.4	1 to 2	None within 1,000 feet	N/A	N/A	N/A
Boom Truck (1)	74.8						
Bucket Truck (1)	78.0						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Structure Removal (TSP Foundation Only)							
Crane (1)	71.8	84.5	7 to 10	Residence approximately 330 feet east of	68.1	No	N/A
Flatbed Truck (1)	74.8						
Dump Truck (1)	80.0						

Equipment Required (Quantity)	Equipment Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Duration at Each Location (Days)	Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor	Noise Level at Nearest Receptor (Leq dBA)	Exceeds Noise Standard at Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor?	Distance to Not Exceed Standard (Feet)
Backhoe with Breaker (1)	81.0			TSP removal work near Eagle Mountain Substation			
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Reconductor (Clipping/Unclipping)							
Bucket Truck (1)	74.0	75.5	1 to 2	Residence approximately 330 feet east of existing/ structures near Eagle Mountain Substation	59.1	No	N/A
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Line Sleeves							
Bucket Truck (1)	68.0	72.1	1 to 2	Residence approximately 330 feet east of existing/ structures near Eagle Mountain Substation	55.8	No	N/A
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Guard Site Installation							
Line Truck with Auger (1)	75.8	78.9	1	Residence approximately 900 feet northwest of Guard Site (GS) 34.	53.8	No	N/A
Boom Truck (1)	74.8						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Guard Site Removal							
Line Truck with Auger (1)	72.8	76.5	1	Residence approximately	51.4	No	N/A
Boom Truck (1)	71.8						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						

Equipment Required (Quantity)	Equipment Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Duration at Each Location (Days)	Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor	Noise Level at Nearest Receptor (Leq dBA)	Exceeds Noise Standard at Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor?	Distance to Not Exceed Standard (Feet)
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0			900 feet northwest of GS 34.			
Pulling							
V-Groove (1)	78.0	83.6	7 to 14	Residence approximately 290 feet east of Wire Setup Site (WS) 2 near Eagle Mountain Substation	68.3	No	N/A
Crane (1)	73.1						
Tensioner (1)	78.0						
Forklift (1)	69.0						
Boom Truck (2)	70.1						
Sagging Cat (1)	75.0						
Flatbed Truck (1)	73.0						
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Splicing							
Bucket Truck (1)	68.0	72.1	2 to 4	Residence approximately 290 feet east of WS 2 near Eagle Mountain Substation	56.9	No	N/A
Haul Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
SWPPP Implementation							
Water Truck (2)	73.0	73.0	1 to 2	Residence approximately 290 feet east of WS 2 near Eagle Mountain Substation	57.8	No	N/A
Pickup Truck (2)	44.0						

Equipment Required (Quantity)	Equipment Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Noise Level (Leq at 50 feet dBA)	Phase Duration at Each Location (Days)	Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor	Noise Level at Nearest Receptor (Leq dBA)	Exceeds Noise Standard at Nearest Noise-Sensitive Receptor?	Distance to Not Exceed Standard (Feet)
Access Road Improvement							
Motor Grader (1)	71.0	74.3	1	Residences approximately 290 feet east of WS 2 near Eagle Mountain Substation	59.0	No	N/A
Water Truck (1)	70.0						
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0						
Skid Steer (1)	66.0						
Laydown Yards							
Pickup Truck (1)	41.0	73.0	192	Park approximately 330 feet west of Blythe Laydown Yard	56.6	No	N/A
Forklift (1)	72.0						
Generator (1)	66.0						

Note: Project-related construction activities are exempt from all noise standards in Riverside County when conducted within appropriate time frames; therefore, work in these jurisdictions that is limited to the allowable construction time frames would not be considered in excess of established standards. In accordance with APM NOI-1, SCE would provide notification as appropriate for work outside of the established time frames. Within the City of Blythe, any temporary noise levels in excess of 75 dBA at the nearest receptor would be considered significant.

5.13.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for the Noise resource area.

5.13.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.13.5.1.1 Noise APMs

The following APM would be implemented to reduce noise impacts associated with the Project:

- **NOI-1: Noise Control.** SCE shall employ the following noise-control techniques, at a minimum, to reduce construction noise exposure at noise-sensitive receptors during construction:
  - Construction activities shall be confined to daytime, weekday and weekend hours established by Section 9.52.020(h) of the Riverside County Code of Ordinances, which restricts temporary construction noise to between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of June through September and 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. during the months of October through May. In the event construction is required beyond those hours, SCE will notify the appropriate local agency or agencies regarding the description of the work, location, and anticipated construction hours.
  - Construction equipment shall use noise reduction features (e.g., mufflers and engine shrouds) that are no less effective than those originally installed by the manufacturer.
  - Stationary noise sources (e.g., generators, pumps) and staging areas shall be shielded by an enclosure, temporary sound walls, acoustic blankets, or other barrier where noise levels are above 80 dBA at sensitive receiver locations. Heights and specifications of noise barriers will be designed to reduce construction noise to below 80 dBA (Federal Transit Administration 2018).
  - Construction traffic and helicopter flight shall be routed away from residences and schools.
  - Unnecessary construction vehicle use and idling time shall be minimized. If a vehicle is not required for use immediately or continuously for construction activities, its engine shall be shut off.

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5.14 Population and Housing

This section describes the population and housing in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to population and housing from construction and operation of the Project.

5.14.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe. More specifically, the Project is located in the following jurisdictions:

- Unincorporated Riverside County
- City of Blythe
- Desert Center Census-designated place (CDP)
- Mesa Verde CDP

Figure 5.14-1 illustrates the locations of these areas with respect to the Project. Population and housing data for these areas have been obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and California Department of Finance and are presented in the following subsections.

5.14.1.1 Population Estimates

Historical and projected future population data (where available) are presented in Table 5.14-1. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 2010 to 2020, the Riverside County population grew by approximately 15.6 percent, the City of Blythe population decreased by approximately 6.7 percent, the Desert Center CDP population grew by approximately 51.2 percent, and the Mesa Verde CDP population decreased by approximately 19.9 percent. The California Department of Finance projects that, by 2030, the Riverside County population will increase by approximately 11.3 percent. No population projections are available for the City of Blythe, Desert Center CDP, or Mesa Verde CDP.

5.14.1.2 Housing Estimates

Housing data and vacancy rates for the Project Area are presented in Table 5.14-2. Vacancy rates in the Project Area have declined in the past 10 years, except for in the Mesa Verde CDP where vacancy rates have increased. The vacancy rates in the Project Area are greater than the federal standard vacancy rate of 5 percent. As a result, housing is not considered limited in the Project Area. Temporary housing and

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

accommodations are available in the City of Blythe and Desert City CDP and can support a relatively minor temporary influx of construction workers.

5.14.1.3 Approved Housing Development

There are currently no approved or proposed housing development projects within 1 mile of the Project.

5.14.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.14.2.1 Federal

There are no federal regulations related to population and housing that are relevant to the Project. However, federal authorizations would be required because a portion of the land within the Project Area is under the jurisdiction of the BLM.

5.14.2.2 State

There are no State regulations related to population and housing that are relevant to the Project.

5.14.2.3 Local

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order 131-D, Section XIV.B:

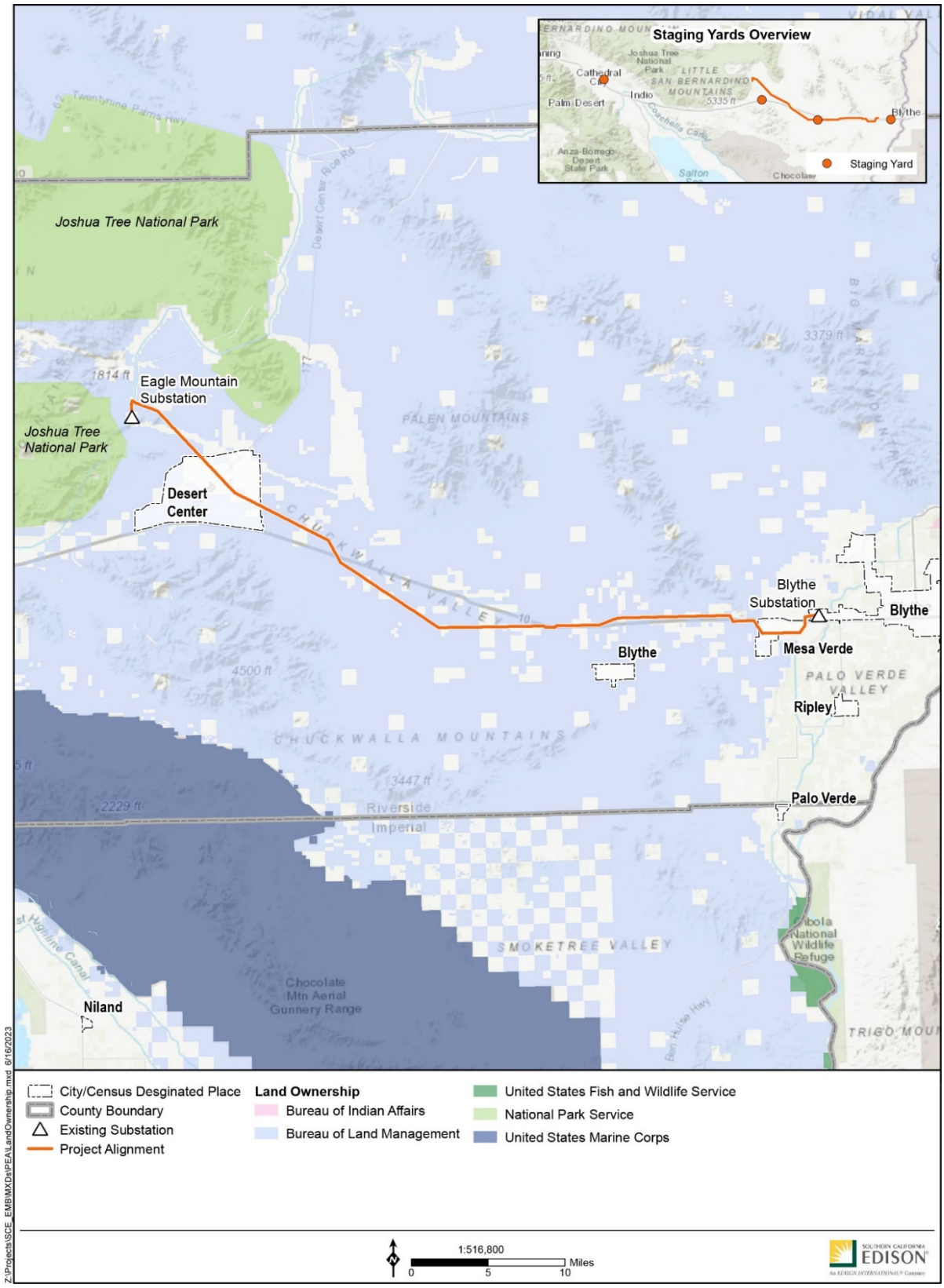
> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.14.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

The 2021-2029 Housing Element of the County of Riverside General Plan contains goals, policies, and actions that guide housing development to meet the needs of residents in unincorporated Riverside County. The Housing Element provides background on the existing community profile and evaluates current housing resources, potential development opportunities, and housing constraints (County of Riverside 2021). This element of the County of Riverside General Plan does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

Figure 5.14-1 Cities and Census Designated Places



5.14.2.3.2 City of Blythe General Plan

The Housing Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains an analysis of the City's local housing needs by examining household characteristics, demographic factors, housing constraints, and more. The Housing Element identifies available housing sites and proposes goals, policies, and programs to meet the housing needs of the City (City of Blythe 2004). This element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

Table 5.14-1 Historical and Projected Population Data in the Project Area[1]

Year	Riverside County[2]	City of Blythe	Desert Center	Mesa Verde
2000	1,545,387	11,825	Information Not Available (INA)	INA
2010	2,109,464	21,164	188	940
2020	2,437,864	19,747	285	753
2030	2,728,068	INA	INA	INA
2040	2,933,038	INA	INA	INA

Source: California Department of Finance, U.S. Census Bureau.

Notes:

[1] The California Department of Finance provides projected population data for Riverside County but not the City of Blythe, Desert Center CDP, or Mesa Verde CDP. U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates were used for 2010 and 2020 population data for Riverside County, City of Blythe, Desert Center CDP, and Mesa Verde CDP. Decennial Census estimates were used for 2000 population data for Riverside County and City of Blythe. The U.S. Census Bureau does not have population data for the year 2000 for the Desert Center CDP or Mesa Verde CDP.

[2] The historical and projected population data for Riverside County is inclusive of all incorporated and unincorporated areas. As such, population data for City of Blythe, Desert Center CDP, and Mesa Verde CDP are included within the Riverside County population, as well as separately in their own column.

Table 5.14-2 Housing Data in the Project Area

Year	Riverside County[1]	City of Blythe	Desert Center	Mesa Verde
2010				
Total Units	783,116	5,686	257	305
Vacant Units	116,210	1,322	179	21
Vacancy Rate	14.8%	23.3%	69.6%	6.9%
2020				
Total Units	845,066	5,804	223	290
Vacant Units	108,653	1,045	107	67
Vacancy Rate	12.9%	18%	47.9%	23.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Notes:

[1] Housing data for Riverside County is inclusive of all incorporated and unincorporated areas. As such, population data for City of Blythe, Desert Center CDP, and Mesa Verde CDP are included within the Riverside County values, as well as separately in their own column.

5.14.3 Impact Questions

5.14.3.1 Population and Housing Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For population and housing, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Induce substantial unplanned population growth in the area, either directly (e.g., by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (e.g., through the extension of new roads or other infrastructure)?
- Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

5.14.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.14.4 Impact Analysis

5.14.4.1 Population and Housing Impact Analysis

5.14.4.1.1 Population and Housing Methodology

Impacts to population and housing within the Project Area are determined using data from the U.S. Census Bureau in combination with housing plans available from the Riverside County General Plan and City of Blythe General Plan.

5.14.4.1.2 Would the Project induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

No Impact. The Project involves work on existing electrical infrastructure as part of Southern California Edison's (SCE's) TLRR Program. The purpose of the Project is to ensure circuits meet the requirements of CPUC G.O. 95. The Project would not directly induce population growth because the Project does not include the construction of any new homes or businesses, and it would not indirectly induce population growth by extending infrastructure into previously unserved areas or by providing additional electrical capacity. New roads would not be constructed; existing roads would not be extended; and other infrastructure would not be expanded that would directly or indirectly induce population growth.

The Project would require approximately 8 months of active construction within an up to 18-month window using up to 80 construction personnel during construction. Given the minimal number of construction personnel required for the Project and the temporary and short-term nature of construction activities, construction personnel would likely be sourced from the regional area and would not permanently relocate from other counties. Therefore, the Project would not directly or indirectly induce substantial unplanned population growth in the vicinity of the Project Area. Therefore, no impact would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operation and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.14.4.1.3 Would the Project displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact. Work associated with the Project would be located within the existing SCE ROW for the Project Alignment and at SCE laydown yards that do not currently include residential structures. Therefore, no existing people or housing would be displaced, and construction of replacement housing would not be required. No impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.14.4.2 Impacts to Housing

As described previously, the Project would be constructed within existing ROWs. These ROWs do not contain existing homes. In addition, any temporary construction areas outside of these ROWs would also be located in areas that do not contain existing housing. As a result, no homes would be demolished or relocated to construct the Project. Following construction, these ROWs would preclude the construction of future housing. Thus, no housing impacts would occur as a result of the Project, and no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.14.4.3 Workforce Impacts

As described previously, SCE expects that up to 80 construction personnel per day would be required to construct the Project. The number of construction personnel who may work on the Project and who currently reside within the impact area is unknown and unknowable, as are the numbers of construction personnel who would temporarily relocate to the Project Area.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.14.4.4 Population Growth Inducing

Information regarding the Project's growth-inducing impacts is provided in Section 7.2, Growth-Inducing Impacts.

5.14.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for Population and Housing.

5.14.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

No impacts to population or housing would occur as a result of the Project. As such, there are no applicant proposed measures.

5.15 Public Services

This section describes the public services in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to public services from construction and operation of the Project.

Information in this section is organized by the public service type and the providers of those services in each jurisdiction within the Project Area. Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- Local agency planning documents
- County and city police and fire department websites
- School district websites
- Aerial imagery

5.15.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe. This section describes the existing public services in the Project Area. The Riverside County Fire Department Station Number 45 – Blythe Air Base is located approximately 1 mile from the southern end of the Project Alignment. No other public services facilities are located within 1 mile of the Project.

5.15.1.1 Service Providers

5.15.1.1.1 Police

Law enforcement in the vicinity of the Project is provided by a number of different agencies. The Project runs along Interstate 10, where the California Highway Patrol (CHP) provides law enforcement services. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services for all other portions of the Project Alignment within unincorporate Riverside County. A small portion of the Project also traverses the City of Blythe, where the Blythe Police Department provides law enforcement services. No law enforcement stations are located within 1 mile of the Project.

5.15.1.1.2 Fire Protection

Multiple jurisdictions provide fire protection within the vicinity of the Project. Fire services near the Project Area are provided by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Riverside

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

County Fire Department (RCFD), and the City of Blythe Fire Department (CBFD). CAL FIRE partners with the following fire stations, which are also the nearest fire stations to the Project Alignment:

- County of Riverside/CAL FIRE Station 43 (Blythe): 140 West Barnard Street, Blythe, California 92225
- County of Riverside/CAL FIRE Station 45 (Blythe Air Base): 17280 West Hobsonway, Blythe, California 92225
- County of Riverside/CAL FIRE Station 49 (Lake Tamarisk): 43880 Lake Tamarisk, Desert Center, California 92239

The Federal Interagency Communications Center (FICC) consolidates and provides dispatching services for the BLM California Desert District and Joshua Tree National Park, among other areas. These member agencies provide dispatching services 24 hours per day, 365 days per year for fire, law enforcement, recreation, resources, and administrative capacities. Fire resources served by the FICC include 35 fire stations, seven active fire lookouts, 20 fire prevention units, 70 forest protection officers, six hand crews, one fuels crew, and equipment (e.g., helicopters, air tankers, and patrol planes) (FICC 2021).

5.15.1.1.3 Schools

The Project crosses the Desert Center Unified and Palo Verde Unified school districts. The nearest school to the Project Alignment is Eagle Mountain Elementary in the Desert Center Unified School District, located approximately 1.5 miles northwest of the western terminus of the Project Alignment. There are three elementary schools and one high school within the Palo Verde Unified School District, all located between 4 and 5 miles east of the eastern terminus of the Project Alignment, within the City of Blythe. There are no schools located within 1 mile of the Project Alignment.

5.15.1.1.4 Parks

Joshua Tree National Park is located approximately 1 mile west of the western terminus of the Project Alignment, in Desert Center. One California Department of Fish and Wildlife ecological reserve, Palo Verde Ecological Reserve, is located approximately 2.75 miles northeast of the eastern terminus of the Project Alignment. There are several local public parks located in the City of Blythe, which are located approximately 4 miles east of the eastern terminus of the Project Alignment.

5.15.1.1.5 Hospitals

Due to the remote location of the Project, no hospitals or other health care facilities are located within 1 mile of the Project. The closest major hospital to the Project is Desert View Medical Center, located approximately 4.5 miles east of the eastern terminus of the Project Alignment, within the City of Blythe.

5.15.1.1.6 Libraries

There are no public or private libraries within 1 mile of the Project. The closest public library—the Lake Tamarisk Library—is located approximately 1.8 miles southwest of the western end of the Project Alignment, in Desert Center.

5.15.1.2 Documented Performance Objectives and Data

In 2021, the RCFD, in cooperation with CAL FIRE, responded to 183,893 incidents in Riverside County, including fires, medical emergencies, false alarms, hazmat, and other incidents (CAL FIRE 2021). The

Blythe Fire Station and the Blythe Air Base Fire Station have two firefighters and one certified paramedic. The Lake Tamarisk Fire Station has two firefighters and two certified paramedics (County of Riverside 2019). All stations are dispatched by the RCFD Emergency Command Center. Emergency response times for police and emergency health care services, including the CHP and RCFD, have not been published.

5.15.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.15.2.1 Federal

A review of the Code of Federal Regulations and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education websites revealed that there are no federal regulations or policies related to public services that are relevant to the Project. However, federal authorizations would be required because the Project would traverse land under the jurisdiction of the BLM.

5.15.2.2 State

5.15.2.2.1 California Public Utilities Commission, General Order 95, Section 35

Section 35 of California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) General Order (GO) 95 covers all aspects of design, construction, and operation and maintenance (O&M) of electrical power lines, as well as fire safety hazards. Section 5.20, Wildfire contains a more detailed discussion of CPUC requirements regarding fire safety and a discussion of SCE's Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

5.15.2.2.2 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 1250 to 1258

Title 14, Sections 1250 to 1258 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) provide specific clearance standards to be maintained by utility companies between electric power lines and all vegetation.

5.15.2.2.3 California Fire Code

24 CCR Part 9 is known as the California Fire Code. This code provides provisions for planning, precautions, and preparations for fire safety and fire protection during various activities, including, but not limited to, construction and demolition, as well as requirements for buildings and guidelines for working with flammable chemicals and materials. As such, the California Fire Code was reviewed for this analysis.

5.15.2.2.4 California Public Resources Code Sections 4292 and 4293

California Public Resources Code (PRC) section 4292 states:

> "[A]ny person that owns, controls, operates, or maintains any electrical transmission or distribution line…shall, during such times and in such areas as are determined to be necessary by the director or the agency, has primary responsibility for fire protection of such areas, maintain around and adjacent to any pole or tower which supports a switch, fuse, transformer, lightening arrester, line junction, or dead end or corner pole, a firebreak which consists of a clearing of not less than 10 feet in each direction from the outer circumference of such a pole or tower."

PRC section 4293 states:

> "[A]ny person that owns, controls, operates, or maintains any electrical transmission or distribution line upon any mountainous land, or in forest-covered land, or grass-covered land shall, during such times and in such areas as are determined to be necessary by the director or the agency which has primary responsibility for the fire protection of such area, maintain a clearance of the respective distances which are specified in this section in all directions between all vegetation and all conductors which are carrying electric current:
>
> (a) For any line which is operating at 2,400 or more volts, but less than 72,000 volts, 4 feet
>
> (b) For any line which is operating at 72,000 or more volts, but less than 110,000 volts, 6 feet
>
> (c) For any line which is operating at 110,000 or more volts, 10 feet
>
> In every case, such distance shall be sufficiently great to furnish the required clearance at any position of the wire, or conductor when the adjacent air temperature is 120 degrees Fahrenheit, or less. Dead trees, old decadent or rotten trees, trees weakened by decay or disease and trees or portions thereof that are leaning toward the line which may contact the line from the side or may fall on the line shall be felled, cut, or trimmed so as to remove such hazard."

5.15.2.2.5 Red Flag Fire Prevention Program

Like PRC sections 4292 and 4293, red-flag warnings and fire-weather watches aim to prevent fire events and reduce the potential for substantial damage. The National Weather Service issues the red-flag warnings and fire-weather watches. When extreme fire weather or behavior is present or predicted in an area, a red-flag warning or fire-weather watch may be issued to advise local fire agencies that these conditions are present.

5.15.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC GO 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.15.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

County of Riverside General Plan: Safety Element

The Safety Element of the County of Riverside General Plan identifies the natural and human-caused hazards that affect existing and future development and provides guidelines for protecting residents,

employees, visitors, or other community members from injury and death. The Safety Element includes policies that encourage availability of adequate emergency services and facilities to protect the public from the following hazards: seismic and geologic hazards; flood and inundation hazards; fire hazards; hazardous waste and materials; disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; and additional climate change-related hazards. As stated in the Safety Element Vision Statements (County of Riverside 2021):

- "We acknowledge security of person and property as one of the most basic community needs and commit to designing our communities so that vulnerability to natural and human made hazards, as well as criminal activities, is anticipated and kept to a minimum."
- "Considerable protection from natural hazards such as earthquakes, fire, flooding, slope failure, and other hazardous conditions is now built into the pattern of development authorized by the General Plan."

5.15.2.3.2 City of Blythe General Plan

The Safety Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains policies and programs that seek to reduce the potential for the loss of life, injuries, and property damage associated with natural and human-caused hazards, such as flooding, geologic hazards, wildland and urban fire, crime, and hazardous materials. The Safety Element proposes implementation measures that promote accessibility to emergency services and facilities as stated in the following policies (City of Blythe 2007):

Policy 8 Cooperate with the City of Blythe Fire Department, Riverside County Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry in periodically evaluating services and service criteria to ensure that the City continues to receive adequate fire protection and prevention services.

Policy 12 Continue to support the Fire Department's coordination with surrounding departments to provide fire protection services.

5.15.3 Impact Questions

5.15.3.1 Public Services Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For public services, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities—the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts—in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:
  - Fire protection,
  - Police protection,
  - Schools,
  - Parks, or
  - Other public facilities?

5.15.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.15.4 Impact Analysis

5.15.4.1 Public Services Impact Analysis

5.15.4.1.1 Public Services Methodology

Impacts to public services in the vicinity of the Project are determined using data from local emergency services providers, schools, and health care facilities, in combination with safety plans available from the County of Riverside General Plan and City of Blythe General Plan.

5.15.4.1.2 Would the Project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities, or the need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits and would not change the physical environment in a way that would require additional fire protection services. The Project does not include provision of new or physically altered fire protection facilities. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for fire protection services nor require additional fire protection services in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other fire protection performance objectives in the region. As a result, no impact would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.1.3 Would the Project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered police protection facilities, or the need for new or physically altered police protection facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits and would not change the physical environment in a way that would require additional police protection services. Upon completion of the Project, the ROW would be similar to existing conditions; therefore, construction of the Project would not induce criminal activity in the surrounding area. The Project would not include provisioning of new or physically altered police protection facilities. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for police protection services nor require additional police protection services in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other police protection performance objectives in the region. Therefore, no impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.1.4 Would the Project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered schools, or the need for new or physically altered schools, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. The Project would not include the provisioning of new or physically altered schools. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for schools or require additional schools in order to maintain acceptable ratios or other school performance objectives in the region. As a result, no impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.1.5 Would the Project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered parks, or the need for new or physically altered parks, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. The Project does not include the provisioning of new or physically altered parks. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for parks or require additional parks in order to maintain acceptable ratios or other park performance objectives in the region. Therefore, no impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.1.6 Would the Project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of other new or physically altered public facilities, or the need for other new or physically altered public facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives?

No Impact. The would Project involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. The Project does not include the provisioning of other new or physically altered public facilities, such as libraries. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for other public facilities, such as libraries, or require other additional public facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other public facility performance objectives in the region. Therefore, no impacts would occur, and no mitigation would be required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.2 Emergency Response Times

No Impact. As described further in Section 5.17, Transportation, the Project would not typically impede ingress and egress of emergency vehicles; any temporary lane or road closures associated with work over or adjacent to public roadways would be coordinated with local jurisdictions through the applicable encroachment permit processes and applicant proposed measure (APM) TRA-1. In addition, all traffic control measures required by these authorizations would be implemented. Therefore, the Project would not impact emergency providers' ability to maintain acceptable emergency response times during construction and no impact would occur. Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.15.4.3 Displaced Population

As presented in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would neither create permanent employment nor displace people. Therefore, the provision of new public services to serve displaced populations or new employees would not be required.

5.15.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No CPUC Draft Environmental Measures have been identified for public services.

5.15.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.15.5.1.1 Public Services APMs

No APMs specific to public services have been developed to reduce an impact that has been identified in Section 5.15.4.1.

5.15.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

The following APM relevant to a different impact category would also reduce public service impacts associated with the Project:

- **TRA-1: Construction Traffic Management Plan.** Southern California Edison shall prepare and implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan subject to approval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the County of Riverside, and the City of Blythe. The approved Traffic Management Plan and documentation of agency approvals shall be submitted to CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities. The plan shall:
  - Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;
  - Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
  - Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging area and take only necessary Project vehicles to the work sites;
  - Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the

construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways will be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;

- Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area. Emergency service providers will be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads will remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
- Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) will be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.
- Construction activities completed within public street rights-of-way will require the use of a traffic control service, and all lane closures will be conducted in accordance with applicable requirements. These traffic control measures will be consistent with those published in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as written and amended by the California Department of Transportation for the State of California and using standard templates from the California Temporary Traffic Control Handbook (California Inter-Utility Coordinating Committee 2018) as applicable.

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5.16 Recreation

This section describes the recreation resources in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to recreation that could result from construction and operation of the Project.

Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- Federal, State, and local agency planning documents
- Aerial imagery

5.16.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe. The following subsections describe the existing recreation resources in the Project Area.

5.16.1.1 Recreational Setting

The Project Alignment crosses the City of Blythe and unincorporated areas of Riverside County, including Desert Center and Mesa Verde. Parks and recreation facilities in proximity to the Project Alignment are listed in Table 5.16-1, and shown on Figure 5.16-1. These facilities are discussed by jurisdiction in the following subsections.

5.16.1.1.1 Federal Lands

Bureau of Land Management

Federal lands used for recreation in the vicinity of the Project consist of lands administered by the BLM Palm Springs-South Coast field office. In addition, the entire Project Alignment is within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA), which is managed by the California Desert District of the BLM. Recreational activities in the California Desert District include hiking, hunting, camping, land sailing, sightseeing, and the use of recreational off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are special management areas designated by the BLM to protect significant historical, cultural, and scenic values, or fish and wildlife or other natural resources. As shown in Figure 5.16-1, the Project is located adjacent to the Chuckwalla ACEC for approximately 18.4 miles, within the Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC for approximately 1.7 miles, and within the Palen-Ford Playa Dunes ACEC for approximately 5.7 miles (see Table 5.16-1 for more details). The Chuckwalla

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

ACEC and Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC provides dispersed recreational activities. The Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC and Palen Ford ACEC allow OHV use in designated routes.

Table 5.16-1 Parks and Recreational Facilities within 1 Mile of the Project

Park	Jurisdiction	Proximity to the Project Alignment	Nearest Project Component
Bureau of Land Management	Bureau of Land Management	Within for approximately 34.5 miles and adjacent for approximately 42.8 miles	Eagle Mountain Substation and Project Alignment
Chuckwalla Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)[1]	Bureau of Land Management	Within for approximately 4.8 miles and adjacent for approximately 12.3 miles	Central portion of the Project Alignment
Chuckwalla Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)[2]	Bureau of Land Management	Adjacent for approximately 18.4 miles	Central portion of the Project Alignment
Joshua Tree National Park	U.S. National Park Service	Approximately 1 mile	Eagle Mountain Substation
Mule-McCoy Linkage ACEC	Bureau of Land Management	Within for approximately 1.7 miles and adjacent for approximately 2.4 miles	Eastern portion of the Project Alignment
Palen-Ford Playa Dunes ACEC	Bureau of Land Management	Within for approximately 5.7 miles and adjacent for approximately 5.4 miles	Central portion of the Project Alignment

Source: Data Basin 2015

[1] The Chuckwalla Mountains Wilderness Recreation Management Zone (RMZ) and Corn Springs RMZ are within the Chuckwalla SRMA. A portion of the Palen Ford ACEC is included in the Chuckwalla SRMA.

[2] The Chuckwalla SRMA is located within the Chuckwalla ACEC.

Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) are high-priority areas for outdoor recreation opportunities defined in the BLM Land Use Planning Handbook. SRMAs help the BLM direct recreation program prioritize areas with high resource values, high levels of public concern, or significant amounts of recreational activity. As shown in Figure 5.16-1, the Project is located within the Chuckwalla SRMA for approximately 4.8 miles and within 1 mile of the Chuckwalla SRMA for approximately 12.3 miles.

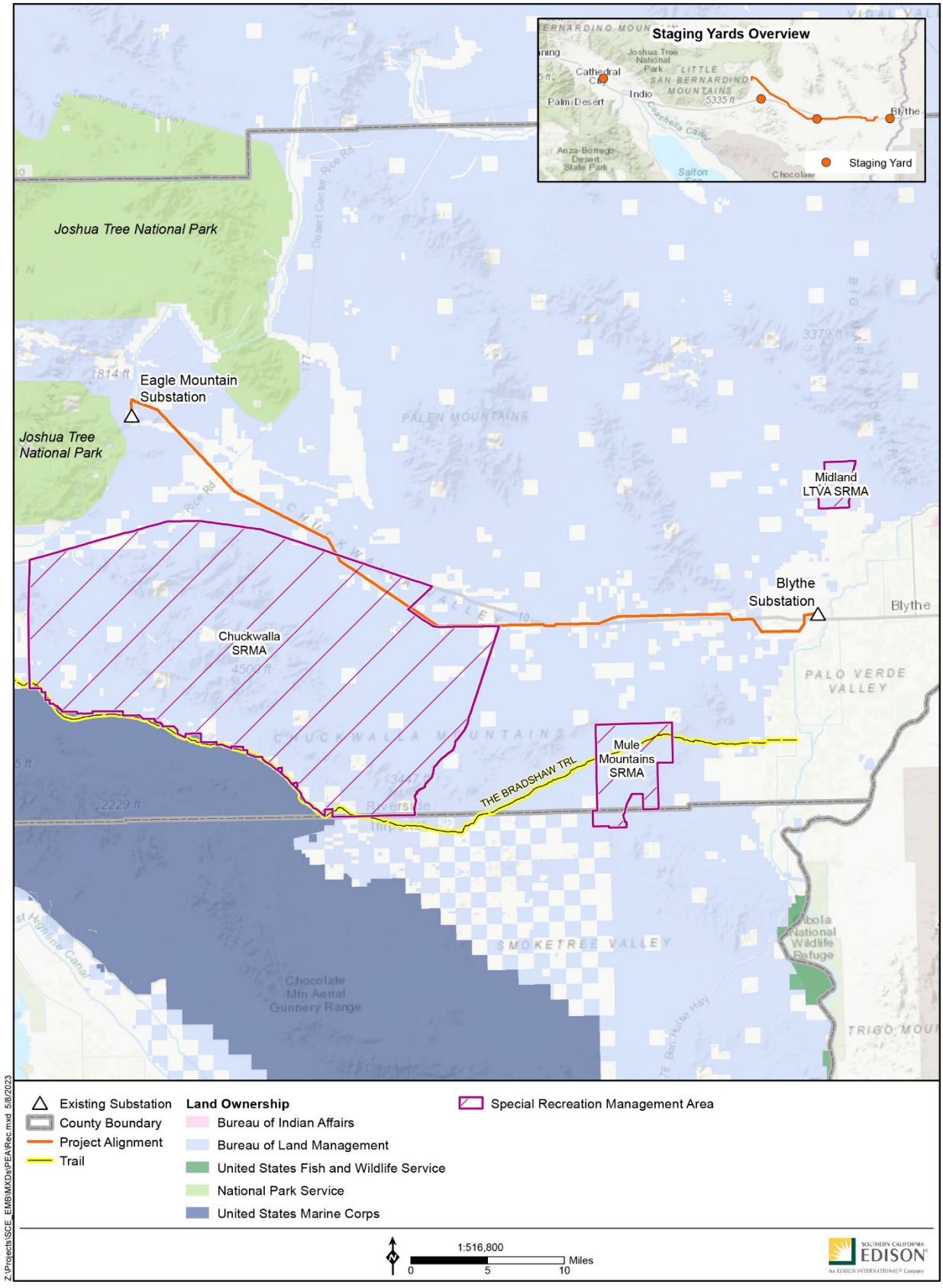
U.S. National Park Service

Federal lands used for recreation in the vicinity of the Project consist of lands administered by the U.S. National Park Service. The western end of the Project Alignment and Eagle Mountain Substation are located approximately 1 mile from the nearest boundary of Joshua Tree National Park. Recreational activities in Joshua Tree National Park include hiking, camping, sightseeing, and rock climbing.

5.16.1.1.2 Local

No local parks were identified in the vicinity of the Project.

Figure 5.16-1 Parks and Recreation Facilities



5.16.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.16.2.1 Federal

5.16.2.1.1 Federal Land Policy and Management Act

Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (43 U.S. Code § 1701 *et seq.*), land management agencies are required to manage federally owned public lands in a manner that protects the quality of resources, and the FLPMA supports multiple uses on public lands. The FLPMA designated the approximately 26 million-acre CDCA in Southern California, of which approximately 10.4 million acres are managed by the BLM. The FLPMA provides a framework for the BLM to manage resources in perpetuity and led to the development of the CDCA Plan, which acts as the BLM's land use guide for the management of public lands and resources.

5.16.2.1.2 California Desert Conservation Area

The CDCA Plan, which was adopted in 1980 and has since been amended, is a comprehensive, long-range plan for the management, use, development, and protection of lands within the CDCA that is required as part of the FLPMA and implemented by the BLM. The CDCA Plan contains a Recreation Element, in which the BLM encourages applicants to provide and manage recreation facilities to support all desert users. In addition, the CDCA plan also includes a Motorized-Vehicle Access Element, in which the BLM encourages the designation and management of routes for motorized vehicle access to minimize harm to the desert resources and users.

5.16.2.1.3 Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) is a collaborative effort between the California Energy Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, BLM, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to:

- Advance federal and State natural resource conservation goals and other federal land management goals
- Meet the requirements of the federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, and FLPMA
- Facilitate the timely and streamlined permitting of renewable energy projects in the Mojave and Colorado/Sonoran Desert regions of Southern California

The DRECP covers approximately 22.5 million acres in the desert regions of Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. The DRECP includes two types of recreation designations: SRMAs and Extensive Recreation Management Areas. The Project is located entirely within the DRECP Plan Area and within and adjacent to two SRMAs, as described in Section 5.16.1.1.1.

5.16.2.1.4 The Wilderness Act of 1964

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. Ch. 23) defines "wilderness" as an area where "the earth, and its community of life, are untrammeled by man and where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." This act also established the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS) that coordinates the wilderness activities of four federal agencies: the U.S. Forest Service, BLM, National Park Service, and USFWS. The

NWPS provides a system by which land is evaluated and can be added to the list of wilderness areas. With some exceptions (e.g., existing private rights), the Wilderness Act prohibits motorized equipment or mechanized transport in designated wilderness areas, timber harvest, or development.

5.16.2.2 State

There are no State regulations related to recreation resources that are relevant to the Project.

5.16.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order (GO) 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.16.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

County of Riverside General Plan: Multipurpose Open Space Element

The Multipurpose Open Space Element of the County of Riverside General Plan contains policies and programs that are designed to protect and conserve environmental resources in Riverside County while encouraging economic development and growth and setting the direction for the framework of its transportation system. The Multipurpose Open Space Element includes the protection and preservation of natural resources including the following key resources: water, biological, forest, vegetation, agriculture and soils, open space, parks and recreation, regional aesthetics, cultural and paleontological, renewable resources, and non-renewable resources (County of Riverside 2015). This element of the County of Riverside General does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

5.16.2.3.2 City of Blythe General Plan

The Parks and Recreation Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 evaluates the City's existing parks, potential opportunities to increase recreational spaces, and constraints on new park development. The Parks and Recreation Element provides guiding policies and implementation measures that promote the development of new parks and maintenance of existing parks to ensure the public has access to adequate recreational opportunities (City of Blythe 2007). This element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

5.16.3 Impact Questions

5.16.3.1 Recreation Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For recreation resources, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?
- Include recreational facilities, or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

5.16.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

The CPUC has identified additional CEQA significance criteria. These additional CEQA significance criteria ask, would the project:

- Reduce or prevent access to a designated recreation facility or area?
- Substantially change the character of a recreational area by reducing the scenic, biological, cultural, geologic, or other important characteristics that contribute to the value of recreational facilities or areas?
- Damage recreational trails or facilities?

5.16.4 Impact Analysis

5.16.4.1 Recreation Impact Analysis

5.16.4.1.1 Recreation Methodology

Parks and recreation areas in the vicinity of the Project Alignment were identified by reviewing general plans and other documents developed by the City of Blythe and Riverside County, along with BLM land management documents. The Project components were then overlain with these resources to identify potential impacts from the construction and operation and maintenance (O&M) phases.

5.16.4.1.2 Would the Project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. As discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities. Further, the Project Alignment does not cross any city or county parks or recreational facilities (Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District 2021).

While the Project is located approximately 1 mile from Joshua Tree National Park, there are no recreational facilities within the park boundary in the vicinity of the Project (National Park Service 2020). As shown in Figure 5.16-1, approximately 16.7 miles of the central portion of the Project Alignment are located within and in the vicinity of the BLM-designated Chuckwalla SRMA, which is identified as a high-priority area for outdoor recreation opportunities (BLM 2016). As described in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, construction crews would likely be sourced from the surrounding area and may temporarily use surrounding

recreational facilities during the approximately 8-month construction process. However, due to the limited duration of construction, and the limited number of construction crew members (up to 80 construction personnel per day) that would be required to build the Project, substantial physical deterioration of the surrounding recreational facilities would not occur. Therefore, the Project would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.16.4.1.3 Does the Project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

No Impact. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. The Project would not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. In addition, as discussed in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, the Project would not directly or indirectly result in growth or development that would result in an increase in demand for recreational facilities such that new or expanded recreational facilities would be required. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.16.4.1.4 Would the Project reduce or prevent access to a designated recreation facility or area?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. The Project would involve work on an existing subtransmission line and underbuilt circuits. Construction activities would potentially require temporary access restrictions and/or road closures to allow for construction to occur safely. The Chuckwalla SRMA located south of Interstate (I-) 10 is the only park and recreation area that may be potentially affected by construction-related access restrictions along I-10. Temporary access restrictions would potentially occur at Ford Dry Lake Road and four locations where the subtransmission line crosses I-10: approximately 2 miles east of the I-10/Mesa Road interchange, approximately 3 miles west of the I-10/Mesa Road interchange, just east of the I-10/Paled Dunes interchange, and approximately 1 mile east of the I-10/Chuckwalla Valley Road interchange. To reduce the potential impacts associated with access restrictions to this recreation area, SCE would implement applicant proposed measure (APM) REC-1. APM REC-1 would require SCE to coordinate with recreation facility owners prior to any temporary access restrictions to ensure facility users are aware of upcoming restrictions and can still access the facility through the use of alternative roads, such as Chuckwalla Valley Road and Hobsonway. In addition, SCE would prepare and implement a Construction Traffic Control Plan (APM TRA-1), which would ensure that the appropriate traffic controls (e.g., flaggers, cones, and detours) are implemented to facilitate safe access to recreation facilities as required by the appropriate State agency and/or local government. Impacts caused by the reduction of access to recreational facilities would be less than significant with the implementation of APMs REC-1 and TRA-1.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.16.4.1.5 Would the Project substantially change the character of a recreational area by reducing the scenic, biological, cultural, geologic or other important characteristics that contribute to the value of recreational facilities or areas?

No Impact. The Project is located within and adjacent to lands managed by the BLM that are or may be used for recreation. As presented in Section 5.1, Aesthetics, Section 5.4, Biological Resources, Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, and Section 5.7, Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources, the Project would not substantially change the character of any recreational area as no significant and unavoidable impacts to these resource areas would occur. Construction activities associated with the Project would not substantially change the character of nearby recreational areas. Therefore, no impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.16.4.1.6 Would the Project damage recreational trails or facilities?

No Impact. The Project would take place in an existing ROW and would not cross any currently maintained recreational trails or facilities. Therefore, no impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.16.4.2 Recreation Impact Details

The maximum extent of each recreation impact is described above in Section 5.16.4.1.

5.16.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No additional CPUC Draft Mitigation Measures are proposed for the recreation resource area.

5.16.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.16.5.1.1 Recreation APMs

The following APM would be implemented to reduce recreation impacts associated with the Project:

- **REC-1:** When temporary closures to recreational areas are necessary for construction activities, SCE will coordinate those closures with recreational facility owners.

5.16.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

The following APM relevant to a different impact category would also reduce recreation impacts associated with the project:

- **TRA-1: Construction Traffic Management Plan.** Southern California Edison shall prepare and implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan subject to approval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the County of Riverside, and the City of Blythe. The approved Traffic Management Plan and documentation of agency approvals shall be submitted to CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities. The plan shall:
  - Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;
  - Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
  - Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging area and take only necessary Project vehicles to the work sites;
  - Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways will be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
  - Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area. Emergency service providers will be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads will remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
  - Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) will be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.
  - Construction activities completed within public street rights-of-way will require the use of a traffic control service, and all lane closures will be conducted in accordance with applicable requirements. These traffic control measures will be consistent with those published in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as written and amended by the California Department of Transportation for the State of California and using standard templates from the California Temporary Traffic Control Handbook (California Inter-Utility Coordinating Committee 2018) as applicable.

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5.17 Transportation

This section describes the existing transportation system in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project) area, as well as the potential impacts to transportation from construction and operation of the Project.

Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) vehicle traffic volume counts,
- regional planning agency transit websites, and
- local agency planning documents.

5.17.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

5.17.1.1 Circulation System

The Project's regional transportation system is comprised of highways and county and local roads. Interstate (I-) 10, State Route (SR)-95, and SR-177 provide regional access to the area. The Project crosses and/or is located adjacent to I-10, Chuckwalla Valley Road, Rice Road (SR-177), and other county and local roads.

5.17.1.2 Existing Roadways and Circulation

The primary regional transportation route in the vicinity of the Project is I-10, which is under the jurisdiction of Caltrans. Within the vicinity of the Project, I-10 is a four-lane freeway with two lanes in each direction. The Project Alignment runs parallel to I-10 along existing utility access roads (within the existing ROW) with the circuit crossing I-10 at four locations. From Blythe Substation westward, the Project Alignment is located north of I-10 and crosses to the south of I-10 approximately 2 miles east of the I-10/Mesa Road interchange. The circuit remains south of I-10 for approximately 5 miles, then crosses to the north of I-10 approximately 3 miles west of the I-10/Mesa Road interchange. For approximately 12 miles, the circuit remains north of I-10, then crosses to the south just east of the I-10/Paled Dunes Drive interchange. The final crossing of the circuit from south of I-10 to north of I-10 occurs approximately 1 mile east of the I-10/ Chuckwalla Valley Road interchange. At this point, the circuit remains north of I-10 until it connects to Eagle Mountain Substation.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Along with I-10, other public roadways that would be used to access the Project are Hobsonway, Chuckwalla Valley Road, Desert Center Rice Road (SR 177), Kaiser Truck Road, and Eagle Mountain Road. These roadways have two lanes with one lane in each direction. Several unpaved public roads (e.g., Paled Dunes Drive) would also be utilized to access the Project. Access to the Project would be from these public roadways or connecting spur roads. No new roads would be required for the Project, and work areas for Project construction activities would not typically include public roadways. The existing named roadways that may be used to access the Project Alignment and to transport materials during construction (or that are otherwise crossed by the Project Alignment) are presented in Table 5.17-1.

5.17.1.3 Transit and Rail Services

One existing Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency bus route, the Wellness Express, travels adjacent to the Project along I-10. This bus route operates twice daily on Mondays, Wednesdays, and the first and third Friday of each month.

5.17.1.4 Bicycle Facilities

The Project is located within Caltrans District 8. Bicyclists are allowed on I-10 in the vicinity of the Project (Caltrans 2022). There are no county-designated bikeways within the vicinity of the Project in Riverside County. There are existing bikeways in the City of Blythe, including a Class I shared-use path and Class II bicycle lanes clustered around the downtown area of the city, east of the Project. As previously discussed, I-10 is crossed by the Project in four locations.

5.17.1.5 Pedestrian Facilities

There are no important pedestrian facilities, including walkways, crossed by the Project Alignment that contribute to the circulation system. Pedestrian access to the main traffic corridor adjacent to- and crossed by- the Project Alignment, I-10, is prohibited (Caltrans 2022). Further, due to the remote and mostly rural location of much of the alignment, existing streets do not have sidewalks or other pedestrian facilities.

5.17.1.6 Vehicle Miles Traveled

Table 5.17-2 presents a summary of the average daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2022 in Riverside County and the City of Blythe.

5.17.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.17.2.1 Federal

5.17.2.1.1 Code of Federal Regulations

Code of Federal Regulations Title 49, Subtitle B includes procedures and regulations pertaining to interstate and intrastate transport (including hazardous materials program procedures) and provides safety measures for motor carriers and motor vehicles that operate on public highways.

5.17.2.1.2 Hazardous Materials Transportation Act of 1974

The Hazardous Materials Transportation Act of 1974 directs the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to establish criteria and regulations regarding safe storage and transportation of hazardous materials. The DOT would primarily deal with the transportation of hazardous materials on roadways in the Project Area. Section 5.9, Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety addresses the transportation of hazardous materials, types of materials defined as hazardous, and the treatment of hazardous materials associated with the Project.

Table 5.17-1 Existing Roadways

Roadway	Jurisdiction/ Ownership	Number of Lanes	Traffic Volume (Monthly Average Daily Traffic	Distance to Project Feature (Miles)
I-10	Caltrans	4	27,500	0
Chuckwalla Valley Road	Riverside County	2	30,000	0
Rice Road (SR-177)	Caltrans	2	2,250	0
SR-95	Caltrans	2	5,000	0
Kaiser Road	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Power Line Road	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
Phone Line Road	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
Corn Springs Road	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
Graham Pass Road	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
Wiley Well Road	Riverside County	2	30,000	0
15th Avenue	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Black Rock Road	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Dracker Road	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Mesa Drive	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Orange Drive	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
South Rannells Boulevard	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Rannells Boulevard	Riverside County	2	N/A	0
Dave Street	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
Butch Boulevard	Riverside County	N/A	N/A	0
West Hobsonway	Riverside County/ City of Blythe	4	4700	0
Buck Boulevard	Riverside County	2	N/A	0

Source: Caltrans 2017; Riverside County 2020a; Google Earth Imagery 2021.
Note: N/A = The data is not available and/or road type is undefined.

Table 5.17-2 Vehicle Miles Traveled

Jurisdiction	Average Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled in 2022	Average Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled per Capita in 2022
Riverside County	57,955,890	23.4
City of Blythe	158,000	9.1

Sources: Caltrans 2023; U.S. Census Bureau 2022

5.17.2.2 State

5.17.2.2.1 State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15064.3, Determining the Significance of Transportation Impacts

In response to Senate Bill 743 (Steinberg, 2013), this section of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines established VMT as the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts in the CEQA process. For transportation impacts under CEQA, VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project. Other relevant considerations may include the effects of the project on transit and nonmotorized travel. Except for roadway capacity projects, a project's effect on automobile delay would not constitute a significant environmental impact under CEQA. For instances where existing models or methods are not available to estimate the VMT for the particular project being considered, a lead agency may analyze the project's VMT qualitatively. Such a qualitative analysis would evaluate factors such as the availability of transit, proximity to other destinations, etc. For many projects, a qualitative analysis of construction traffic may be appropriate [14 California Code of Regulations 15064.3(b)(3)].

In December 2018, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) released a technical advisory titled Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA (OPR guidelines), which contains recommendations regarding the assessment of VMT and thresholds of significance. As noted in the OPR guidelines, lead agencies are directed to choose metrics and thresholds that are appropriate for their jurisdiction to evaluate the potential impacts of a project.

The OPR guidelines indicate that projects that generate or attract fewer than 110 trips per day generally may be presumed to cause a less-than-significant transportation impact. Section 15064.3(a) of the state CEQA Guidelines define VMT as the "amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project." The OPR guidelines further state, "Here, the term 'automobile' refers to on-road passenger vehicles, specifically cars and light trucks." Truck trips are generally excluded from the requirements of CEQA as they pertain to transportation impacts and VMT. Furthermore, the OPR guidelines focus almost exclusively on permanent residential, office, and retail projects as primarily responsible for increasing VMT in the state. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, the Project would potentially conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3(b), and potentially result in a significant impact if it would generate more than 110 permanent automobile trips per day.

5.17.2.2.2 California Streets and Highways Code

Caltrans manages state highways in California. The use of California state highways for reasons other than normal transportation purposes may require written authorization or an encroachment permit from Caltrans. Caltrans has jurisdiction over the state's highway system and is responsible for protecting the public and infrastructure. Section 660 of the California Streets and Highways Code allows Caltrans to issue encroachment permits authorizing activities related to the placement of encroachments within, under, or

over state highway ROWs. Caltrans reviews all requests from utility companies that plan to conduct activities within state highway ROWs. Caltrans' encroachment permits may include conditions or restrictions that limit when construction activities can occur within or above roadways that are under the jurisdiction of Caltrans. The California Streets and Highways Code also includes regulations for the care and protection of state and county highways and requires permits for any load that exceeds Caltrans's weight, length, or width standards for public roadways. Sections 700 through 711 provide provisions that are specific to utility providers. Additionally, the California Streets and Highways Code outlines directions for cooperation with local agencies, guidelines for permits, and general provisions relating to state highways and Caltrans's jurisdiction.

Caltrans prepared a document, Guide for the Preparation of Traffic Studies, that describes when a traffic impact study is needed. The intent of this guide is to provide a starting point and a consistent basis upon which Caltrans evaluates traffic impacts to state highway facilities. The applicability of the guide for local streets and roads (non-state highways) is at the discretion of the affected jurisdiction.

5.17.2.2.3 California Transportation Commission

The California Transportation Commission (CTC) was established in 1978 out of a growing desire for a single, unified California transportation policy. The CTC is responsible for programming and allocating funds for the construction of highway, passenger rail, active transportation, aeronautics, and transit improvements throughout California. The CTC advises and assists the Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency and the state legislature in formulating and evaluating state policies and plans for California's transportation programs. The CTC is also an active participant in the initiation and development of state and federal legislation that seeks to secure financial stability for the state's transportation needs.

5.17.2.2.4 California Joint Utility Traffic Control Manual

The California Joint Utility Traffic Control Manual provides guidelines for ensuring that the needs of all road users (e.g., motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians) are met through the establishment of a temporary traffic control zone during highway construction, utility work, and maintenance operations. For any Project construction activities within a local public ROW, the use of a traffic control service and any lane closures would be conducted in accordance with applicable laws and permit conditions. These traffic control measures would be consistent with those published in the California Joint Utility Traffic Control Manual.

5.17.2.2.5 California Vehicle Code

The California Vehicle Code includes regulations pertaining to licensing, size, weight, and load of vehicles operated on highways, safe operation of vehicles, and the transportation of hazardous materials.

5.17.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.17.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

The Circulation Element of the County of Riverside General Plan contains the following transportation policies (Riverside County 2020b):

C 2.1 The following minimum target levels of service have been designated for the review of development proposals in the unincorporated areas of Riverside County with respect to transportation impacts on roadways designated in the Riverside County Circulation Plan which are currently County maintained, or are intended to be accepted into the County maintained roadway system:

- LOS C shall apply to all development proposals in any area of the Riverside County not located within the boundaries of an Area Plan, as well those areas located within the following Area Plans: REMAP, Eastern Coachella Valley, Desert Center, Palo Verde Valley, and those non-Community Development areas of the Elsinore, Lake Mathews/Woodcrest, Mead Valley and Temescal Canyon Area Plans.

5.17.2.3.2 Riverside County Long Range Transportation Study

The Riverside County Long Range Transportation Study (LRTS) was conducted by the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), which is the Regional Transportation Planning Agency for Riverside County. RCTC's Riverside County LRTS outlines policies and implementation strategies to improve the County's transportation system and follows the RCTC's four core goals (RCTC 2019):

1. RCTC is focused on improving life for the people of Riverside County and empowering them to live life at their pace.
2. RCTC is a responsible and conservative steward of taxpayer dollars.
3. RCTC is a driver of economic growth in Riverside County.
4. RCTC partners with local, regional, and state governments to deliver road and transit projects.

5.17.2.3.3 City of Blythe General Plan

The Circulation Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains multiple policies and implementation strategies related to improving the operation and maintenance of citywide transportation facilities and services. This element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 does not contain specific goals or policies relevant to the Project.

5.17.3 Impact Questions

5.17.3.1 Transportation Impact Questions

The significance criteria for assessing the impacts to transportation and traffic come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. For transportation, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?
- Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?
- Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?
- Result in inadequate emergency access?

5.17.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

The CPUC has identified additional CEQA significance criteria. These additional CEQA significance criteria ask:

- Would the project create potentially hazardous conditions for people walking, bicycling, or driving or for public transit operations?
- Would the project interfere with walking or bicycling accessibility?
- Would the project substantially delay public transit?

5.17.4 Impact Analysis

5.17.4.1 Transportation Impact Analysis

5.17.4.1.1 Transportation Methodology

Impacts to transportation within the Project Area were determined by evaluating the existing modes of transportation and evaluating the potential hazards or delays to these services and facilities from Project construction and operation and maintenance (O&M) activities. Using the information provided in Chapter 3, Proposed Project Description, an estimate of VMT was generated for the construction phase of the Project. Appendix B contains the data used to generate this estimate.

5.17.4.1.2 Would the Project conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. The Project would result in temporary increases of traffic during construction activities. Traffic would consist of a combination of construction worker vehicles and construction equipment arriving to and from the construction work area and the existing laydown yards. Most work areas for construction activities would be located along existing Southern California Edison- (SCE-) maintained access roadways within or adjacent to the Project ROW. Some work areas for the installation of guard structures during reconductoring would be within the Caltrans ROW at the four locations where the circuit crosses I-10. Work areas for these locations would be maintained in the median and outside of the freeway pavement. Lane closures on I-10 and public roadways would not be anticipated during construction.

During construction, multiple round trips to the construction site would occur during each construction phase. Project construction activities would be spread out along the length of the Project Alignment such that construction-related traffic would not be concentrated at one location. Construction traffic would be temporary, and any traffic increase would be negligible in the desert, rural area of the county. Due to the temporary nature of any traffic impacts, construction-related traffic would not conflict with the Riverside

County Congestion Management Program and Riverside County General Plan's Circulation and Infrastructure Element; the Blythe General Plan's Circulation Element; or any other applicable plan, ordinance, or policy related to the effectiveness of the existing circulation system.

Furthermore, prior to the start of construction, a Construction Traffic Control Plan (applicant proposed measure [APM] TRA-1) would be reviewed and approved by State and local agencies responsible for public roads that would be directly affected by the construction activities and/or would require permits and approvals. The Construction Traffic Control Plan would include traffic control measures such as signage, locations of all road or traffic lane segments that would need to be temporarily closed or disrupted due to construction activities (if any, although none are anticipated at this time), and locations of traffic control personnel implemented to maintain traffic flow on Project access roads. Additionally, guard structures would be placed adjacent to roadways to protect the safety of workers and the public prior to initiation of wire-stringing activities. Any crossing or encroachment permits would be obtained as necessary, and construction activities would be in compliance with these permits. With implementation of APM TRA-1, Project construction would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. With the implementation of APM TRA-1, impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.3 Would the Project conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Less than Significant Impact. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3 states that VMT is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) provides several criteria for analyzing transportation impacts, including analyzing a project's VMT qualitatively when lead agencies may not be able to quantitatively estimate VMT for a project type.

A VMT calculation is typically conducted on a daily or annual basis for long-range planning purposes. No VMT thresholds have been adopted by the City of Blythe. The County of Riverside has adopted VMT thresholds; however, they are only applicable to the operational phase for land use projects. The county has not adopted thresholds applicable to construction VMT or utility projects (County of Riverside 2020b). As discussed previously, traffic on local roadways would be temporarily increased during Project construction due to the presence of construction vehicles and equipment during the approximately 8-month construction period. Increases in VMT from construction would be short term, minimal, and temporary. During the most vehicle-intensive phase of construction activities (i.e., conductor pulling), approximately 20,860 daily VMT would occur from worker commutes, haul trucks, and pickup trucks, which would represent an approximately 0.04-percent increase over the approximately 57,000,000 daily VMT in Riverside County (SCAG 2020, U.S. Census Bureau 2022). As such, construction of the Project would generate a negligible short-term increase in VMT. Due to the negligible increase in VMT during construction, a traffic study for the Project was not prepared. Construction-related impacts associated with VMT would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.4 Would the Project substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible use (e.g., farm equipment)?

No Impact. The Project would not increase the footprint of the existing ROW and would not alter circulation patterns on adjacent roadways or construct new roadways. In addition, the Project would not introduce any new uses to the Project Area. During construction, temporary work areas would be generally confined to existing access roads and areas outside public roadways. These Project construction activities would not introduce design features that would increase hazards to motorists or others traveling on the roadways. Heavy construction equipment would travel on public roadways to access the Project, and the movement of heavy trucks and equipment on roadways providing access to Project work areas could incidentally damage road surfaces, shoulders, curbs, sidewalks, signs, and light standards. Due to the temporary and minimal nature of heavy construction equipment use that would be spread out on the local roadway network along the approximately 53-mile Project Alignment, no impact would occur from construction.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.5 Would the Project result in inadequate emergency access?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. The Project involves work on existing electrical equipment and would not change existing physical conditions. While crews and construction equipment would travel on paved public roads and a network of existing unpaved access roads maintained by SCE along the existing ROW to access the work areas, construction activities would occur within defined work areas within or immediately adjacent to the Project ROW. These work areas do not include roads that would generally be used by emergency responders. Project construction activities would generally not occur on public roads or require temporary closures of road lanes; therefore, the Project would not physically interfere with emergency response actions. In the event that construction activity would require temporary closure of road lanes that may be used by emergency responders, SCE would coordinate that activity with the local emergency response agencies. Furthermore, as noted in APM TRA-1, SCE would notify emergency service providers prior to construction activities and would ensure all roads remain accessible to emergency service vehicles at all times. In addition, guard structures would be set up next to major highway and road crossings such that Project construction activities at these locations would not impede emergency access. Therefore, with implementation of APM TRA-1, the Project would not result in inadequate emergency access, and impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.6 Would the project create potentially hazardous conditions for people walking, bicycling, or driving or for public transit operations?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. The Project would not include the incompatible uses of or alteration to any public roads. Construction traffic would utilize roadways along which pedestrians, cyclists, other motorists, and transit operations may be present. In addition, temporary road and/or lane closures may be required to facilitate construction. These activities may reduce the availability of pedestrian or bicycle

facilities and may introduce delays in public transit operations. As required by APM TRA-1, SCE would prepare and implement traffic control plans in accordance with required encroachment permits. These plans would require that construction activities be coordinated with local agencies and emergency providers and that appropriate traffic controls be implemented to maintain pedestrian and bicycle access and to reduce potential traffic delays for public transit operations. Therefore, construction of the Project would not create a potentially significant hazardous condition for other users of public roads or associated infrastructure and impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.7 Would the project interfere with walking or bicycling accessibility?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Limited pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle trails or lanes exist in the Project Area due to its remote location. Use of these facilities could be temporarily interrupted when construction occurs adjacent and/or over these facilities. However, interruptions of use would be temporary and short-term, lasting only a few days in any one location. Further, alternative routes and/or notices of closures would be provided in accordance with the traffic control plans required by APM TRA-1. Thus, impacts associated with walking and bicycling accessibility would be less than significant with mitigation.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.1.8 Would the project substantially delay public transit?

Less than Significant Impact. One existing Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency bus route, the Wellness Express, travels adjacent to the Project along I-10. This bus route operates twice daily on Mondays, Wednesdays, and the first and third Friday of each month. Travelers on this route could be delayed by up to 15 minutes during the removal of an installation of conductors across I-10; however, the Project includes the use of guard structures at all major public road crossings. As a result, substantial delays to public transit are not anticipated and impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.2 Vehicle Miles Traveled

The Project is not located within 0.5 mile of a major transit stop or a high-quality transit corridor. Construction is anticipated to generate a maximum of 100 daily vehicle roundtrips across the breadth of the Project. These daily vehicle roundtrips are inclusive of each worker making two daily trips in a personal vehicle (i.e., one trip in the morning to a laydown yard, and one return trip in the evening, for a maximum of approximately 68 roundtrips per day). The remaining daily vehicle roundtrips would account for medium- and heavy-duty vehicle movements associated with construction. The VMT generated by the Project during construction is summarized in Table 5.17-3. When compared to the average daily VMT in the County of Riverside, the Project would represent a maximum anticipated daily increase of 0.04 percent.

Table 5.17-3 Construction VMT

Trip Type	Approximate Maximum Daily VMT	Approximate Total VMT
Worker Commutes	17,360	2,966,300
Construction Vehicles	3,500	497,840
Total	**20,860**	**3,464,440**

Note: Daily VMT would vary depending on factors such as material availability, resource availability, and construction scheduling. The maximum daily total sum of VMT across vehicle classes has been presented. Total VMT has been calculated using the activity levels and schedule presented in Appendix B.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.3 Traffic Impact Analysis

A traffic impact study has not been prepared for the Project. The Project would not result in any noticeable long-term or permanent increases in traffic, would not generally result in an increase in peak hour trips given the typical work hours of construction crews, is not a development project, and would not result in any land use changes.

5.17.4.4 Hazards

Construction of the Project would not generate any permanent traffic hazards. Guard structures and temporary road and/or lane closures may occur along roadways crossed or adjacent to construction, as described previously. SCE would prepare and implement a traffic control plan in accordance with encroachment permit requirements and APM TRA-1. These plans would reduce the potential hazards by notifying landowners of the planned construction activities, require SCE to coordinate construction activities with emergency service providers, and implement applicable traffic control measures.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.17.4.5 Accessibility

There are no existing bicycle lanes that would be crossed by the Project and no developed pedestrian walkways or transit stops that would be closed during construction.

5.17.4.6 Transit Delay

As described in Section 5.17.1, the Wellness Express is the only public transit route crossed by the Project. The Project would include the use of guard structures at all major road crossings to reduce the potential for disruption to traffic flow during the removal and installation of conductor. As a result, no road closures are anticipated along I-10, and traffic delays would be minimal.

5.17.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No CPUC Draft Environmental Measures have been identified for transportation.

5.17.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

The following APM would be implemented to reduce transportation impacts associated with the Project:

- **TRA-1 Construction Traffic Management Plan.** Southern California Edison shall prepare and implement a Construction Traffic Management Plan subject to approval of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the County of Riverside, and the City of Blythe. The approved Traffic Management Plan and documentation of agency approvals shall be submitted to CPUC prior to the commencement of construction activities. The plan shall:
  - Include a discussion of work hours, haul routes, work area delineation, traffic control and flagging;
  - Identify all access and parking restriction and signage requirements;
  - Require workers to park personal vehicles at the approved staging area and take only necessary Project vehicles to the work sites;
  - Lay out plans for notifications and a process for communication with affected residents and landowners prior to the start of construction. Advance public notification shall include posting of notices and appropriate signage of construction activities. The written notification shall include the construction schedule, the exact location and duration of activities within each street (i.e., which road/lanes and access point/driveways be blocked on which days and for how long), and a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints;
  - Include plans to coordinate all construction activities with emergency service providers in the area. Emergency service providers will be notified of the timing, location, and duration of construction activities. All roads will remain passable to emergency service vehicles at all times; and
  - Identify all roadway locations where special construction techniques (e.g., night construction) will be used to minimize impacts to traffic flow.
  - Construction activities completed within public street rights-of-way will require the use of a traffic control service, and all lane closures will be conducted in accordance with applicable requirements. These traffic control measures will be consistent with those published in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as written and amended by the California Department of Transportation for the State of California and using standard templates from the California Temporary Traffic Control Handbook (California Inter-Utility Coordinating Committee 2018) as applicable.

5.18 Tribal Cultural Resources

This section describes the tribal cultural resources potentially of importance to California Native American tribes in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to tribal cultural resources from construction and operation of the Project.

Assembly Bill (AB) 52 (Gatto; Stats. 2014, Ch. 532), which was enacted in September 2014, sets forth both procedural and substantive requirements for analysis of tribal cultural resources, as defined in Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21074, and consultation with California Native American tribes.

This section is based on information obtained from technical reports prepared for the Project, as described below in Section 5.18.1.2, Tribal Cultural Resources. See Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, for a discussion of cultural resources more broadly, including archaeological and built environment resources.

5.18.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas. The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe. The Project is in the Victory Pass, East of Victory Pass, Corn Spring, Sidewinder Well, Aztec Mines, East of Aztec Mines, Hopkins Well, Roosevelt Mine, and Ripley 7.5-minute United States Geological Survey (USGS) topographic quadrangles. See Section 5.5.1, Cultural Resources Environmental Setting, for a detailed discussion of this region.

5.18.1.1 Outreach to Tribes

PRC Section 5097.91 established the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), the duties of which include taking inventory of places of religious or social significance to Native Americans and identifying known graves and cemeteries of Native Americans on private lands. PRC Section 5097.98 specifies a protocol to follow when the NAHC is notified of a discovery of Native American human remains from a county coroner.

On December 7, 2022, Rincon Consultants submitted a request to the NAHC for a Sacred Lands File (SLF) search within the Proposed Project area on behalf of SCE. The NAHC responded on February 23, 2024, stating that the SLF results were negative and provided a list of 30 contacts; these contacts are provided in Appendix E. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will perform additional NAHC and tribal outreach activities in accordance with AB 52 at a later date.

5.18.1.2 Tribal Cultural Resources

Two Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Reports, which together cover the entirety of the Project, were conducted for the Project: *Class III Cultural Resources Inventory Report for the Proposed Southern*

California Edison Eagle Mountain-Blythe 161kv Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project, Riverside County, California (AECOM 2017) (referred to herein as "original report"), and *SCE Eagle Mountain-Blythe 161kV Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project Cultural Resources Assessment* (Rincon 2021) (referred to herein as "subsequent report"). The original and subsequent reports have been reviewed and approved by BLM. For a discussion of archaeological resources that were identified near the Project, refer to Section 5.5.1.2, Cultural Resources Summary. No tribal cultural resources have been identified near the Project. Outreach to tribes that will be performed by CPUC in accordance with AB 52 will identify tribal cultural resources near the Project.

5.18.1.3 Ethnographic Study

The following information is excerpted from the original report. A number of ethnographically documented culture groups are associated with the Project Area through historical use and oral history. These include the Yuman-speaking Mohave, Halchidhoma, Tipai/Kamia, and Quechan, and Numic-speaking Chemehuevi along the lower Colorado River, and the Takic-speaking Cahuilla in the deserts and mountains west of the Project (AECOM 2017).

The western area of the Colorado Desert contains the territories of two tribal groups, the Tipai/Kamia to the south and the Cahuilla to the north. Schaefer (2006, page 21) indicates that, although both groups "consider the cultural resources of the general area as part of their cultural and historical legacy," tribal boundaries likely shifted through time. While the territory of the Tipai/Kamia also extended into the eastern area of Colorado Desert as far as the East Mesa–Sand Hills area, the area from the Sand Hills to Colorado River containing the Project Area is most commonly considered to be the territory principally occupied by the Quechan (Yuma) (Bee 1983, page 87; Luomala 1978, page 593). However, as noted above by Schaefer for the Tipai/Kamia and Cahuilla, tribal boundaries likely shifted through time. The Quechan, sometimes referred to as the Yuma (e.g., Forde 1931), are generally considered to have occupied the eastern Colorado Desert area where the Project is located. While the Quechan are, therefore, mostly described here, their relations with their neighbors to the west, the Tipai/Kamia, are also described.

The Quechan are linguistic members of the Yuman subfamily of the Hokan family. While the eastern Colorado Desert area is generally considered to be the territory principally occupied by the Quechan, according to Bee (1983, page 86), they may have been relatively late arrivals into the area they were occupying in the 18th century. The earliest Spanish explorations into the area, in A.D. 1540, did not mention any people they encountered with that name, and the earliest references to them in Spanish documents did not occur until the 17th century (Bee 1983, page 86). It is possible, then, that the Tipai/Kamia territory may have extended farther to the east prior to the 17th century. Early chronicler Gifford (1931) designated the Kumeyaay living in the eastern San Diego County and Imperial County area as the Kamia, who were distinguished by a desert orientation, with contacts and travel most frequently between eastern San Diego County and the Imperial Valley. This term has generally been replaced with the designation of eastern Kumeyaay or Tipai (Gifford 1931, page 2; Hedges 1975; Langdon 1975; Luomala 1978). Recently, however, Schaefer (2006, page 25) stated that "The Kamia specifically were also directly related to the Tipai (southern Kumeyaay) of the mountains and coastal areas of San Diego County and northern Baja California. Their dialect, however, is closely related to the Cocopah and other delta Yumans." Delta Yumans could also include the Quechan, as, according to Cook et al. (1997, page 9), the Tipai/Kamia were also closely connected to the Quechan on the Colorado River and served as trading partners between the coastal and desert groups, using a travel route through the Mountain Springs Grade. These trading partners also were frequently politically allied against other groups to the north and south (Cook et al. 1997, page

9). This indicates that discussion continues as to the exact affiliation and territory of the Tipai/Kamia in relation to the Quechan (Yuma).

By the time of contact, the Quechan were primarily growers and gatherers (Bee 1983, page 86; Forde 1931, pages 107–118). Utilizing the Colorado River as a means of growing food versus relying on hunting and gathering from the desert area to the west of the river was a clear subsistence preference. While the river could sometimes also be an unreliable provider during episodes of flooding, it was apparently considered more reliable than trying to subsist solely on resources obtained by hunting and gathering in the adjacent dry desert areas. This subsistence tendency might also shed some light on the territorial relationship with the Tipai/Kamia, as it might be more likely that the two groups would be willing to share this area of the desert in terms of resource procurement. The principal wild foods gathered by the Quechan were honey mesquite and screw-bean pods. Honey mesquite pods were preferred as they were more resistant to drought and so were more consistently available. The pods were gathered from natural groves or stands, generally in some proximity to the river. The pods were crushed in mortars into a pulp that was then dried and ground into flour. The flour was then mixed with water and baked into cakes that could be saved and stored for long periods. The crushed pods could also be soaked in water and the liquid then fermented into a mildly intoxicating beverage (Bee 1983, page 87; Castetter and Bell 1951, page 179).

The principal crops grown by the Quechan, prior to historic contact, were likely maize, tapary beans, and several varieties of squash including pumpkins. Seeds of wild grasses were also gathered and sowed in less fertile areas of the river floodplain and the seeds were then harvested and ground into meal and dried or baked into cakes (Bee 1986, pages 86–87). Subsequent to historic contact, plants such as wheat, black-eyed peas, and various melons were also grown (Bee 1986, page 86–87).

Subsequent to historic contact, the Quechan lived in relatively large settlements or rancherias of several hundred people. The settlements were distributed along the Colorado River and Gila River to the east. While marriage was allowed between members belonging to other rancherias, there was at least a slight tendency to marry someone from your own rancheria. A bilocal extended family household was the pattern with residence occurring with either the man's or woman's family. This bilocal arrangement allowed for a maximal subsistence unit especially for agricultural exploitation by providing a larger labor force for the requirements of land clearing, crop planting, and harvesting. During the farming season, families lived under ramadas or in dome-shaped arrowweed shelters near their fields, and then moved into arrowweed shelters or camped under ramadas on high ground. Two larger structures covered on three sides with earth and the front walled with posts and horizontal slats stuffed with arrowweed. These were constructed for the leaders of the rancheria but were also used as community meeting places and as shelters for people in inclement weather. Clothing was frequently minimal with small willowbark aprons worn by women, front and back, with men frequently wearing nothing. Quechan hunting equipment consisted of simple unbacked bows capable of producing only relatively weak penetrating power. Arrows were sometimes tipped with stone heads, but were often only sharpened cane or wooden shafts. Larger sharpened staffs were used as digging sticks with longer ones used as spears (Bee 1986, pages 87–89). Warfare between the Quechan and their Colorado River neighbors, most often the Cocopa, Maricopa and/or Pima, was common (Bee 1986, page 93). The northern area of the Colorado Desert contains the territories of three tribal groups, the Mojave, Chemehuevi and Halchidhoma. The stretch of the Colorado River immediately adjacent to the Project was notably contentious, changing hands more than once in the Protohistoric period. Prior to 1700, the banks of Colorado River east of Blythe may have been occupied by the historical Maricopa (Kroeber 1925, page 800), although this is far from certain. At some point, the Maricopa migrated east and the related Halchidhoma (or Panya) settled the area. Almost immediately, the Halchidhoma found themselves under attack from the allied forces of the Mohave and Quechan. The traditional focus of Mohave population was

to the north in the Mojave Desert, while Quechan peoples had their largest villages to the south between Yuma and the Gulf of California. Both groups, though, used the Palo Verde Valley and Mesa area intermittently. Generations of near-constant hostility finally drove the Halchidhoma off the river and, ultimately, to their Maricopa allies on the Gila River in Arizona (Kroeber 1925, page 799). The removal of the Halchidhoma from the Colorado River was part of a larger "international" network of alliances, conflict, and trade that Lowell Bean has described as the "Northern Sonoran Desert Amity-Enmity System" (Bean and Vane 1978, pages 5-30). In the Northern Sonoran Desert during the Protohistoric and Historical periods, traditional allies and trading partners formed two antagonistic groups. In one group, the Halchidhoma were allied with the Maricopa, Pima, Papago, and Cocopah to the east, and the Cahuilla, Diegueño, Serrano, and Gabrielino to the west. In the opposing group, the Mohave and Quechan were allied with the Chemehuevi (Southern Paiute) and Yavapai to the north and east, and the Kamia, Northern Serrano, Chumash, Yokuts, and Tubatulabal to the west. Southwestern Pueblo peoples, such as the Hopi, were interested trading partners in this system, but they were largely neutral (Bean and Vane 1978, pages 5-7).

In this trading system of alliance and aggression, the stretch of the Colorado River bracketed by the modern cities of Blythe, California and Ehrenberg, Arizona was a key transshipment point (Bean and Vane 1978, pages 5-38). One of the most significant east-west trade routes, known as the Coco-Maricopa Trail (CA-RIV-53T) crossed the river at this point, and ran just south of the BSPP plant site, alongside the present-day I-10 highway. The Palo Verde Valley was a pivot point in the trade between the Plains and the Pacific Coast: a contentious place of strategic interest to all parties.

After the Halchidhoma vacated the Parker-Blythe vicinity between 1825 and 1830, the Mohave lived in the area for a year or so, but then apparently returned north to the Mohave Valley. According to Mohave tradition, the Mohave then encouraged the Chemehuevi, with whom they shared many ceremonial practices, to move into the former Halchidhoma territory along the river (Bean and Vane 1982, page 34). By the mid-1800s, if not before, Chemehuevi groups were living along the Colorado River east of Blythe, and experimenting with floodplain agriculture. The lower Colorado River groups had trading relationships with groups to the west, most notably the Cahuilla, who lived principally in the deserts and mountains around historical Lake Cahuilla. The Cahuilla likely traversed the Project Alignment visiting their river neighbors, and even today, some group members retain knowledge of the area and its traditional resources. In the late 1860s, hostilities broke out again along the Colorado River, this time between the long-time but uneasy allies, the Mohave and Chemehuevi. Several years of infighting resulted in the western migration of a portion of the Chemehuevi population to Cahuilla villages in Banning and Cabezon and to a Serrano village in the Twentynine Palms area (Bean and Vane 1978, pages 5-20; Kroeber 1925, page 594). Many of those displaced at that time did not return, but chose to stay among their new allies and kinsmen. In 1874, the Office of Indian Affairs set aside a portion of the Mohave-occupied Colorado River Reservation (now known as the Colorado River Indian Tribes Reservation) for the Chemehuevi. Understandably, most Chemehuevi "preferred to remain in their historical locations near Blythe, Needles, Beaver Lake, and Chemehuevi Valley" rather than live so close to their estranged friends the Mohave (Kelly and Fowler 1986, page 388). Ultimately, in 1907, a separate reservation was established along the Colorado River north of Parker for the Chemehuevi living in Chemehuevi Valley (Kelly and Fowler 1986, page 388). As noted above, the Palo Verde Mesa was part of a long-distance transportation corridor from the Plains to the Pacific Coast (Bean and Vane 1978, Singer 1984). The west side of the Colorado River was also an important corridor for travel between southern and northern river groups, particularly the Quechan and Mohave. North-south running trails have been identified along the river as transportation routes, as well as ceremonial ways linking key mountains, springs, and other landscape features (Stone 1991; Woods 1986). These trails and landscape features are frequently associated with rock and earth art, as well as small rock piles known as cairns.

5.18.2 Regulatory Setting

*5.18.2.1 **Regulatory Setting***

The primary federal and State laws, regulations, and policies that pertain to the Project are summarized in Section 5.5.2, Cultural Resources Regulatory Setting.

Tribal cultural resources include sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, and sacred places or objects that have cultural value or significance to a tribe. A tribal cultural resource is one that is either: (1) listed on, or eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or local register of historical resources (see Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, for more information about the CRHR); or (2) a resource that the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) lead agency, at its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, determines is significant pursuant to the criteria in PRC Section 5024.1, subdivision (c) (see PRC Section 21074). Further, because tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with a geographic area may have specific expertise concerning their tribal cultural resources, AB 52 sets forth requirements for notification and invitation to government-to-government consultation between the CEQA lead agency and geographically affiliated tribes (PRC Section 21080.3.1[a]). Under AB 52, lead agencies must avoid damaging effects to tribal cultural resources, when feasible, regardless of whether consultation occurred or is required. Tribal cultural resources per PRC Section 21074 are defined as either of the following:

1) Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either of the following:
   - Included or determined to be eligible for inclusion in the CRHR.
   - Included in a local register of historical resources as defined in subdivision (k) of Section 5020.1.

2) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1 for the purposes of this paragraph, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.
   - A cultural landscape that meets the criteria of subdivision (a) is a tribal cultural resource to the extent that the landscape is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape.
   - A historical resource described in Section 21084.1, a unique archaeological resource as defined in subdivision (g) of Section 21083.2, or a "nonunique archaeological resource" as defined in subdivision (h) of Section 21083.2 may also be a tribal cultural resource if it conforms with the criteria of subdivision (a).

5.18.3 Impact Questions

5.18.3.1 Tribal Cultural Resources Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. For tribal cultural resources, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the Project:

- Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:
  - Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k)?

- A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe?

5.18.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.18.4 Impact Analysis

5.18.4.1 Tribal Cultural Resources Impact Analysis

5.18.4.1.1 Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is listed or eligible for listing in the CRHR, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Section 5020.1(k)?

No Determination. The CPUC will consult with eligible tribes under PRC Section 21080.3.1 once the Application is complete. Impacts on tribal cultural resources are not addressed in this Proponent's Environmental Assessment because under AB 52, the CPUC must identify these resources during consultation. Therefore, no tribal cultural resources have been identified, and the impacts associated with tribal cultural resources have not been determined.

A potential impact would occur if a tribal cultural resource is located within an area subject to disturbance. SCE would avoid impacts to known tribal cultural resources to the greatest extent possible through implementation of applicant proposed measures (APM) TCR-1 and TCR-2. APM TCR-1 would require an archaeological monitor, and tribal monitor that is culturally affiliated with the Project, to be present for ground-disturbing activities within or directly adjacent to identified tribal cultural resources. APM TCR-2 would require development and implementation of a Tribal Engagement Plan.

As outlined in Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, APMs CUL-1, CUL-2, CUL-3, CUL-4, and CUL-5 would be implemented and would further avoid or mitigate impacts to tribal cultural resources. Prior to construction, SCE would implement APM CUL-1, which includes the preparation and implementation of a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP). The primary objectives of the CRMP would be the management, avoidance, and/or minimization of potential significant impacts to cultural resources. The CRMP would require the demarcation of all Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) with proper signage prior to construction. Signage would include protective fencing, flagging, or other markers to protect ESAs from inadvertent trespass during construction. The CRMP would specify monitoring requirements for the identification of cultural resources during construction and would outline procedures to implement during the inadvertent discovery of cultural resources. The CRMP would also specify roles and responsibilities of jurisdictional agencies for the long-term management of identified cultural resources in the area of potential effect (APE). All potentially NRHP or CRHR eligible or archaeologically sensitive sites identified during records searches and field surveys would be evaluated to determine eligibility for listing under the CRHR and/or the NRHP. All potentially sensitive sites for tribal cultural resources within the APE would be considered ESAs and avoided per APM CUL-2.

Per APM CUL-2, SCE would perform cultural resource surveys prior to construction for any Project Areas that were not previously surveyed, which may include new or modified laydown yards, pull sites, or other work areas. Cultural resources discovered during these surveys would be subject to the mitigation measures and requirements specified in the CRMP. Prior to construction, SCE would implement APM CUL-3, which involve a worker environmental awareness program (WEAP) to train construction personnel by a qualified archaeologist regarding the recognition of possible buried cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric and/or historical artifacts, objects, or features) during construction. The WEAP would provide construction personnel with instruction on compliance with APMs and avoidance measures developed after pre-construction surveys. Additional objectives of the WEAP include instruction on the roles of cultural resource monitors and the appropriate treatment of ESAs. Further, SCE would deploy monitors per APM CUL-4 which involves conducting construction monitoring by a qualified archaeologist as needed.

As outlined in APM CUL-5, in the event that Native American remains are inadvertently discovered on federal lands, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requires that the responsible federal agency must be immediately notified by telephone and in writing. Following the receipt of the written notification, the federal agency must certify the receipt of it within three days. The activity that resulted in the discovery must be stopped immediately after discovery and may not resume until 30 days after the applicable federal agency certifies the receipt of the notification. The federal agency would also be responsible for taking immediate steps, if necessary, to further secure and protect the remains and/or items that were discovered. During this process, the federal agency would notify any MLDs or applicable Native American tribes of the discovery, obtain written confirmation of the notification, and initiate consultation, if necessary. Following consultation, the federal agency would prepare, approve, and sign a written NAGPRA Plan of Action (43 CFR 10.3 and 10.5), which would specify the treatment, care, and handling of the discovered remains and cultural resources.

As outlined in APM CUL-5, in the event Native American remains are inadvertently discovered and the discovery is not on federal land, the County Coroner and CPUC shall be notified immediately and the remains shall be treated in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, CEQA Section 15064.5(e), and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. SCE shall assist and support the BLM, as appropriate, in all required NAGPRA and Section 106 actions, government to-government and consultations with Native Americans, agencies, and consulting parties as requested by the BLM, CPUC, or CDFW. SCE shall comply with and implement all required actions and studies that result from such consultations.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operations and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities. However, SCE is not the CEQA Lead Agency responsible for tribal consultations per PRC Section 21080.3.1, and SCE has not performed any tribal consultation. Therefore, no tribal cultural resources have been identified, and the impacts associated with tribal cultural resources have not been determined.

5.18.4.1.2 Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is a resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Section 5024.1?

No Determination. The CPUC will consult with eligible tribes under PRC Section 21080.3.1 once the Application is complete. Impacts on tribal cultural resources are not addressed in this Proponent's Environmental Assessment because under AB 52, the CPUC must identify these resources during consultation. Therefore, no tribal cultural resources have been identified, and the impacts associated with tribal cultural resources have not been determined.

A potential impact would occur if a tribal cultural resource is located within an area subject to disturbance. SCE would avoid impacts to known tribal cultural resources to the greatest extent possible through implementation of APMs TCR-1 and TCR-2. Further, as outlined in Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, APMs CUL-1, CUL-2, CUL-3, CUL-4, and CUL-5 would be implemented and, through doing so, construction impacts to potential tribal cultural resources would be avoided or mitigated.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts from ongoing O&M activities. However, SCE is not the CEQA Lead Agency responsible for tribal consultations per PRC Section 21080.3.1, and SCE has not performed any tribal consultation. Therefore, no tribal cultural resources have been identified, and the impacts associated with tribal cultural resources have not been determined.

5.18.4.2 Information Provided by Tribes

SCE has not performed outreach to Tribes. As detailed in Section 5.18.1.1 Outreach to Tribes, Rincon Consultants, on behalf of SCE requested a SLF search within the Project area from the NAHC. A NAHC response was received stating that the SLF results were negative and provided a list of 30 contacts. The contacts from the SLF search are provided in Appendix E. The CPUC will perform additional NAHC and tribal outreach activities in accordance with AB 52 at a later date.

5.18.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

There are no CPUC Draft Environmental Measures identified for Tribal Cultural Resources.

5.18.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.18.5.1.1 Tribal Cultural Resources APM

The following APMs would be implemented to reduce impacts associated with the Project.

- **TCR-1: Tribal Monitoring.** An archaeological monitor, and tribal monitor that is culturally affiliated with the Project Area, may be present for ground-disturbing activities within or directly adjacent to identified tribal cultural resources. The archaeological and tribal monitors will consult the Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP; APM CUL-1) to determine when to increase or decrease the monitoring effort should the monitoring results indicate a change is warranted. Monitoring reports shall be prepared and submitted to the CPUC on a monthly basis.

- **TCR-2: Tribal Engagement Plan.** A tribal engagement plan shall be prepared, which will detail how Native American tribes will be engaged and informed throughout the Project. The tribal engagement plan will be included in the CRMP (APM CUL-1).

5.18.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

The following APMs relevant to a different impact category would also reduce tribal cultural resources impacts associated with the Project in addition to the tribal cultural resources-specific APMs described previously:

- **CUL-1: Develop a Cultural Resources Management Plan (CRMP).** SCE shall prepare and submit for approval a Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) to guide all cultural resource management activities during project construction. Management of cultural resources shall follow all applicable federal and State standards and guidelines for the management of historic properties/historical resources. The CRMP shall be submitted to the CPUC and BLM for review and approval at least 60 days prior to the start of construction. The CRMP shall be prepared by a qualified archaeologist who meets the Secretary of Interior's standards for archaeology and include, but not be limited to, the following sections:
  - **Cultural Resources Management Plan:** The CRMP shall define and map all known National Register of Historic Places- (NRHP) and California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR)-eligible properties in or within 100 feet (30.5 meters) of the proposed Project Area of Potential Effect. A cultural resources protection plan shall be included that details how NRHP- and CRHR-eligible properties will be avoided and protected during construction. Measures shall include, at a minimum, designation and marking of Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), archaeological monitoring, personnel training, and reporting. The plan shall also detail which avoidance measures will be used, where and when they will be implemented, and how avoidance measures and enforcement of ESAs will be coordinated with construction personnel.
  - **Cultural Resource Monitoring and Field Reporting:** The CRMP shall detail procedures for archaeological monitoring and Tribal participation, define the reporting matrix, and establish criteria for when the monitoring effort should increase or decrease if monitoring results indicate that a change is warranted. The CRMP shall also include guidelines for monitoring in areas of high sensitivity for the discovery of buried NRHP- and/or CRHR-eligible cultural resources, burials, cremations, tribal cultural resources, or sacred sites.
  - **Unanticipated Discovery Protocol:** The CRMP shall detail procedures for temporarily halting construction, defining work stoppage zones, notifying stakeholders (e.g., agencies, Native Americans, utilities), and assessing NRHP and/or CRHR eligibility in the event unanticipated discoveries are encountered during construction. It shall include methods, timelines for assessing NRHP and/or CRHR eligibility, formulating mitigation plans, and implementing treatment. Mitigation and treatment plans for unanticipated discoveries shall be reviewed by tribal stakeholders and approved by the CPUC and BLM prior to implementation.
  - **Data Analysis and Reporting:** The CRMP shall detail methods for data analysis in a regional context, reporting of results within one year of completion of field studies, curation of artifacts and data (maps, field notes, archival materials, recordings, reports, photographs, and analysts' data) at a facility that is approved by the CPUC and BLM and dissemination of reports to appropriate repositories.

- **CUL-2: Avoid Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA).** SCE shall perform cultural resource surveys for any portion of the proposed Project Area of Potential Effect not yet surveyed (e.g., new or modified staging areas, wire setup sites, existing access roads requiring improvements, or other work areas). Cultural resources discovered during surveys will be subject to APM CUL-1 (Develop CRMP). Where

operationally feasible, all NRHP- and CRHR-eligible resources shall be protected from direct Project impacts by Project redesign (i.e., relocation of the line, ancillary facilities, or temporary facilities or work areas). In addition, all historic properties/historical resources shall be avoided by all Project construction, operation and maintenance, and restoration activities, where feasible. Avoidance measures shall include, but not be limited to, fencing off ESAs for the duration of the Project or as outlined in the CRMP.

- **CUL-3: Train Construction Personnel.** Prior to initiating construction, all construction personnel shall be trained by a qualified archaeologist regarding the recognition of possible buried cultural resources (i.e., prehistoric and/or historical artifacts, objects, or features) and protection of these resources during construction. Training shall also inform all construction personnel of the procedures to be followed upon the discovery of cultural materials. All personnel shall be instructed that unauthorized removal or collection of artifacts is a violation of federal and State laws. Any excavation contract (or contracts for other activities that may have subsurface soil impacts) shall include clauses that require construction personnel to attend a Worker's Environmental Awareness Training Program (WEAP). The WEAP shall include the Project's potential for the post-discovery review of archaeological deposits, how to operate adjacent to and avoid all ESAs, and procedures to treat post-discovery reviews.
- **CUL-4: Conduct Cultural Resources Construction Monitoring.** Archaeological monitoring shall occur as outlined in the CRMP. Archaeological monitoring shall be conducted by a qualified archaeologist familiar with the types of historic and prehistoric resources that could occur within the Project Areas. The qualifications of the principal archaeologist and monitors shall be approved by the CPUC and BLM (when appropriate). Monitoring reports shall be submitted to the CPUC and BLM on a monthly basis. A Tribal Participant may be required at culturally sensitive locations in consultation with CPUC, BLM, and/or as outlined in the CRMP.
- **CUL-5: Properly Treat Human Remains.** SCE shall follow all federal and State laws, statutes, and regulations that govern the treatment of human remains. All work in the vicinity of a find shall cease within a 200-foot radius of the remains, the area will be protected to ensure that no additional disturbance occurs. Should inadvertent discovery of human remains be made on federal lands, the CPUC, BLM, and County Coroner (California Health and Safety Code 7050.5[b]) shall be notified immediately. If the remains are determined to be Native American or if Native American cultural items pursuant to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) are uncovered, the remains shall be treated in accordance with the provisions of NAGPRA (43 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 10) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (43 CFR 7). If the remains are not on federal land, the CPUC shall be notified immediately and the remains shall be treated in accordance with Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5, CEQA Section 15064.5(e), and Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. SCE shall assist and support the CPUC and BLM, as appropriate, in all required Archeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) (16 United States Code 470 & 43 CFR 70), NAGPRA (25 United States Code 3001 and 43 CFR 100), and Public Lands (Interior 43 CFR 8365.1-7) actions, government to-government and consultations with Native Americans, agencies, and consulting parties as requested by the CPUC and BLM. SCE shall comply with and implement all required actions and studies that result from such consultations.

5.19 Utilities and Service Systems

This section describes the utilities and system services in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to utilities and system services from construction and operation of the Project. Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) Solid Waste Information System database
- United States Department of Transportation National Pipeline Mapping System database
- Local agency and public utility planning documents, including but not limited to Urban Water Management Plans (UWMPs)

5.19.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way (ROW) that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" (or "Project Area") refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe. This section describes the existing utility and service systems (electric, natural gas, water, sewage and wastewater treatment, solid waste services, and other utilities) in the Project vicinity.

5.19.1.1 Utility Providers

Utility providers that serve the areas along the Project Alignment are as follows:

- Electricity: Southern California Edison (SCE)
- Natural gas: Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas)
- Water: MWD of Southern California (wholesaler), Palo Verde Irrigation District (PVID; retailer), City of Blythe (retailer)
- Sewer/Wastewater Treatment: Blythe Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility, County of Riverside Economic Development Community Service Area #51 – Lake Tamarisk Wastewater Treatment Plant.

5.19.1.2 Utility Lines

The following sections describe existing utility infrastructure in the vicinity of the Project.

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

5.19.1.2.1 Water

The PVID is the nearest water provider to the Project Alignment, mostly distributing to agricultural customers. MWD provides water for the unincorporated region of Riverside County surrounding the Project Area, and the City of Blythe provides drinking water to residents within its own jurisdiction. Water providers near the Project Alignment are listed above under Section 5.19.1.1 and described in further detail in Section 5.19.1.4. UWMPs from the City of Blythe, the County of Riverside, and PVID are further described in Section 5.19.4.4.2.

5.19.1.2.2 Natural Gas

The Project is located within the service territory of SoCalGas, although many communities along the rural western portion of the Project Area are not connected to the SoCalGas network and may utilize privately maintained individual gas tanks (SoCalGas 2021). SoCalGas operates the intrastate natural gas pipeline, which closely follows Interstate 10.

5.19.1.2.3 Sewer/Wastewater

Sewer pipelines are largely absent from the Project vicinity as wastewater collection in the unincorporated areas of Riverside County is primarily provided by septic systems. The City of Blythe has a sewage collection system that consists of numerous gravity lines and lift stations. Sewage is collected into sewage mains and delivered to the Blythe Regional Wastewater Reclamation Facility located at the south end of the city, east of South Lovekin Boulevard.

The City of Blythe owns and operates a 2.4-million-gallon-per-day (MGD) capacity wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The WWTP serves only the residents of the city. The WWTP is currently operating at approximately 1.3 MGD.

The community of Tamarisk Lake in Desert Center is located within the County of Riverside County Service Area #51, which provides wastewater treatment services via the Lake Tamarisk WWTP.

5.19.1.2.4 Electrical

Within the Project vicinity, electrical power is provided by SCE.

5.19.1.2.5 Stormwater

Stormwater conveyance infrastructure in the vicinity of the Project is generally limited to the area in and around the City of Blythe. The City of Blythe Public Works Department, Streets Division, maintains over 711 linear miles of streets, including associated storm drain structures and conveyances (City of Blythe 2023). While not mapped, stormwater facilities are generally concentrated along paved, public roadways.

5.19.1.2.6 Telecommunications

Telecommunication services within the Project vicinity are generally provided by AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, and T-Mobile (State of California 2022).

5.19.1.3 Approved Utility Projects

Utility projects within 2 miles of the Project Alignment are listed in Chapter 7, Cumulative Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations.

5.19.1.4 Water Supplies

The water suppliers that serve the Project Area are the PVID, MWD, and the City of Blythe. The PVID distributes most of its supply, pumped from the Colorado River, to agricultural customers within the Palo Verde Valley. The City of Blythe provides all of the drinking water to residents within its jurisdiction, and MWD provides water to the unincorporated areas of Riverside County within the Project Area.

5.19.1.4.1 Palo Verde Irrigation District

The PVID occupies about 189 square miles of territory in Riverside and Imperial Counties, California. PVID contains approximately 131,298 acres, 26,798 acres of which are on the Palo Verde Mesa.

5.19.1.4.2 Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

The MWD provides drinking water to unincorporated areas of Riverside County, including Eagle Mountain and Desert Center. The Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant, owned and operated by MWD, is the fourth pumping plant on the Colorado River Aqueduct System and has the second highest lift at 438 feet. It is located about 110 miles west of Whitsett/Intake and lifts water from an elevation of 966 feet to 1,404 feet. The plant contains a 118-acre-foot capacity-regulating reservoir and has the highest rated motor of all MWD plants at 12,500 horsepower (MWD 2023). Water supply is pumped from the Colorado River Aqueduct to the Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant.

5.19.1.4.3 City of Blythe

The City of Blythe (City) is a retail supplier of drinking water to approximately 15,000 residents within the city limits (City of Blythe 2020). Water systems are comprised of the City of Blythe Proper Water System, the Mesa Ranch Water System, and the Hidden Beaches Water System. These systems consist of groundwater supply wells, water storage facilities, booster pumps, and water distribution pipeline networks. The City's only source of water is from approximately 15 groundwater wells in the area, which receive treatment through the City of Blythe Water Treatment Plant located in the northeast area of the City.

5.19.1.5 Landfills and Recycling

Riverside County Department of Waste Resources operates two active landfills in the Project vicinity - Blythe Sanitary Landfill and Desert Center Sanitary Landfill. The Blythe Sanitary Landfill is approximately 38 percent full, with 3,834,470 cubic yards of capacity remaining. This landfill accepts agricultural, construction/demolition, contaminated soil, deceased animals, green materials, industrial, inert, liquid waste, metals, mixed municipal, tires, and wood waste (CalRecycle 2016). The Desert Center Sanitary Landfill is approximately 69 percent full, with 409,112 cubic yards of capacity remaining. This landfill accepts agricultural, asbestos, construction/demolition, contaminated soil, deceased animals, green materials, inert, metals, mixed municipal, tires, and wood waste (CalRecycle 2018). Additionally, the Kaiser iron ore mining facility, located approximately 3 miles north of Eagle Mountain Substation, has been permitted to transition into the Eagle Mountain Class III nonhazardous solid waste landfill and would provide additional waste capacity for the Project (County of Riverside 2015a).

5.19.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project. Section 5.10, Hydrology and Water Quality, provides a detailed discussion of regulations related to water quality and stormwater discharge, which are not discussed further in this section.

5.19.2.1 Federal

5.19.2.1.1 Clean Water Act

The CWA was originally enacted in 1948 and has been amended numerous times, with significant expansions in 1972 and 1977. The CWA's main objectives are to maintain and restore the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of waters through the authorization of standards. Authority for the implementation and enforcement of the CWA lies primarily with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and its delegated state and local agencies, namely the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and in the Project Area, the Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

5.19.2.1.2 Safe Drinking Water Act

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) regulates public water systems that supply drinking water (42 United States Code Section 300(f) *et seq.*; 40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 141 *et seq*.). The principal objective of the federal SDWA is to ensure that water from the tap is potable (safe and satisfactory for drinking, cooking, and hygiene). The main components of the federal SDWA are to:

- Ensure that water from the tap is potable
- Prevent contamination of groundwater aquifers that are the main source of drinking water for a community
- Regulate the discharge of wastes into underground injection wells pursuant to the Underground Injection Control program (see 40 CFR 144)
- Regulate distribution systems

5.19.2.2 State

5.19.2.2.1 California Health and Safety Code § 25150.7(d)(1)

The California Health and Safety Code requires treated wood waste to be disposed of in either a Class I hazardous waste landfill or in a composite-lined portion of a solid waste landfill that meets RWQCB-specified requirements.

5.19.2.2.2 Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989

The Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, also known as Assembly Bill (AB) 939, mandates that California's jurisdictions divert 50 percent of their solid waste from landfills. CalRecycle is under the umbrella of the California EPA and is responsible for the implementation of AB 939.

5.19.2.2.3 California Code of Regulations (Title 27)

Title 27 (Environmental Protection) of the California Code of Regulations defines regulations for the treatment, storage, processing, and disposal of solid waste. The SWRCB maintains and regulates compliance with Title 27 (Environmental Protection) of the California Code of Regulations. The compliance of the Project would be enforced by the Colorado River Basin RWQCB.

5.19.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC General Order 131-D (GO 131-D), Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.19.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

The County of Riverside General Plan contains the following policies relating to utilities from the Safety and Circulation Elements:

Policy C 1.4 Utilize existing infrastructure and utilities to the maximum extent practicable and provide for the logical, timely, and economically efficient extension of infrastructure and services.

Policy S 6.16 Promote strengthening of planned and existing utilities and lifelines, the retrofit and rehabilitation of existing weak structures, and the relocation of certain critical facilities. (AI 100, 101, 148, 152, 155, 156)

The County of Riverside Multipurpose Open Space Element addresses wastewater with the following policies:

Policy OS 3.1 Encourage innovative and creative techniques for wastewater treatment, including the use of local water treatment plants.

Policy OS 3.2 Encourage wastewater treatment innovations, sanitary sewer systems, and groundwater management strategies that protect groundwater quality in rural areas.

5.19.2.3.2 Riverside Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan

The Riverside Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan (CIWMP) outlines the goals, policies, and programs that the county and its cities, would implement to create an integrated and cost-effective waste management system that complies with the provisions of AB 939 and its diversion mandates. The Riverside County Waste Management Department is specifically charged with the following responsibilities:

- Implementing programs that adhere to the goals, policies, and objectives outlined in the Source Reduction and Recycling Element of the county's General Plan that enable the unincorporated portion of Riverside County to achieve 50-percent diversion of solid waste from landfill disposal.
- Implementing programs that adhere to the goals, policies, and objectives outlined in the county's Household Hazardous Waste Element to reduce the amount of household hazardous waste that is disposed of within landfills.

- Meeting the solid waste disposal needs of all Riverside County residents.
- Maintaining and updating the CIWMP and reporting to the California Integrated Waste Management Board on the county's progress in complying with AB 939.

5.19.2.3.3 City of Blythe General Plan

The Parks and Recreation Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains policies and implementation strategies that promote the establishment of water supply and wastewater services that adequately meet public needs. Policies from the Parks and Recreation Element relating to water supply and wastewater include the following (City of Blythe 2007):

Policy 10 Promote orderly and efficient expansion of public utilities to meet projected needs.

Policy 11 Encourage water conservation with incentives for decreased water use and active public education programs.

Policy 12 Coordinate capital improvements planning for all municipal service infrastructure with the direction, extent, and timing of growth.

Policy 13 Establish equitable methods for distributing costs associated with providing water and wastewater service to development, including impact mitigation fees where warranted.

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains the following policy relating to solid waste management (City of Blythe 2007):

Policy 28 Reduce the generation of solid waste, including hazardous waste, and recycle those materials that are used, to slow the filling of local and regional landfills, in accord with the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989.

5.19.3 Impact Questions

5.19.3.1 Utilities and Service Systems Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Environmental Checklist. For utilities and service systems, the CEQA Checklist asks, would the project:

- Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?
- Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?
- Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?
- Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

- Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

5.19.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

The CPUC has identified the following additional CEQA impact question:

- Would the project increase the rate of corrosion of adjacent utility lines as a result of alternating current impacts?

5.19.4 Impact Analysis

5.19.4.1 Utilities and Service Systems Impact Analysis

5.19.4.1.1 Utilities and Service Systems Methodology

Utilities and service system impacts were evaluated based upon a review of UWMPs, data from County of Riverside and the City of Blythe, regulatory requirements that apply to areas crossed by the Project, and the potential for the Project to affect utility infrastructure.

5.19.4.1.2 Would the Project require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project involves work on existing electrical infrastructure in an existing ROW. The Project is part of SCE's TLRR Program, the purpose of which is to ensure circuits meet or exceed the most stringent strength, clearance, and reliability requirements of CPUC GO 95. The Project would not directly induce population growth because the Project does not include the construction of any new homes or businesses, and it would not indirectly induce population growth by extending infrastructure into previously unserved areas or by providing additional electrical capacity. The Project would not expand or relocate the Project circuit and would not require connection to or relocation of any existing utility infrastructure.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operation and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

Water, Wastewater Treatment, or Stormwater Facilities

Minimal water use would be required for construction activities for the Project. Water required during construction (e.g., for concrete and dust suppression) would be obtained from existing developed water supply systems and transported to the site. As discussed in Section 5.10, Hydrology and Water Quality, water use is estimated at 14,038 gallons per day on average which, over the 8-month construction period, would amount to a total of 9.6 acre-feet (see Appendix M). Water would be obtained from local municipal sources that have enough supplies to serve the Project, such as the City of Blythe, the County of Riverside, and the PVID. Municipal supplies may come from groundwater or surface water sources, or a combination of both, depending on the water agency. No new connections to a water supply system would be required. During construction, portable sanitation facilities would be used in the Project Area. Portable sanitation facilities would be maintained by a licensed sanitation contractor, and sanitation waste and wastewater (i.e.,

human-generated waste) would be transferred to existing off-site disposal facilities in accordance with sanitation waste management practices. No new connections to wastewater treatment facilities would be required. As discussed in Section 5.10, Hydrology and Water Quality, the incremental increase in impervious surfaces resulting from the Project would represent a minor alteration in the existing drainage pattern and would not create or contribute to a volume of runoff water that would have the potential to require new or expanded stormwater drainage facilities. Therefore, the Project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment, or stormwater drainage facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

Electric Power, Natural Gas, or Telecommunications Facilities

The Project would not increase demands for natural gas, electricity, or telecommunications; and no new natural gas lines or telecommunications facilities would be needed for construction. While construction of the Project would have the potential to disrupt existing underground utility systems, coordination with other utility system owners and compliance with California Government Code Sections 4216 through 4216.9 and CPUC GO 95 would reduce the likelihood of accidental disruptions from a collocation accident. For example, prior to initiating underground construction, including drilling for pole foundations, SCE or its contractor would contact Underground Service Alert to identify any existing underground utilities in the construction zone. Therefore, the Project would not require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.1.3 Would the Project have sufficient water supplies available to serve the Project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

Less than Significant Impact. Project construction activities would result in a temporary increase in water demand for dust management and concrete mixing. Water used during construction would be obtained from existing hydrants and wells operated by utilities, including the City of Blythe (6,900 acre-feet of capacity per year), County of Riverside CSA 51 (1,276 acre-feet of capacity per year) and CSA 122 (300 acre-feet of capacity per year), and the PVID (717 acre-feet of capacity per year) (City of Blythe 2020; Riverside Local Agency Formation Commission 2019). The municipal supplies may come from groundwater or surface water sources, or a combination of both, depending on the water agency. Each water agency is responsible for managing groundwater resources to ensure sufficient water supply is available, and the Project would not result in a significant increase in demand for water. In addition, the Project is part of SCE's TLRR Program, the purpose of which is to ensure circuits meet or exceed the most stringent strength, clearance, and reliability requirements of CPUC GO 95. As such, the Project would not provide additional electrical capacity that could promote growth or other changes to the environment that could result in increased demand for water supplies. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.1.4 Would the Project result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the Project that it has adequate capacity to serve the Project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

Less than Significant Impact. The Project is not serviced by a wastewater treatment provider, and the Project would not require connection to a wastewater treatment facility. During construction, portable restrooms would be staged at work sites. Sanitation waste and wastewater (i.e., human-generated waste) from these restrooms would be disposed of offsite at appropriate treatment facilities. Wastewater from the portable restrooms used during Project construction would not constitute a significant addition to existing wastewater treatment commitments in the region; and existing wastewater facilities would adequately accommodate the minor, temporary increase in demand associated with Project construction while serving existing commitments. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.1.5 Would the Project generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. Construction of the Project would result in the generation of solid waste materials, including metal, wood, and concrete from structure removal and replacement of the existing conductors. Approximately 570 tons of construction waste would be generated by the Project and would be temporarily stored in laydown yards prior to disposal. Empty cable reels and spools would be returned to the vendor or the laydown yard for reuse, and wiring would be recycled. Materials would be recycled to the greatest extent possible; however, some materials may require disposal, which would occur in accordance with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations. In addition, implementation of applicant proposed measures (APMs) HAZ-1 and HAZ-3, which require development and implementation of a Hazardous Materials Management Plan and Soil Management Plan, would ensure that unanticipated soil contamination is appropriately handled and disposed of. Soil material removed from the Project would be collected, analyzed for contaminants, and characterized based on analytical results. Based on those results, SCE would either reuse the soil on site, send the soil for recycling, or dispose of it off site at a licensed waste facility.

Approximately 100 truckloads for hauling materials would be required for the construction phase of the Project. The Riverside County Department of Waste Resources operates two active landfills in the Project vicinity: Blythe Sanitary Landfill and Desert Center Sanitary Landfill. The Blythe Sanitary Landfill is approximately 45 percent full, with 3,271,203 cubic yards of capacity remaining. This landfill accepts agricultural, construction/demolition, contaminated soil, deceased animals, green materials, industrial, inert, liquid waste, metals, mixed municipal, tires, and wood waste (CalRecycle 2023). The Desert Center Sanitary Landfill is approximately 69 percent full, with 127,414 cubic yards of capacity remaining. This landfill accepts agricultural, asbestos, construction/demolition, contaminated soil, deceased animals, green materials, inert metals, mixed municipal, tires, and wood waste (CalRecycle 2018). Additionally, the Kaiser

iron ore mining facility, located approximately 3 miles north of Eagle Mountain Substation, has been permitted to transition into the Eagle Mountain Class III nonhazardous solid waste landfill and would provide additional waste capacity for the Project (County of Riverside 2015a). Given the substantial remaining capacity of the Blythe Sanitary Landfill and the Desert Center Sanitary Landfill, as well as the availability of the Eagle Mountain Class III nonhazardous solid waste landfill, the Project would not generate a considerable increase in solid waste that would exceed the capacity of the regional landfills or the existing, planned, and proposed facilities in Riverside County. Additionally, the Project would comply with all applicable solid waste regulations and policies in the Riverside General Plan's Circulation and Healthy Communities Element and the City of Blythe General Plan's Open Space and Conservation Element related to solid waste (County of Riverside 2015a; City of Blythe 2007). Furthermore, APMs HAZ-1 and HAZ-2 detail hazardous waste disposal guidelines, which would ensure that any hazardous waste materials generated by the Project would be safely disposed of. All other materials would be disposed of in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. With implementation of APMs HAZ-1 and HAZ-2, the Project would not generate solid waste in excess of State or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals; and impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.1.6 Would the Project comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Less than Significant Impact. The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989—which emphasizes resource conservation through reduction, recycling, and reuse of solid waste guide solid waste management—requires that localities conduct a Solid Waste Generation Study and develop a Source Reduction Recycling Element. Construction activities would be compliant with these applicable Solid Waste Management Policy Plans because SCE would recycle materials as appropriate. All solid waste generated during construction of the Project would be temporarily stored in a designated area of the laydown yards or substations and would be reused or disposed of.

In addition, the County of Riverside Waste Management Plan provides goals, objectives, and policies to help the county reach waste reduction and recycling goals. Compliance with the Waste Management Plan would ensure that waste produced by the Project would be consistent with the county's goals and policies related to solid waste. Debris and solid waste would be generated during construction of the Project and would be transported to an approved solid waste disposal facility in compliance with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Based on the relatively low quantity of waste material generated during construction, the Project would comply with federal, State, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste. Impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.1.7 Would the project increase the rate of corrosion of adjacent utility lines as a result of alternating current impacts?

No Impact. No aspect of construction would increase the rate of corrosion of adjacent utility lines as a result of alternating current impacts, as construction would not include activities that would introduce or increase electrical interference along existing pipeline facilities. The infrastructure to be installed as part of SCE's TLRR Project would be located in the same alignment as the existing infrastructure, and thus would be installed in the same soils and have the same separation distances, collocated lengths, and crossing angles as are currently present. No impact would occur, and no mitigation is required.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.4.2 Utility Relocation

No conflicts with existing non-Project utility lines are anticipated based on the current Project design and known locations of utility lines; therefore, no utilities would require relocation.

5.19.4.3 Waste

Construction of the Project would generate solid waste in the form of metals (e.g., from the removed metal structures and scrap wire), wood poles, concrete (e.g., from removed structure foundations), wood pallets, cardboards/papers (e.g., from material packaging), worker-generated solid waste (e.g., food and food packaging), and organic waste (e.g., removed vegetation). SCE estimates that the entire mass of the removed wood structures would be recycled. SCE estimates that, at a minimum, three-quarters of the mass of metallic hardware and fittings and miscellaneous solid waste would be recycled. A total of 71 wood poles identified for replacement may require recycling, generating an estimated 145 tons of solid waste. A total of 25 steel poles identified for replacement may require recycling, generating an estimated 150 tons of solid waste.

5.19.4.4 Water Supply

5.19.4.4.1 Estimate of the Amount of Water Required for Project Construction and Operation, and Potential Water Supply Source(s)

The estimated amount of water required for Project construction is provided above in Section 5.10, Hydrology and Water Quality. No increases in operational water demand are anticipated. The potential water supply sources include the water purveyors and utilities listed above in Section 5.19.1.2.1. In addition, wastewater treatment plants may be a source of construction water supply (i.e., a source of reclaimed or recycled water) for the Project. The water supply sources would be identified by SCE's construction contractor during the pre-construction planning process.

5.19.4.4.2 Evaluation of the Ability of the Water supplier to Meet the Project Demand Under a Multiple Dry Year Scenario

Because individual water suppliers are not identified at this time, SCE has examined the regional UWMPs across the Project Alignment to assess the ability of water suppliers to meet the Project's demands under a

multiple dry year scenario. The UWMPs reviewed include the City of Blythe 2020 UWMP, the County of Riverside 2020 UWMP, and the PVID 2020 UWMP.

The City of Blythe 2020 UWMP encompasses the portion of the Project within the City of Blythe. The plan forecasts excess supply from 2020 through 2040 under a multiple dry year scenario ranging from approximately 4,091 acre-feet per year in 2020 to 2,396 acre-feet per year in 2040. This excess supply suggests that the water supplier would have the ability to meet the small, short-term demand of the Project for work within the city's water service area (City of Blythe 2020).

The County of Riverside CSA 51 covers the entirety of the Project Alignment within the unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The water wholesaler serves multiple, smaller water retailers in the vicinity of the Project. The County of Riverside 2020 UWMP forecasts balanced or excess supply from 2020 through 2040, ranging from 0 to 11,480 acre-feet per year of excess supply under a multiple dry year scenario. The supplier does not forecast any supply deficiencies in a multiple dry year scenario. This balanced or excess supply suggests the County of Riverside has the ability to meet increasing demand over time, and would have the ability to meet the small, short-term demand of the Project for work within its service area (County of Riverside 2020).

PVID's service area covers the eastern portion of the Project Alignment within the unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The water retailer serves mainly agricultural customers within the Palo Verde Mesa. Like the County of Riverside, PVID's 2020 UWMP forecasts balanced or excess supply from 2020 through 2065, ranging from 0 to 8,434 acre-feet per year of excess supply under a multiple dry year scenario. The supplier does not forecast any supply deficiencies in a multiple dry year scenario. This balanced or excess supply suggests PVID has the ability to meet increasing demand over time, and would have the ability to meet the small, short-term demand of the Project for work within its service area (PVID 2021).

Given that all of the water providers—including water wholesalers—that serve the Project Area forecast balanced or excess supply during a multiple dry year scenario, water suppliers would be able to meet the Project's minimal anticipated demand.

5.19.4.4.3 Analysis of the Project Meeting the Criteria for Consideration as a Project Subject to Water Supply Assessment Requirements under California Water Code Section 10912

The Project does not meet the criteria for consideration as a project subject to Water Supply Assessment Requirements under California Water Code Section 10912, which states the following:

"For the purposes of this part, the following terms have the following meanings:

(a) "Project" means any of the following:

(1) A proposed residential development of more than 500 dwelling units.

(2) A proposed shopping center or business establishment employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 500,000 square feet of floor space.

(3) A proposed commercial office building employing more than 1,000 persons or having more than 250,000 square feet of floor space.

(4) A proposed hotel or motel, or both, having more than 500 rooms.

(5) A proposed industrial, manufacturing, or processing plant, or industrial park planned to house more than 1,000 persons, occupying more than 40 acres of land, or having more than 650,000 square feet of floor area.

(6) A mixed-use project that includes one or more of the projects specified in this subdivision.

(7) A project that would demand an amount of water equivalent to, or greater than, the amount of water required by a 500-dwelling unit project."

The Project does not meet the definition of a "Project" under (1) through (6). Regarding (7) and according to the California Department of Water Resources' Guidebook for Implementation of Senate Bill 610 and Senate Bill 221 of 2001 to assist water suppliers, cities, and counties in integrating water and land use planning, it is generally acknowledged that 1 acre-foot of water can serve two to three households on an annual basis. As presented above, it is estimated that the Project would demand approximately 9.6 acre-feet of water over the approximately 8-month construction period and negligible new water demand during operations. The Project would not demand an amount of water equivalent to or greater than the amount of water required by a 500-dwelling unit project, and thus the Project does not meet the criteria for consideration as a project subject to Water Supply Assessment Requirements under California Water Code Section 10912. Accordingly, no Water Supply Assessment has been developed for the Project.

5.19.4.5 Cathodic Protection

The Project involves the replacement of existing utility structures; therefore, the potential for existing utilities to experience corrosion due to proximity to the Project is not anticipated to change from existing conditions. Given the nature of the Project and limited collocation with adjacent pipeline facilities, construction of the Project is not anticipated to require cathodic protection.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.19.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No CPUC Draft Environmental Measures have been identified for utilities and service systems.

5.19.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.19.5.1.1 Utilities and Service Systems APMs

No APMs specific to utilities and service systems have been developed for the project to reduce an impact identified in Section 5.19.4.

5.19.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

The following APM relevant to a different impact category would also reduce hazards or hazardous materials impacts associated with the project:

- **HAZ-1: Hazardous Materials Management Plan.** SCE shall prepare and implement a Hazardous Materials Management Plan (HMMP) during project construction. The program shall outline proper hazardous materials handling, use, storage, and disposal requirements as well as hazardous waste management procedures. This plan shall be developed to ensure that all hazardous materials and wastes

would be handled and disposed of according to applicable rules and regulations. The HMMP shall address the types of hazardous materials to be used during the project, hazardous materials storage, employee training requirements, hazard recognition, fire safety, first aid/emergency medical procedures, hazardous materials release containment/control procedures, hazard communication training, personal protective equipment training, and release reporting requirements.

- **HAZ-2: U.S. EPA Identification Number.** SCE shall obtain a U.S. EPA Identification Number prior to transport of hazardous waste offsite for disposal. Prior to the start of construction, SCE shall also determine whether the treatment or the handling or the storing of hazardous materials will require authorization of the local Certified Unified Program Agency.
- **HAZ-3: Soil Management Plan.** A Soil Management Plan shall be developed and implemented for the proposed Project. The Soil Management Plan shall provide guidance for the proper handling, on-site management, and disposal of impacted soil that may be encountered during construction activities.

5.20 Wildfire

This section describes the wildfire risk in the area of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation Project (Project), as well as the potential impacts to the wildfire risk from construction and operation of the Project.

Research for this analysis involved a review of the following resources:

- California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) High Fire-Threat District Map
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps
- Wildland Urban Interface data
- CAL FIRE California Fire Perimeters maps
- Local agency planning documents

5.20.1 Environmental Setting

The Project is located in an existing right-of-way that extends approximately 53 miles between the existing Eagle Mountain and Blythe Substations. Approximately 34.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses land managed by the Bureau of Land Management or the Metropolitan Water District (approximately 1 mile), and approximately 18.5 linear miles of the existing line traverses privately-owned lands. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "Project Site" refers to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, Eagle Mountain Substation, and Blythe Substation as well as associated Project work areas and laydown yards/staging areas.[1] The term "Project Alignment" refers specifically to the EM-B subtransmission alignment, between the Eagle Mountain and Blythe substations. The Project Site is generally located in the Chuckwalla Valley between Desert Center and Blythe within Riverside County, California. The majority of the Project Site is within unincorporated Riverside County with approximately 0.7 mile of its 53 linear miles located within the city limits of Blythe.

5.20.1.1 High Fire Risk Areas and State Responsibility Areas

Within California, Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZs) are designated by the CAL FIRE. CAL FIRE uses a five-tiered ranking system to assess the threat to people based on fuel hazard, wildland fire potential, and housing density. The tiers, from lowest to highest threat, are termed little or no threat, moderate threat, high threat, very high threat, and extreme threat. FHSZs are administered by the federal, State, or local government that is financially responsible for preventing and suppressing wildfires in a given area, and are categorized into the following three groups:

- Federal Responsibility Areas (FRA): The federal government is financially responsible for wildfire suppression.
- State Responsibility Areas (SRA): The state is financially responsible for wildfire suppression.
- Local Responsibility Areas (LRA): Cities or counties are financially responsible for wildfire suppression.

Additionally, the CPUC produces a High Fire-Threat District (HFTD) map to show areas where there is an elevated (Tier 2) or extreme (Tier 3) risk from wildfires associated with overhead utility power lines or overhead utility power line facilities also supporting communication facilities. The CPUC HFTD map also

[1] The terms "laydown yard", "staging yard", and "staging area" may be used interchangeably throughout the document.

indicates areas (Zone 1) in direct proximity to communities, roads, and utility lines where there is a direct threat to public safety.

As shown in Figure 5.20-1, the Project Alignment does not cross any SRAs (CAL FIRE 2023a). In addition, the Project Alignment is not located within an area classified as Moderate, High, or Very High FHSZs nor is it within a HFTD Tier 2 or 3 area or Zone 1. Southern California Edison (SCE) has not independently identified any fire hazard severity zone areas along the Project Alignment (CPUC 2023).

Figure 5.20-2 presents the wildland urban interface (WUI) data in the Project vicinity. WUI is the area where houses meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland vegetation. This makes the WUI a focal area for human-environment conflicts such as wildland fires. Figure 5.20-2 shows that the Project Alignment primarily extends through areas with vegetation but no habitation, areas of no to very low vegetation and no habitation, and minimal areas of low interface (primarily near Eagle Mountain Substation and Blythe Substation).

5.20.1.2 Fire Occurrence

According to the CAL FIRE online historical fire map, one historical fire overlapped or was within 1 mile of the Project Alignment (CAL FIRE 2023b). This fire, known as the Lightning #55, occurred in 1973.

5.20.1.3 Fire Risk

As part of the process of predicting potential behavior and effects of wildland fires, forest/fire scientists have developed fire behavior fuel models. These models use descriptions of fuel properties and climate to calculate fire behavior potentials. Anderson's original fire behavior fuel model contained 13 fuel properties. The Scott and Burgan Fire Behavior Fuel Model expanded the range of fuel models to improve predictions outside of the original, with 40 classifications of fuel. Scott and Burgan Fire Behavior Fuel Model (LANDFIRE 2023) data for the area along the Project Alignment are presented in Figure 5.20-3.

Table 5.20-1 lists vegetation types included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fire Effects Information System (FEIS) that are found along the Project Alignment. FEIS provides synthesized scientific information about fire effects on individual ecosystems, how often fire might occur in individual ecosystems and how long it takes individual ecosystems to recover (replacement) (USDA 2023). Vegetation community mapping is also shown on Figure 5.4-1 in Section 5.4, Biological Resources. The vegetation types and plant communities that the Project crosses do not present a high fire risk. Wind direction and speed, relative humidity, and temperature for representative weather stations along the alignment between 2016 and 2020, gathered hourly, and digital elevation models of topography are attached in Appendix L (Weather Data). Ten-year publicly available data is not available at this time.

5.20.1.4 Values at Risk

Communities near the Project Alignment are identified in Section 5.14, Population and Housing, and are shown on Figure 5.14-1. Table 5.20-2 shows values (facilities, structures, residences) within 1,000 feet of the Project Alignment based on a review of aerial maps.

Figure 5.20-1 Fire Hazard Severity Zones

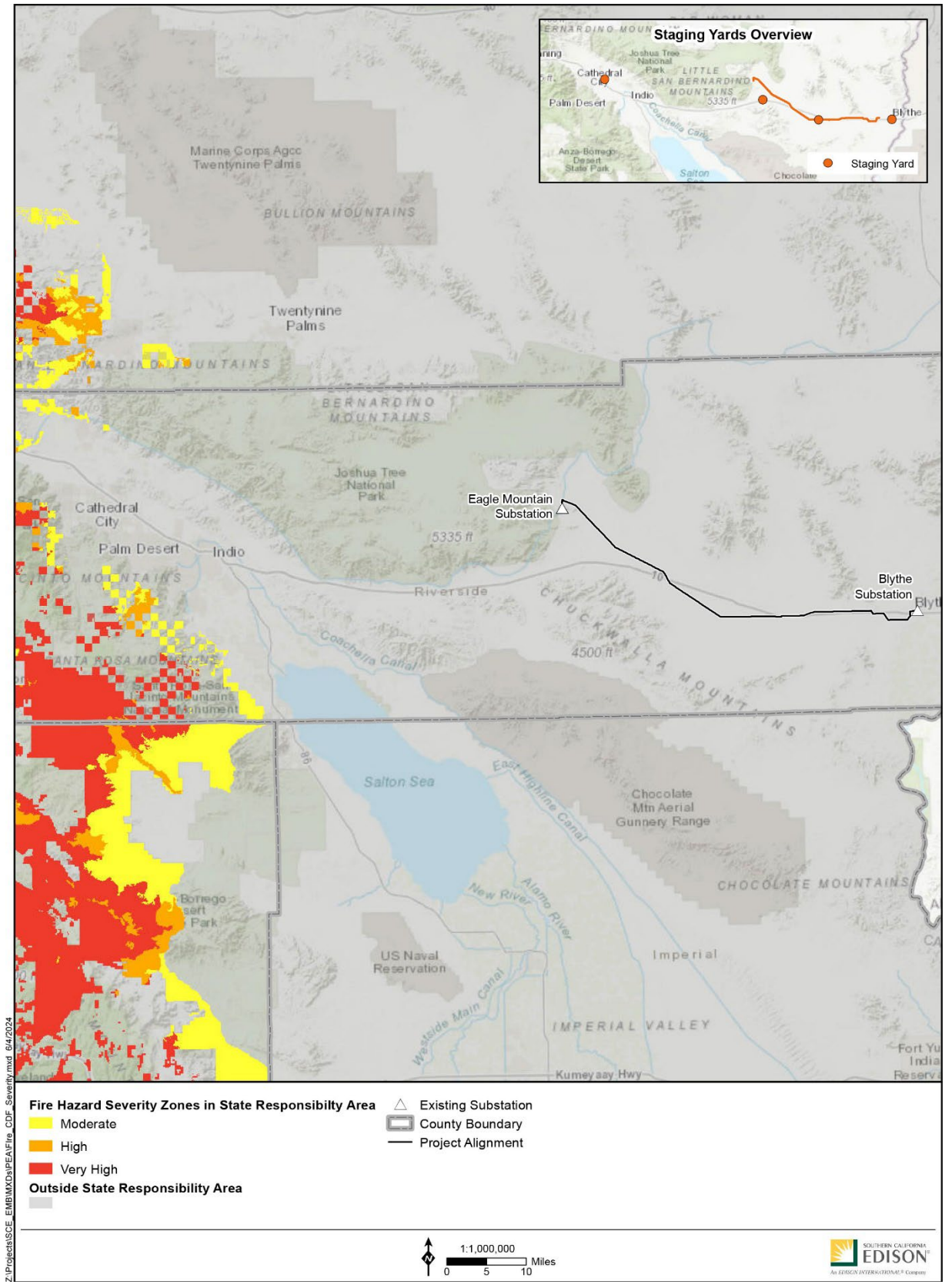

Figure 5.20-2 Wildland Urban Interface

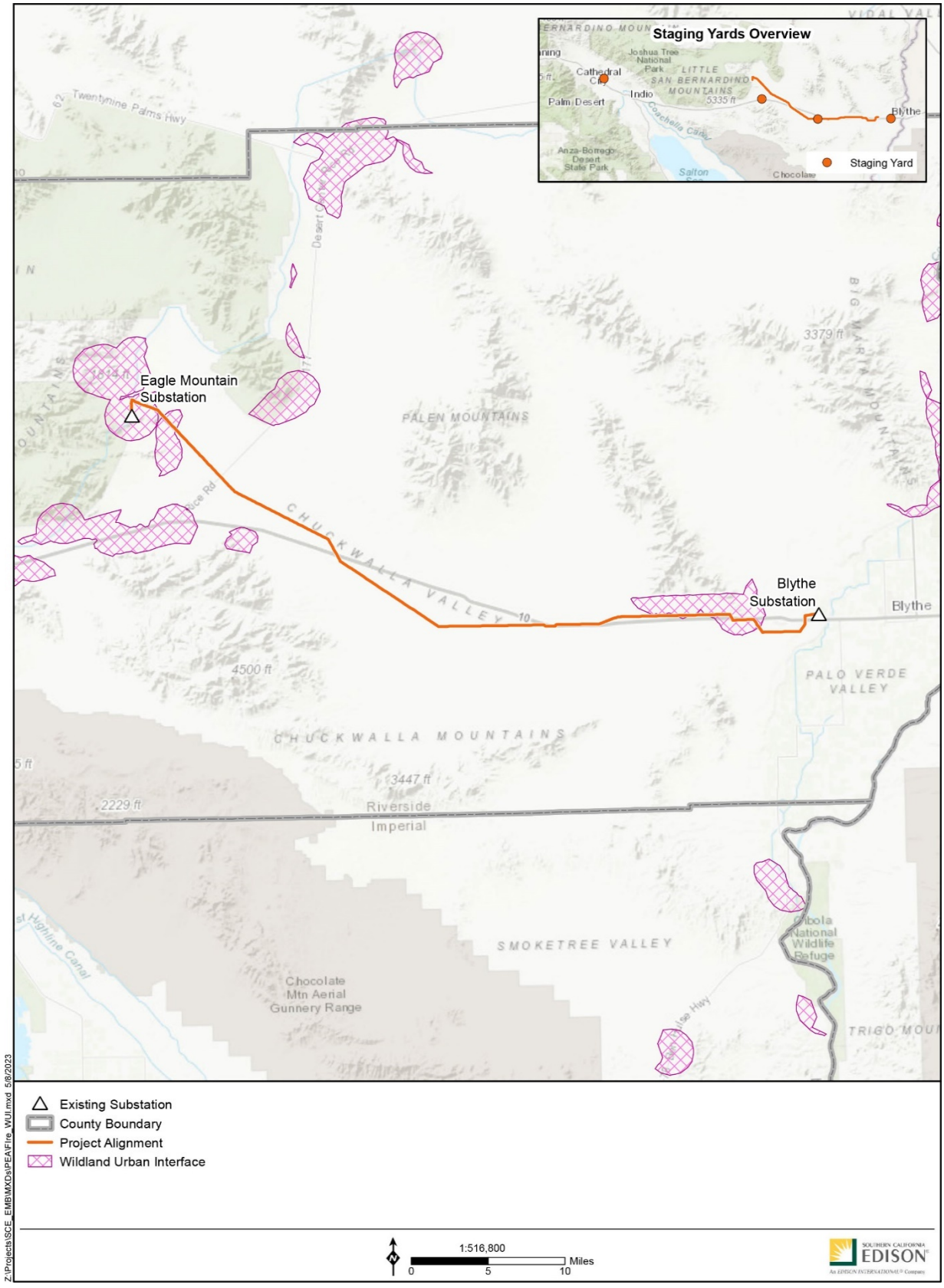

Figure 5.20-3 Scott and Burgan Fire Behavior Fuel Model

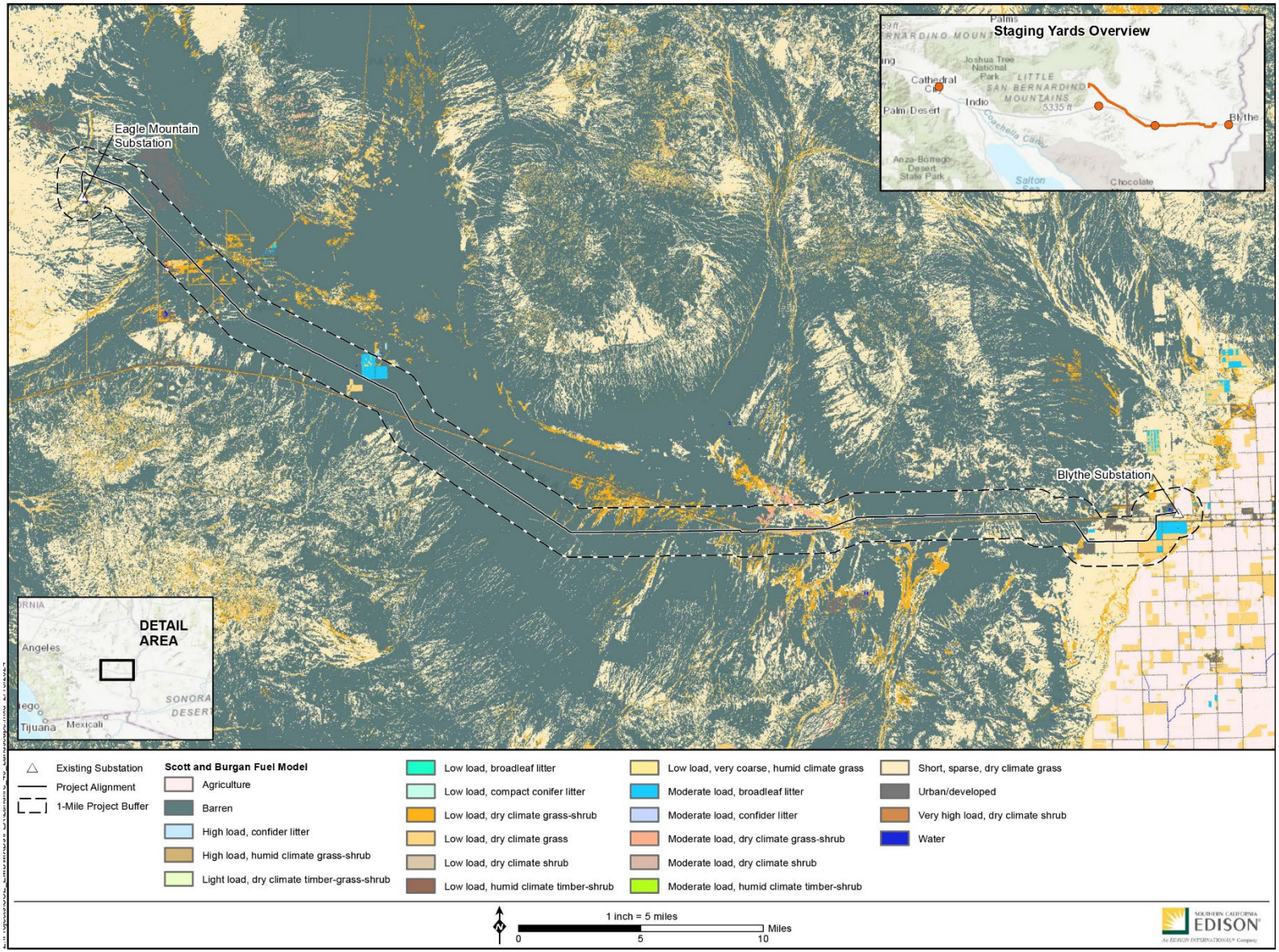

Table 5.20-1 USDA Fire Effects Information System Vegetation Types

Vegetation Types/Plant Community	Fire Interval[1]	Fire Severity[2] (Percentage of Fires)			High Risk
		Replacement	Mixed	Low	
North American warm desert riparian systems	666	100	0	0	No
Sonora-Mojave Creosotebush-White Bursage Desert Scrub	333	57	43	0	No
Sonoran palo verde-mixed cacti desert scrub	1,000	100	0	0	No

Source: USDA 2023

[1] Average historical fire-return interval derived from LANDFIRE succession modeling (labeled "MFRI" in LANDFIRE).

[2] Percentage of fires in three fire severity classes, derived from LANDFIRE succession modeling. Replacement severity fires cause >75% kill or top-kill of the upper canopy layer; mixed-severity fires cause 26%-75%; low-severity fires cause <26%.

Table 5.20-2 Values at Risk Along the Project Alignment

Values at Risk	Building Material and Vulnerability	Approximate Distance from Project Alignment
Fire Department	Metal/Steel Low vulnerability	5,215 feet
Eagle Mountain Pumping Plant (MWD)	Metal/Steel Low vulnerability	710 feet
Abandoned Homes (Department of Interior)	Wood and other materials consistent with Residential Use Medium vulnerability	208 feet
Wiley's Well Rest Stop	Metal/Steel Low vulnerability	990 feet
Blythe Photovoltaic Power Plant	Metal/Steel Low vulnerability	140 feet
Steel Shed and storage yard	Wood and other materials consistent with Residential Use Medium vulnerability	100 feet
Blythe Skeet and Trap Club	Wood, concrete and other materials consistent with Commercial Use Medium vulnerability	725 feet

5.20.1.5 Evacuation Routes

The Project Alignment is in eastern Riverside County, with the western most portion of the Project Alignment located in the unincorporated Desert Center area and the eastern most portion of the Project Alignment in the unincorporated Palo Verde Valley area. Evacuation routes for the Desert Center area include Interstate (I-) 10 and State Route (SR-) 177. Evacuation routes for the Palo Verde Valley area, which surrounds the City of Blythe, are I-10, US Route 95, SR-78, and Midland Road/North Lovekin Boulevard (Riverside County 2021). The Project Alignment crosses SR-177 and crosses and runs parallel to I-10. Additional information about emergency response plans and evacuation plans are addressed in Section 5.9, Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety.

5.20.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, State, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the Project.

5.20.2.1 Federal

There are no federal regulations applicable to the Project.

5.20.2.2 State

5.20.2.2.1 California Public Utilities Commission General Order 95, Section 35

Section 35 of CPUC General Order (GO) 95 covers all aspects of design, construction, and operation and maintenance (O&M) of electrical power lines, as well as fire safety hazards.

5.20.2.2.2 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 1250 to 1258

14 California Code of Regulations sections 1250 to 1258 provide specific clearance standards to be maintained by utility companies between electric power lines and all vegetation.

5.20.2.2.3 Senate Bill 901

Senate Bill 901, enacted in 2018, adopted new provisions of California Public Utilities Code (CPUC) section 8386 requiring all electric utilities to prepare, submit and implement annual wildfire mitigation plans that describe the utilities' plans to construct, operate and maintain their electrical lines and equipment in a manner that would help minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfires associated with those electrical lines and equipment.

5.20.2.2.4 Health and Safety Code Section 13009

Health and Safety Code section 13009 permits CAL FIRE to file civil actions to recover fire suppression costs from a party who causes a fire (1) negligently, or (2) in violation of a law or an order to correct a fire hazard. CAL FIRE established a Civil Cost Recovery Program to satisfy the statute's intent to assign financial responsibility to culpable parties and to prevent fires through deterrence.

5.20.2.2.5 California Public Resources Code Sections 4292 and 4293

California Public Resources Code (PRC) section 4292 states:

> "[A]ny person that owns, controls, operates, or maintains any electrical transmission or distribution line…shall, during such times and in such areas as are determined to be necessary by the director or the agency, has primary responsibility for fire protection of such areas, maintain around and adjacent to any pole or tower which supports a switch, fuse, transformer, lightening arrester, line junction, or dead end or corner pole, a firebreak which consists of a clearing of not less than 10 feet in each direction from the outer circumference of such a pole or tower."

PRC section 4293 states:

> "[A]ny person that owns, controls, operates, or maintains any electrical transmission or distribution line upon any mountainous land, or in forest-covered land, or grass-covered land shall, during such times and in such areas as are determined to be necessary by the director or the agency which has primary responsibility for the fire protection of such area, maintain a clearance of the respective distances which are specified in this section in all directions between all vegetation and all conductors which are carrying electric current:

(a) For any line which is operating at 2,400 or more volts, but less than 72,000 volts, 4 feet

(b) For any line which is operating at 72,000 or more volts, but less than 110,000 volts, 6 feet

(c) For any line which is operating at 110,000 or more volts, 10 feet

In every case, such distance shall be sufficiently great to furnish the required clearance at any position of the wire, or conductor when the adjacent air temperature is 120 degrees Fahrenheit, or less. Dead trees, old decadent or rotten trees, trees weakened by decay or disease and trees or portions thereof that are leaning toward the line which may contact the line from the side or may fall on the line shall be felled, cut, or trimmed so as to remove such hazard."

5.20.2.2.6 Red Flag Fire Warning and Weather Watches

Like PRC sections 4292 and 4293, red-flag warnings and fire-weather watches aim to prevent fire events and reduce the potential for substantial damage. When extreme fire weather or behavior is present or predicted in an area, a red-flag warning or fire-weather watch may be issued to advise local fire agencies that these conditions are present. The National Weather Service issues red flag warnings and fire weather watches and CAL FIRE has provided safety recommendations for preventing fires, including clearing and removing vegetation, and ensuring the proper use of equipment.

5.20.2.2.7 Division of California Occupational Safety and Health, Department of Industrial Relations

The Division of California Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) protects workers and the public from safety hazards. Cal/OSHA assumes primary responsibility for developing and enforcing workplace safety regulations. These regulations concern the use of hazardous materials in the workplace, including preparation of emergency action and fire prevention plans.

Cal/OSHA also enforces hazard communication program regulations. Cal/OSHA standards are generally more stringent than federal regulations. Construction workers and operational employees within the project alignment would be subject to these requirements.

5.20.2.2.8 2019 Strategic Plan for California

The 2019 Strategic Plan prepared by CAL FIRE and the California Natural Resources Agency lays out central goals for reducing and preventing the impacts of fire in California. The goals are meant to establish, through local, state, federal, and private partnerships, a natural environment that is more resilient and human-made assets that are more resistant to the occurrence and effects of wildland fire. In addition to the 2019 Strategic Plan for California, individual CalFire units develop fire plans, which are major strategic documents that establish a set of tools for each CalFire unit for its local area. Updated annually, unit fire plans identify wildfire protection areas, initial attack success, assets and infrastructure at risk, pre-fire management strategies, and accountability within their unit's geographical boundaries. The unit fire plan identifies strategic areas for pre-fire planning and fuel treatment as defined by the people who live and work locally. The plans include contributions from local collaborators and stakeholders and are aligned with other plans for the area (CAL FIRE 2019).

5.20.2.2.9 Power Line Fire Prevention Field Guide 2021 Edition

CAL FIRE, the state's three investor-owned utilities (Pacific Gas and Electric Company, SCE, and San Diego Gas & Electric Company), and other California electric utilities have mutually developed a comprehensive field guide for their personnel. Its purpose is to provide information and guidance to the personnel of the fire service agencies and electrical operators for minimum uniform application within the areas of their respective jurisdiction and franchise responsibilities. In addition to the safety of the public, the guide details fire hazard reduction maintenance procedures for the safety of conductors and certain hardware (CAL FIRE 2020).

5.20.2.3 Local

The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Project. Pursuant to CPUC GO 131-D, Section XIV.B:

> "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters."

Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use regulations is provided for informational purposes only.

5.20.2.3.1 County of Riverside General Plan

County of Riverside General Plan: Safety Element

The Safety Element of the County of Riverside General Plan identifies the natural and human-caused hazards that affect existing and future development and provides guidelines for protecting residents, employees, visitors, or other community members from injury and death. The Safety Element includes policies to protect the public from the following hazards: seismic and geologic hazards; flood and inundation hazards; fire hazards; hazardous waste and materials; disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; and additional climate change-related hazards. As stated in the Safety Element Vision Statements (County of Riverside 2021):

- "We acknowledge security of person and property as one of the most basic community needs and commit to designing our communities so that vulnerability to natural and human made hazards, as well as criminal activities, is anticipated and kept to a minimum."
- "Considerable protection from natural hazards such as earthquakes, fire, flooding, slope failure, and other hazardous conditions is now built into the pattern of development authorized by the General Plan."

5.20.2.3.2 Riverside County Fire Department Fire Protection Plan and Emergency Medical Services Strategic Master Plan

The Riverside County Fire Department (RCFD) Fire Protection Plan and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Strategic Master Plan outlines goals and implementation measures that ensure Riverside County residents in unincorporated areas and Contract Cities are protected from urban and wildland fire emergencies. The RCFD Fire Protection Plan and EMS Strategic Master Plan's goals are as follows (RCFD 2009):

Goal 1 The RCFD seeks fiscal sustainability to ensure uninterrupted services.

Goal 2 The RCFD seeks to have well-trained and certified individuals to enable the department to carry out its mission and all responsibilities.

Goal 3 The RCFD seeks efficient and effective performance in its operations, measures its performance, and continuously improves its work methods.

Goal 4 The RCFD is committed to maintaining a strong relationship with its cooperative partners and providing cost effective services while maintaining the highest level of customer service.

Goal 5 The RCFD seeks to ensure that effective and efficient support services are in place to support the mission of the department.

Goal 6 The RCFD seeks to have well maintained facilities, equipment, technology and apparatus that enable personnel to perform their jobs safely and efficiently.

5.20.2.3.3 Riverside County Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan

Riverside County and several participating jurisdictions, including the City of Blythe, prepared a Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan in April 2023 (Riverside County 2023). The purpose of this plan is to guide hazard mitigation planning to better protect the people and property of the County from the effects of natural disasters and hazard events, such as severe weather, floods, and earthquakes. The plan demonstrates the commitment of each participating jurisdiction to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a tool to help decision makers direct mitigation activities and resources.

5.20.2.3.4 City of Blythe General Plan

The Safety Element of the City of Blythe General Plan 2025 contains policies and programs that seek to reduce the potential for the loss of life, injuries, and property damage associated with natural and man-made hazards, such as flooding, geologic hazards, wildland and urban fire, crime, hazardous materials, and airport hazards. The following policies (City of Blythe 2007) pertain to urban and wildland fire protection:

Policy 8 Cooperate with the City of Blythe Fire Department, Riverside County Fire Department and the California Department of Forestry in periodically evaluating services and service criteria to ensure that the City continues to receive adequate fire protection and prevention services.

Policy 12 Continue to support the Fire Department's coordination with surrounding departments to provide fire protection services.

Policy 13 Enforce policies to protect the public's safety from urban and wildland fires.

5.20.2.4 CPUC Standards

In October 2007, devastating wildfires driven by strong Santa Ana winds burned hundreds of square miles in Southern California. Several of the worst wildfires were reportedly ignited by overhead utility power lines and aerial communication facilities in close proximity to power lines. In response to these wildfires, the CPUC initiated Rulemaking (R.) 08-11-005 to consider and adopt regulations to protect the public from potential fire hazards associated with overhead powerline facilities and nearby aerial communication facilities.

Beginning in 2009, the CPUC issued several decisions in R.08-11-005 that together adopted dozens of new fire-safety regulations. Most of the adopted fire-safety regulations consisted of new or revised rules in GO 95. Several of the adopted fire-safety regulations apply only to areas, referred to as "high fire-threat areas," where there is an elevated risk for power line fires igniting and spreading rapidly. These high fire threat areas are designated by several maps that were adopted on an interim basis. Each of the interim maps covers a different part of the state and uses its own methodology for identifying high fire-threat areas, presenting consistency and potential enforcement issues. To address these issues, the CPUC also commenced the development of a single statewide fire-threat map to designate areas where (1) there is an elevated risk for destructive power line fires, and (2) stricter fire-safety regulations should apply.

In May 2015, the CPUC closed R.08-11-005 and initiated successor rulemaking R.15-05-006 to complete the outstanding tasks in R.08-11-005. The general scope of R.15-05-006 was to address the following matters carried over from the scope of R.08-11-005: (1) develop and adopt a statewide fire-threat map that delineates the boundaries of a new HFTD where the previously adopted regulations would apply, (2) determine the need for additional fire-safety regulations in the HFTD, and (3) revise GO 95 to include a definition and maps of the HFTD, as well as any new fire-safety regulations. The scope and schedule for R.15-05-006 was divided into two parallel tracks. One track focused on the development and adoption of a statewide fire-threat map. The second track focused on the identification, evaluation, and adoption of fire-safety regulations in the HFTD.

On December 21, 2017, the CPUC issued Decision (D.) 17-12-024 adopting regulations to enhance fire safety in the HFTD, effectively completing the second track of R.15-05-006 described above. On January 19, 2018, the CPUC adopted, via Safety and Enforcement Division's disposition of a Tier 1 Advice Letter, the final CPUC Fire-Threat Map. The adopted CPUC Fire-Threat Map, together with the map of Tier 1 High Hazard Zones (HHZs) on the USFS-CAL FIRE joint map of tree mortality HHZs, comprise the HFTD Map where stricter fire-safety regulations apply.

Inspection and Maintenance Standards D. 96-11-021 and D.97-03-070 establish inspection cycles and record-keeping requirements for utility distribution equipment, which are contained in GO 165. In general, utilities must patrol (walk, drive, or fly by) their systems once a year (in urban areas) or once every 2 years (in rural areas). Utilities must conduct detailed inspections every 3 to 5 years, depending on the type of equipment. For detailed inspections, utilities' records must specify the condition of inspected equipment, any problems found, and a scheduled date for corrective action. The utility must submit an annual report summarizing inspections made, equipment condition observed, and repairs made. Utilities are required to make intrusive inspections of power poles; no pole should go over 25 years before its first intrusive inspection, and once passed, every 20 years thereafter. Currently, GO 165 is being considered for revisions to optimize the CPUC's ability to identify areas of noncompliance with its safety standards, GO 95 Overhead and GO 128 Underground, and its inspection, maintenance and repair standards, GO 165.

Tree Trimming Standards D. 97-01-044 of Investigation 94-06-012 establishes standards for trimming trees near power lines, issued as a revision to Rule 35 of GO 95-A. For lines at voltages higher than 750 volts,

in general, trees must be trimmed to provide no less than 18 inches of clearance from lines under normal annual weather variations. When trimmed, where practicable, trees must be 4 to 15 feet from power lines over 2,400 volts (clearances vary with voltage). Detailed rules are contained in Appendix A of Decision 97-01-044 of Investigation 94-06-012.

5.20.3 Impact Questions

5.20.3.1 Wildfire Impact Questions

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. For wildfire, the CEQA Checklist asks, if located in or near SRA lands or lands classified as very high FHSZ, would the project:

- Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?
- Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?
- Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?
- Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

5.20.3.2 Additional CEQA Impact Questions

There are no CPUC-identified additional CEQA impact questions.

5.20.4 Impact Analysis

5.20.4.1 Wildfire Impact Analysis

5.20.4.1.1 Wildfire Methodology

Wildfire impacts were evaluated based upon a review of California Air Resources Board 5-year meteorological data (Appendix L), CPUC HFTD data, CAL FIRE FHSZ data, RCFD resources, USDA data, regulatory requirements that apply to the Project, and the potential for the Project to affect wildfire in the area.

5.20.4.1.2 If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. As shown in Figure 5.20-1, no portion of the Project Alignment is located in an SRA and the nearest very high FHSZ is located approximately 45 miles southwest of the Project Alignment. Because the Project is not located in or near an SRA or a very high FHSZ, no impacts related to wildfire would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.20.4.1.3 If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project, due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

No Impact. As stated previously, the Project Alignment is not within or near an SRA or very high FHSZ. As a result, no impacts related to wildfire would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.20.4.1.4 If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

No Impact. As stated previously, the Project Alignment is not within or near an SRA or very high FHSZ. As a result, no impacts related to wildfire would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.20.4.1.5 If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslopes or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

No Impact. As stated previously, the Project Alignment is not within or near an SRA or very high FHSZ. As a result, no impacts related to wildfire would occur.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.20.4.2 Fire Behavior Modeling

The Project is not located within a CAL FIRE FHSZ, indicating that vegetation in the area is not very susceptible to fire. The Project is also not within a CPUC-designated HFTD. Therefore, fire behavior modeling is not necessary for the Project. Furthermore, as shown in Table 5.20-1, the plant communities and vegetation types in the Project Area have fire intervals of 333 to 1,000 years, meaning that the average time between fires in the Project Area is approximately 666 years. These prolonged fire intervals indicate plant communities in the Project Area do not present a high fire risk.

5.20.4.3 Wildfire Management

During O&M of the Project, SCE would implement its 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (and successor plans) to manage wildfire risk in the area (SCE 2023). No special procedures for wildfire management,

beyond those addressed in the plan or required by regulation, are included as part of the Project. The Project Alignment is not located in a CPUC-identified HFTD. Therefore, enhanced inspections as described in SCE's 2023-2025 Wildfire Mitigation Plan (SCE 2023) would not be applicable. SCE would prepare a Fire Management Plan to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Fire Management Plan outlines responsibilities for management, fire patrol, supervisors, and all personnel working on the Proposed Project. Appendix H includes an outline of the Fire Management Plan for the Proposed Project.

5.20.5 CPUC Draft Environmental Measures

No CPUC Draft Environmental Measures have been identified for wildfire.

5.20.5.1 Applicant Proposed Measures

5.20.5.1.1 Wildfire APMs

No impacts to wildfire would occur as a result of the Project. As such, there are no applicant proposed measures (APMs).

5.20.5.1.2 Cross-Referenced APMs

Although no impacts to wildfire would occur as a result of the Project, the following APM relevant to a different impact category would also address potential impacts to other resources.

- **HAZ-4: Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan.** A Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan shall be developed to ensure the health and safety of construction workers, SCE personnel, and the public during Project construction. The Plan shall cover:
  - The purpose and applicability of the plan
  - Responsibilities and duties
  - Project areas where the plan applies
  - Procedures for incorporating Red Flag Warnings, Fire Potential Index (FPI), Project Activity Level (PAL), and equivalent indicators in determining fire weather related work restrictions.
  - Procedures for fire reporting, response, prevention, and evacuation routes
  - Coordination procedures with federal and local fire officials
  - Crew training, including fire safety practices and restrictions
  - Fire suppression and communication equipment required to be on hand during construction
  - Method for verification that Plan protocols and requirements are being followed

  The Project-specific Construction Fire Management Plan for construction of the project shall be prepared by SCE and submitted to the CPUC and BLM as well the Riverside County Fire Department and Blythe Fire Department for review at least 30-days prior to the initiation of construction. SCE shall address all comments received from reviewing agencies and provide the final Construction Fire Prevention and Emergency Response Plan to reviewing agencies for approval prior to initiating construction activities.

5.21 Mandatory Findings of Significance

This section of the Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) provides an analysis of the mandatory findings of significance associated with construction and operation of the Eagle Mountain-Blythe 161 kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project). In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines section 15064 (a through h), this PEA section provides substantial evidence that is used to support the determination of whether the Project would result in significant environmental impacts.

5.21.1 Impact Assessment for Mandatory Findings of Significance

5.21.1.1 Significance Criteria

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines provides the criteria used in determining whether project-related impacts would be significant. Impacts resulting from the Project could be considered significant if they have the potential to create substantial impacts when the following questions are considered. Would the Project:

- Have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?
- Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?
- Have environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

5.21.2 Impact Analysis

5.21.2.1 Does the Project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. As discussed in Section 5.4, Biological Resources, the Project would result in less than significant impacts to existing habitats, wetlands, and waterways with the implementation of applicant proposed measures (APMs). The Project's impacts on biological resources, including special-status plants and wildlife, riparian habitat, and sensitive natural communities, would be less than significant with the incorporation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-18, AIR-2, and HAZ-1. The Project would not involve the construction of a highway, levee, or other major infrastructure that could restrict the range of a species and impacts would be less than significant.

As discussed in Section 5.5, Cultural Resources, the Project is not anticipated to eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory based on the findings of two Class III

Cultural Resources Inventory Reports. With incorporation of APMs CUL-1, CUL-2, CUL-3, CUL-4, and CUL-5, impacts to cultural resources would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing operational and maintenance (O&M) activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.21.2.2 Does the Project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. As described in Chapter 7, Cumulative Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations, with the incorporation of APMs, the Project would not result in cumulatively considerable impacts related to the analyzed environmental resource categories.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.

5.21.2.3 Does the Project have environmental effects which would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation. In general, impacts to human beings are associated with air quality, geologic hazards, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, and traffic safety impacts. As discussed in Section 5.3, Air Quality, impacts related to air pollution emissions for sensitive receptors would be reduced with the implementation of APMs AIR-1 and NOI-1. As presented in Section 5.7, Geology, Soils, and Paleontological Resources, the Project would not result in environmental impacts that would have substantial direct or indirect effects on human beings with respect to geologic hazards. As discussed in Section 5.9, Hazards, Hazardous Materials, and Public Safety, the Project's potential for hazards from hazardous materials or accidents would be reduced with the implementation of APMs HAZ-1 and HAZ-2. As discussed in Section 5.13, Noise, impacts related to noise for sensitive receptors would be reduced with the implementation of APM NOI-1. As discussed in Section 5.17, Transportation, impacts with respect to safety would be reduced with the implementation of APM TRA-1. As discussed in Section 5.20, Wildfire, APM HAZ-4 would require implementation of a Construction Fire Management Plan which would reduce the risk of fire ignition and spread during Project construction, thereby reducing potential wildfire impacts.

Overall, as presented throughout this PEA, the direct and indirect impacts of the Project's construction activities would be less than significant for all resource areas with the implementation of APMs, as applicable. Therefore, the Project would not cause a substantial adverse direct or indirect effect on human beings, and impacts would be less than significant.

Implementation of the Project would not change the requirement for existing O&M activities for the facilities along the Project Alignment; as a result, there would be no impacts to the Project Area from ongoing O&M activities.