

4.3 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**4.3.1 Introduction**

This section describes the existing extent of agricultural resources in the proposed project area for the proposed 500 kV T/L and Alternative 1. Both routes begin in the City of Lancaster and terminate in Santa Clarita at the Pardee 220 kV substation. The land between the two cities is primarily open space through the Angeles National Forest and unincorporated land in Los Angeles County.

Agricultural resources were evaluated by reviewing the Los Angeles County General Plan (County of Los Angeles, 1979d), as well as the City of Lancaster General Plan (1997a) and the City of Santa Clarita General Plan (1991a, 1991b). Agricultural resources data were also obtained from the California Department of Conservation (CDOC) (Division of Land Resource Protection, and Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program) (CDOC, 2004), as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (NRCS, 2004).

While Los Angeles is commonly viewed as an urbanized county, there is significant crop production ongoing in the Antelope Valley area of the county. Despite the recent increase in agriculture in the Antelope Valley, Los Angeles County continues to report a net loss in agricultural acreage. Approximately 14,188 acres of agricultural lands (8,045 acres of “important farmland,” and 6,143 acres of grazing land) were converted to another use between the years 2000-2002 (CDOC, 2002). Refer to Table 4.13-1 for a summary of farmland conversion between 2000 and 2002 in Los Angeles County.

The NRCS identifies soil suitability for agriculture in Los Angeles County as varying from “prime” to “poor.” Prime farmland (P), as defined by the NRCS, is the farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Other important farmland categories include Farmland of Statewide Importance (S), Unique Farmland (U), Farmland of Local Importance (L), and Grazing Land (G). S is similar to P but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less moisture. U is land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county’s board of supervisors. G is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

Approximately 32,382 acres of Los Angeles County are identified as prime farmland (CDOC, 2002). The 1993 Los Angeles General Plan (1979h) states that 450,000 acres of prime agricultural soil [then] remain undisturbed by urbanization. However, the majority of this farmland is located in the Antelope Valley where water costs and climatic conditions limit productivity. In the south county, urban growth has eliminated most agricultural

**TABLE 4.3-1
FARMLAND CONVERSION IN LA COUNTY FROM 2000 TO 2002**

Land Use Category		Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing Land	Total Agricultural Land	Urban and Built-up Land	Other Land	Total Converted
Prime Farmland ^{1,2}	to:	--	135	100	315	698	1,248	287	1,423	2,958
Farmland of Statewide Importance ¹	to:	190	--	7	0	168	365	0	143	508
Unique Farmland ¹	to:	128	9	--	1	66	204	27	143	374
Farmland of Local Importance ^{3,4}	to:	1,998	36	25	--	1,636	3,695	16	494	4,205
Important Farmland Subtotal		2,316	180	132	316	2,568	5,512	330	2,203	8,045
Grazing Land ⁵	to:	694	29	108	231	--	1,062	1,464	3,617	6,143
Agricultural Land Subtotal		3,010	209	240	547	2,568	6,574	1,794	5,820	14,188
Urban and Built-up Land ⁶	to:	113	0	76	3	1,909	2,101	--	9,447	11,548
Other Land ³	to:	3,421	185	99	63	329	4,097	7,927	--	12,024
Water Area	to:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Acreage Converted	to:	6,544	394	415	613	4,806	12,772	9,721	15,267	37,760

¹ Conversions between Important Farmland categories primarily due to corrections made to soil unit identification.

² Conversion to Other Land primarily due to land left idle for three update cycles in the northeastern portion of the county.

³ Conversion to Prime Farmland primarily due to newly irrigated agricultural land.

⁴ Conversion to Grazing Land primarily due to land left idle for four update cycles throughout the county.

⁵ Conversion to Other Land primarily due to identification of ranchettes, small water bodies and rural commercial uses throughout the county. Also, the Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve was converted to Other Land due to its designation as a no-grazing area.

⁶ Conversion from Urban and Built-up Land primarily the result of the use of digital imagery to delineate more distinct urban boundaries.

acreage. As a result, the remaining agricultural activity has become very specialized, shifting to crops of high value, such as nursery products, cut flowers, vegetables and fruits.

Under the California Land Conservation Act of 1968 (known as the Williamson Act), the owner of an agricultural parcel may enter into a contract with a county in which the owner agrees to maintain agricultural operations on the parcel for a 10-year period. In exchange, the county assesses the property for tax purposes based solely on the agricultural value of the parcel, lowering the property tax obligation of the property owner.

4.3.2 Proposed 500 kV T/L System

Agricultural resources exist at the north and south ends of the proposed 500 kV T/L route. Potential Prime Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Farmland of Statewide Importance are all traversed at the north end of the proposed 500 kV T/L route. No important farmlands are traversed through the central portion of the R-O-W, as it passes through the Angeles National Forest. Livestock grazing can be considered as a viable option for vegetative fuel reduction in some locations of the forest, however, grazing use does not occur along the proposed 500 kV T/L corridor. Along the portion of the proposed T/L corridor northeast of the Pardee Substation, two areas identified as Farmland of Local Importance are traversed, and one area of Unique Farmland is adjacent to the corridor. All of these farmland areas are less than one-half mile in extent. These areas on the southern end of the proposed T/L corridor are located in the Santa Clarita Valley development area which is being built out with residences (i.e., viable farmland potential would no longer exist). Historically used grazing land is also traversed throughout the Santa Clarita area at the south end of the proposed route.

4.3.3 Alternative Transmission System

Two small areas of Farmland of Local Importance (less than one-half mile in extent) are traversed at the north end of Alternative 1. Grazing lands are also encountered at the north end of Alternative 1. Alternative 1 would traverse the same potentially important farmlands at the south end of the corridor, as it would share the same route with the proposed route in this area. There are no agricultural resources along Alternative 1 in the central portion of the route across the Angeles National Forest.

4.3.4 Modifications to Antelope and Pardee Substations

The Antelope Substation is located in an area with soils that are capable of supporting grazing uses. Potential prime farmland soils are located at the Pardee Substation. The land use at the existing SCE Antelope and Pardee 220 kV substations was converted to electric

transmission related use years ago and any farmland potential at these sites was negated at the time of construction. The proposed expansion of the Antelope Substation would occur on potential grazing land. It is expected that the primary marshalling yard near the Antelope Substation may involve temporary use of land with grazing potential as well.