

5.3 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

5.3.1 Significance Criteria

The significance criteria listed below were derived from Appendix G, CEQA Guidelines. Impacts to agricultural resources in the project area would be considered significant if the project:

- Converts prime agricultural land to non-agricultural land
- Impairs the agricultural productivity of prime farmland

As stated in the Los Angeles County General Plan (1979h), one of the county's goals is "*To preserve and protect prime agricultural lands, forests, fisheries, significant ecological areas and other biotic resources.*" This general goal is soon to be revised and strengthened, as stated in the County's General Plan Update (2004b). The revised goal (Goal O-1 of the Conservation and Open Space Element) calls for preservation of productive farmland and land with agricultural opportunities to contribute to food production, open space, and the local economy. Goal O-1 is anticipated to enforce the following policies:

- Establish Agricultural Opportunity Areas, to identify prime agricultural soils and viable agricultural uses, where consistent with adjacent land uses and natural resources
- Support the establishment of voluntary agricultural preserves under the Williamson Act within Agricultural Opportunity Areas to preserve productive agricultural lands
- Support the Agricultural Commissioner's efforts to assist farmers and ranchers in their agricultural operations and discourage incompatible uses adjacent to farmlands
- Allow vacant land under utility lines to be used for agricultural activities, where such use is compatible with adjacent land uses

5.3.2 Proposed 500 kV T/L Route

Construction activities for the proposed 500 kV T/L route would cause a temporary increase in vehicular traffic that may result in a short-duration disruption in farming and grazing activities that are directly associated with the access roads crossed by the proposed route. This potential impact would be temporary and intermittent, and would only occur on the north and south ends of the corridor, as discussed in Section 4.3. This would not impair the agricultural productivity of the area or the ability to conduct existing agricultural practices. Such impacts would be less than significant, if they occur at all.

Potential prime farmland occurs along the north end of the proposed T/L route at two locations north of the Angeles National Forest. Grading would occur (e.g., at expanded tower site locations) along the route, however, this impact to the prime soils would be only temporary. A very small amount of land may be converted to a new use, but the construction of the T/L would not be expected to impair the long-term agricultural productivity of any affected prime farmland areas.

5.3.3 Alternative 1

As discussed for the proposed route, construction activities for the Alternative 1 500 kV T/L route would cause a temporary increase in vehicular traffic that may result in a short-duration disruption in farming and grazing activities that are directly associated with the access roads that are crossed by the T/L route. This potential disruption of farming and grazing would be temporary and intermittent. This would not impair the agricultural productivity of the potentially affected areas or the ability to conduct existing agricultural practices. Such impacts would be less than significant, if they occur at all.

Potential prime farmland exists along the Alternative 1 corridor in the vicinity of mile 2.5 near the Antelope Substation. Impacts to this area of potential prime farmland would likely be avoided because existing access roads to the corridor do not traverse the farmland, and the amount of area affected by intermittent tower pads would be very small.

5.3.4 Modifications to Antelope and Pardee Substations

Proposed construction at the Antelope Substation includes expansion and relocating of existing equipment, however, no prime farmland or any other important farmland exists within the construction area. Grazing may occur around the Antelope Substation, however, construction of the additional expanded facilities at this location would not be expected to adversely affect grazing activities. Therefore, no significant impacts on agricultural resources would be expected.

At the south end of the proposed route, the Pardee 220 kV Substation is in place. The new equipment installations would occur within the existing substation fence line, and therefore be contained within the existing land use. Therefore, no impacts to prime farmland would occur.

5.3.5 Operation Impacts

Because the project would not convert prime agricultural land areas to non-agricultural land or impair the agricultural productivity of prime farmland, impacts would be less than significant.