

## 4.4 Biological Resources

This section describes the environmental and regulatory settings and discusses impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen 115-kilovolt (kV) Subtransmission Line Project (proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project) and the proposed Alberhill System Project (proposed Alberhill Project) with respect to biological resources. During scoping of the proposed Alberhill Project, comment letters were received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife<sup>1</sup> (CDFW) and the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) regarding the Stephens' kangaroo rat (SKR), SKR habitat, SKR reserve land, and other wildlife and plant species (e.g., livestock and protected trees). Comments were also received regarding consistency with the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) and construction impacts on nesting birds and fully protected species. These comments are addressed below.

Public comments received during scoping for the proposed Alberhill Project expressed concern about the effects of electromagnetic fields on humans, livestock, and wildlife; effects of construction noise on livestock, wildlife, and migration corridors; and the adequacy of survey data used in impact analyses. Impacts on wildlife and migratory corridors and survey data adequacy are discussed below. Electromagnetic fields are discussed in Section 4.8, "Hazards and Hazardous Materials." Impacts from noise are addressed in this section and in Section 4.11, "Noise and Vibration."

A total of three microwave antennas would be installed on existing structures at the Santiago Peak Communication Site in the United States Forest Service Cleveland National Forest, as well as at the Serrano Substation in the City of Orange as part of the proposed Alberhill Project. Due to the minor construction and operation activities associated with these components, these components would have no impact on biological resources. Therefore, these components of the proposed Alberhill Project are not discussed further in this section.

### 4.4.1 Environmental Setting

#### 4.4.1.1 Data Sources

The information presented in the environmental setting was compiled from scientific literature and database searches, coordination with resource experts, and the results of field surveys provided by Southern California Edison (SCE or the applicant). For the purpose of this document, Valley-Ivyglen Project Phase 1 encompasses 115-kV Segments ~~VIG1-VIG4~~ through ~~VIG3-VIG8~~, and Phase 2 encompasses 115-kV Segments ~~VIG4-VIG1~~ through ~~VIG8-VIG3~~.

#### *Literature Search and Review*

Information on biological resources within the proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Project area was gathered through desktop analyses and review of applicant conducted field survey reports. The desktop analyses were conducted by reviewing regional literature and accessing agency databases and resources and geographic information system (GIS) layers. The following data resources were reviewed:

- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) 2015 records search of the Romoland, Lake Elsinore, Winchester, Bachelor Mountain, Murrieta, Lakeview, Perris, Steele Peak, Wildomar,

<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

1 Sitton Peak, Lake Mathews, Santiago Peak, Corona South, Riverside, and Alberhill United States  
2 Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles;

- 3 • California Native Plant Society’s (CNPS’s) 2015 online Inventory of Rare and Endangered  
4 Vascular Plants of California for Romoland, Lake Elsinore, and Alberhill USGS 7.5-minute  
5 quadrangles (CNPS 2015);
- 6 • United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation  
7 (USFWS 2015a);
- 8 • Special Animals List (CDFW 2015);
- 9 • National Wetlands Inventory (USFWS 2015b);
- 10 • National Hydrography Dataset (USGS 2015); and
- 11 • National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Hydric Soils (NRCS 2013).

12  
13 Additional local and regional biological resources were reviewed to identify pertinent ordinances or  
14 conservation plans, including the Riverside County General Plan, the SKR Habitat Conservation Plan  
15 (HCP), and the Western Riverside County MSHCP.

16  
17 Field surveys were conducted by the applicant and their biological consultants. Appendix E includes a list  
18 of applicant-supplied surveys reports used for the Valley–Ivyglen and Alberhill analyses. Survey  
19 methodologies are discussed below, as well as within each biotechnical report (Appendices F1, F2, and  
20 F3).

### 21 22 **Vegetation Mapping Methods**

23 The proposed Alberhill Project and Valley–Ivyglen Project are located within the MSHCP area, and  
24 vegetation communities within the proposed project area have been classified and mapped according to  
25 the MSHCP Conservation Area descriptions (Riverside County 2003a). The MSHCP vegetation types  
26 were used in place of those described in *A Manual of California Vegetation* to maintain consistency  
27 between this report and local HCP, which is consistent with the protocols of the CNPS (CNPS 2001). The  
28 applicant visually identified vegetation communities and dominant plant species and mapped  
29 communities on ortho-rectified aerial photographs of the proposed project area (AECOM 2011a; AMEC  
30 2013a, 2013b).

31  
32 To estimate impacts on each vegetation community, the proposed disturbance areas for each project  
33 component were layered over applicant-provided GIS vegetation layers (SCE 2013a). Impacts were  
34 calculated based on the acreage of each vegetation type that intersected the disturbance areas. In certain  
35 instances, ground-truthed data obtained during site visits were used in place of GIS data.

### 36 37 **Special Status Plant Survey Methods**

38 Protocol-level surveys were conducted for special status plants and MSHCP Narrow Endemic Plants  
39 (Appendix E) within the proposed Alberhill and Valley–Ivyglen Project areas. Botanical surveys for the  
40 proposed Alberhill and Valley–Ivyglen Projects were conducted from 2006 through 2014 following  
41 *Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed, Proposed and*  
42 *Candidate Species* (USFWS 2000); *CNPS Botanical Survey Guidelines* (CNPS 2001); *Guidelines for*  
43 *Assessing the Effects of Proposed Projects on Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants and Natural*  
44 *Communities* (CDFG 2000); and *Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts on Special Status*  
45 *Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities* (CDFG 2009).

1 The applicant's surveys were conducted by qualified biologists during the optimal blooming period for  
2 each of the special status species identified as having the potential to occur in the proposed project area.  
3 Developed portions of the proposed project area were excluded from the acreage surveyed due to lack of  
4 suitable plant habitat. The remaining undeveloped grassland and sage scrub habitat were surveyed on  
5 foot. To ensure thorough coverage of the surveyed area, pedestrian transects were systematic and spaced  
6 appropriately to compensate for varying vegetation densities and topography encountered. An effort was  
7 made to field survey 100 percent of the areas that may be impacted by construction or operation of the  
8 proposed project; however, areas inaccessible due to steep topography were surveyed by scanning the  
9 ground surface with binoculars. Every plant taxon encountered was identified to the taxonomic level  
10 necessary to determine its rarity and listing status, and any species that could not be immediately  
11 identified were brought into the laboratory for further investigation.

### 12 13 **Oak Tree Survey Methods**

14 Oak trees were surveyed in October and November 2011 for the proposed Alberhill Project. Survey  
15 locations within the project area were located in areas within 30 feet of known transmission lines, from  
16 the western project boundary at Interstate-15 (I-15) on Temescal Canyon Road to the eastern termination  
17 of the Alberhill 115-kV subtransmission line alternate route. Trees within the survey area were numbered  
18 and tagged, and evaluated for health, structural, and aesthetic quality (AECOM 2012a).

19  
20 No oak trees were found on or adjacent to the VIG Phase 1 Project alignment (AMEC 2014a). For Phase  
21 2, oak tree surveys were completed in October and November 2014 within 40 feet of the proposed  
22 centerline (AMEC 2014b). Tree location and canopy extent was mapped in the field and measurements  
23 were taken for trunk diameter at breast height, canopy spread, and height (AMEC 2014b).

### 24 25 **Special Status Wildlife Survey Methods**

26 The applicant conducted surveys to characterize wildlife habitat types and to evaluate the potential for  
27 occurrence of special status wildlife species in the proposed project area. The proposed project area was  
28 traversed by foot and vehicle to survey each vegetation community for evidence of wildlife presence. All  
29 wildlife and wildlife signs, including tracks, scat, nests, and vocalizations were noted. Protocol-level  
30 surveys for the following special status species were conducted (Appendix E):

- 31
- Southwestern willow flycatcher
  - Coastal California gnatcatcher
  - Least Bell's vireo
  - Western yellow-billed cuckoo
  - Vernal pool fairy shrimp
  - Riverside fairy shrimp
  - Western burrowing owl
  - Quino checkerspot butterfly
  - Arroyo toad
  - SKR
  - Los Angeles pocket mouse

32  
33 For each survey, qualified biologists followed survey protocols set forth by the appropriate jurisdictional  
34 agency (e.g., CDFW, United States Army Corps of Engineers [USACE], or USFWS). In general,  
35 protocol-level surveys were conducted along the right-of-way (ROW) in the proposed project areas where  
36 suitable habitat existed for each species.

### 37 38 **Jurisdictional Features Assessment Methods**

39 A formal jurisdictional delineation of hydrologic features in proximity to the components of the proposed  
40 project area was conducted by the applicant for the proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects.  
41 Surveyors used methods described in the USACE *Wetland Delineation Manual* (1987), the *Regional*

1 *Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Arid West Region* (USACE 2008a),  
2 and *A Field Guide to the Identification of the Ordinary High Water Mark in the Arid West Region of the*  
3 *Western United States* (USACE 2008b). Hydrologic features were assessed for potential indicators of  
4 stream, riparian, or wetland functions. Where wetland indicator vegetation was present, soil  
5 characteristics were evaluated from core samples obtained by auger. Dominant plant species were  
6 identified within plots of 3 square meters. Standard field survey forms for the Arid West Region were  
7 used to record and summarize field observations. The surveys were performed with consideration of the  
8 following agencies and regulations that would have jurisdictional authority over hydrologic resources in  
9 the proposed project area: USACE, CDFW, Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and  
10 RCAMSHCP.

#### 11 12 **Surveys for Additional Staging Areas**

13 Field surveys for staging areas VIG10, VIG12, VIG13, VIG14, and ASP 14 were completed on  
14 September 15 and 16, 2015 (AECOM 2015). Plant communities were assessed using the CNPS/ CDFW  
15 Protocol for Combined Vegetation Rapid Assessment (CNPS 2014). The plant communities were first  
16 mapped as polygons using aerial imagery and then ground-truthed in the field. Reconnaissance-level  
17 pedestrian surveys were completed to assess habitat suitability for each sensitive plant and wildlife  
18 species with the potential to occur within the vicinity of the proposed staging areas. These surveys were  
19 performed outside of peak blooming season for most early spring and summer annual plant species.

#### 20 21 **4.4.1.2 Common and Special Status Natural Communities**

22  
23 The plant communities and habitat types within the proposed project area are described below. Plant  
24 communities were characterized using MSHCP methods (Volume II, Section C; Riverside County  
25 2003a), which identifies plant communities according to the *Preliminary Descriptions of Terrestrial*  
26 *Natural Communities of California* (Holland 1986). Characterization was also aided by *A Guide to*  
27 *Wildlife Habitats of California* (Mayer and Laudenslayer 1988). Some vegetation communities, such as  
28 coast live oak woodland or subsets of more common communities (e.g., Riversidean sage scrub) are  
29 special status natural communities according to the CDFW.

30  
31 Special status natural communities are defined as communities that are of limited distribution statewide or  
32 within a county or region and are often vulnerable to the environmental effects of development projects  
33 (CDFG 2009). These communities may or may not contain special status species or comprise their  
34 habitat, and may be interspersed with or represent subcomponents of more common vegetation types  
35 described in the previous section.

36  
37 For this analysis, a list of special status natural communities were identified through a CNDDDB inquiry of  
38 topographic quadrangles for the proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen project areas. The acreage of each  
39 vegetation community intersecting with project components was determined using applicant-provided  
40 GIS vegetation layers overlaid with the general disturbance areas for each project (SCE 2013b, 2014a).  
41 The title and description of the following special status natural communities are derived from the  
42 vegetation types described in the MSHCP, which generally follow the Sawyer-Keeler-Wolf and Holland  
43 classification systems (Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf and Evens 2009; Holland 1986). Special status vegetation  
44 communities are designated in parentheses below.

#### 45 46 ***Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest and Southern Willow Scrub (Special*** 47 ***Status)***

48 These forest and scrub communities are dominated by willows and occur around stream banks, slope  
49 seeps, and drainages. This vegetation community is valuable for its ability to stabilize banks and slopes.

1 Plant species associated with this community include Freemont's cottonwood, several types of willow,  
2 California mugwort, wax myrtle, Mexican elderberry, mulefat, and California sycamore.

### 4 ***Southern Mixed Riparian Forest and Southern Riparian Forest (Special Status)***

5 In Western Riverside County, these vegetation communities are comprised of two co-dominant tree  
6 species, the Peruvian pepper tree and the ngaio tree. Both species are exotic species, introduced from  
7 Peru and New Zealand, respectively. Native species present in this community include willows, alders,  
8 and cottonwoods.

### 9 ***Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland (Special Status)***

11 This community can be found in gullies and around intermittent streams, springs, stream banks, and  
12 terraces adjacent to floodplains. In Western Riverside County, this community occurs along low-  
13 elevation streams. This community is dominated by two tree species, California sycamore and alder. This  
14 woodland is one of the state's rarer vegetation communities because California sycamore does not  
15 compete well with other more obligate wetland trees such as alders and willows, and is often grazed or  
16 flooded due to human activities. Species associated with this community include bigleaf maple,  
17 poisonslender wild-oats, valley oak, California blackberry, Freemont cottonwood, and California  
18 mugwort, arroyo willow.

### 19 ***Coastal Sage Scrub or Riversidean Sage Scrub (Special Status)***

21 This community is characterized by low, deciduous shrub species such as California sagebrush,  
22 California buckwheat, laurel sumac, and other sage species. This community is often interspersed with  
23 other plant communities such as grassland, chaparral, and oak riparian woodlands.

### 24 ***Chamise Chaparral (Special Status)***

26 Chaparral is one of the most common and widespread vegetation types in Western Riverside County,  
27 occurring along the Santa Ana, San Bernardino, San Jacinto, and Agua Tibia Mountains. This shrub-  
28 dominated community is composed of low-growing evergreen species, the most common being chamise.  
29 Other species that may be present include manzanita, oak, laurel sumac, and toyon.

### 30 ***Coast Live Oak Woodland (Special Status)***

32 This plant community occurs on cool, steep slopes or adjacent to stream channels in the interior of the  
33 woodland canopy. The woodland canopy can be continuous or open. This community is dominated by  
34 coast live oaks, which reach heights between 30 and 60 feet. Coast live oak woodland supports an  
35 understory of shade-tolerant species such as wild blackberry, California bay, poison oak, and miner's  
36 lettuce.

### 37 ***Non-native Grassland***

39 Nonnative grassland is composed of introduced annual grass species with variable presence of other  
40 nonnative and native herbaceous species. These grasslands within the study area vary in quality and often  
41 intergrade into other communities. Some are annually disked while others are relatively undisturbed and  
42 intermixed with native annuals. Nonnative grasses found within the study area include slender oat, wild  
43 oat, red brome, foxtail barley, and English ryegrass. Herbaceous annual forbs present include nonnatives  
44 such as red-stem filaree, mustards, and common catchfly and disturbance tolerant native species such as  
45 doveweed, vinegar weed, and tarweeds.

1 | ***Riversidean Alluvial Fan Scrub (Special Status)***

2 | In addition to scalebroom, this vegetation community is typically composed of white sage, redberry, flat-  
3 | top buckwheat, cholla, tarragon, yerba santa, mulefat, and mountain-mahogany. Two sensitive annual  
4 | species endemic to alluvial scrub vegetation in the MSHCP area include slender-horned spineflower and  
5 | Santa Ana River woolly-star.

6 |  
7 | ***Cismontane Alkali Marsh***

8 | Typical cismontane alkali marsh species include yerba mansa, saltgrass, alkali-heath, cattails, common  
9 | pickleweed, rushes, marsh flea-bane and sedges.

10 |  
11 | ***Mulefat Scrub***

12 | Mulefat scrub is dominated by mulefat, but also may include willows, sedges, and stinging nettle.

13 |  
14 | ***Riparian Scrub***

15 | Areas mapped as riparian scrub are dominated by willows, Mexican elderberry, and mulefat all at a  
16 | younger successional stage than mature riparian forest.

17 |  
18 | ***Open Water***

19 | Open water habitat typically is unvegetated due to a lack of sunlight. However, open water may contain  
20 | suspended organisms such as filamentous green algae, phytoplankton (including diatoms) and desmids.  
21 | Floating plants such as duckweed, water buttercup and mosquito fern also may be present.

22 |  
23 | **4.4.1.3 Jurisdictional Waters**

24 |  
25 | Wetlands are ecologically productive habitats that support a diversity of plant and animal life. Often,  
26 | species endemic to wetlands are found in no other habitat type. Wetlands are recognized as important  
27 | natural systems because of their value to fish and wildlife, and their functions as storage areas for flood  
28 | flows, groundwater recharge, nutrient recycling and water quality improvement. Wetlands are defined as  
29 | areas that are periodically or permanently inundated by surface or ground water and support vegetation  
30 | adapted to saturated soils.

31 |  
32 | The proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Project areas traverse numerous drainages and wetland areas  
33 | within the Santa Ana and San Jacinto River Watersheds. This portion of Western Riverside County is  
34 | dominated by ephemeral washes that flow into the San Jacinto River and Temescal Wash, then continue  
35 | into the Santa Ana River. The majority of waterways in the project area are minor ephemeral drainages  
36 | containing water for short periods of time during large storm events. Larger waterways, including the San  
37 | Jacinto River and Temescal Wash may be identified as seasonal waterways, containing water for longer  
38 | periods on a seasonal basis, but not always perennially throughout their entire reaches. For a detailed  
39 | description of the hydrology of the project area, see Section 4.9, "Hydrology and Water Quality."

40 |  
41 | **4.4.1.4 Special Status Species**

42 |  
43 | For the purposes of this environmental impact report (EIR), the term *special status species* refers to any of  
44 | the following:

- 45 |  
46 | • Species listed as Endangered or Threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) (Title 50,  
47 | Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Sections 17.11 and 17.12);

- Species listed as Endangered, Threatened, or Rare under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Sections 670.2 and 670.5, Title 14, California Code of Regulations);
- Species without a formal listing status that meet the definitions of Endangered or Rare under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15380, including CDFW Species of Special Concern, CNPS rare plant ranks 1B and 2, Candidate, or Proposed species for listing under the ESA, and USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern;
- Species listed as Species of Special Concern or Fully Protected by the CDFW; or
- Species protected under the MSHCP or SKR HCP.

Special status species occurrences or potential occurrences in the proposed project area and species covered under the MSHCP are listed in Appendix G (Tables 1 and 2). Additional information about these species is included in the technical studies for the proposed projects, which can be found in Appendices F1, F2, and F3. Expanded species descriptions are provided below for species known to inhabit proposed project areas or have high potential to occur.

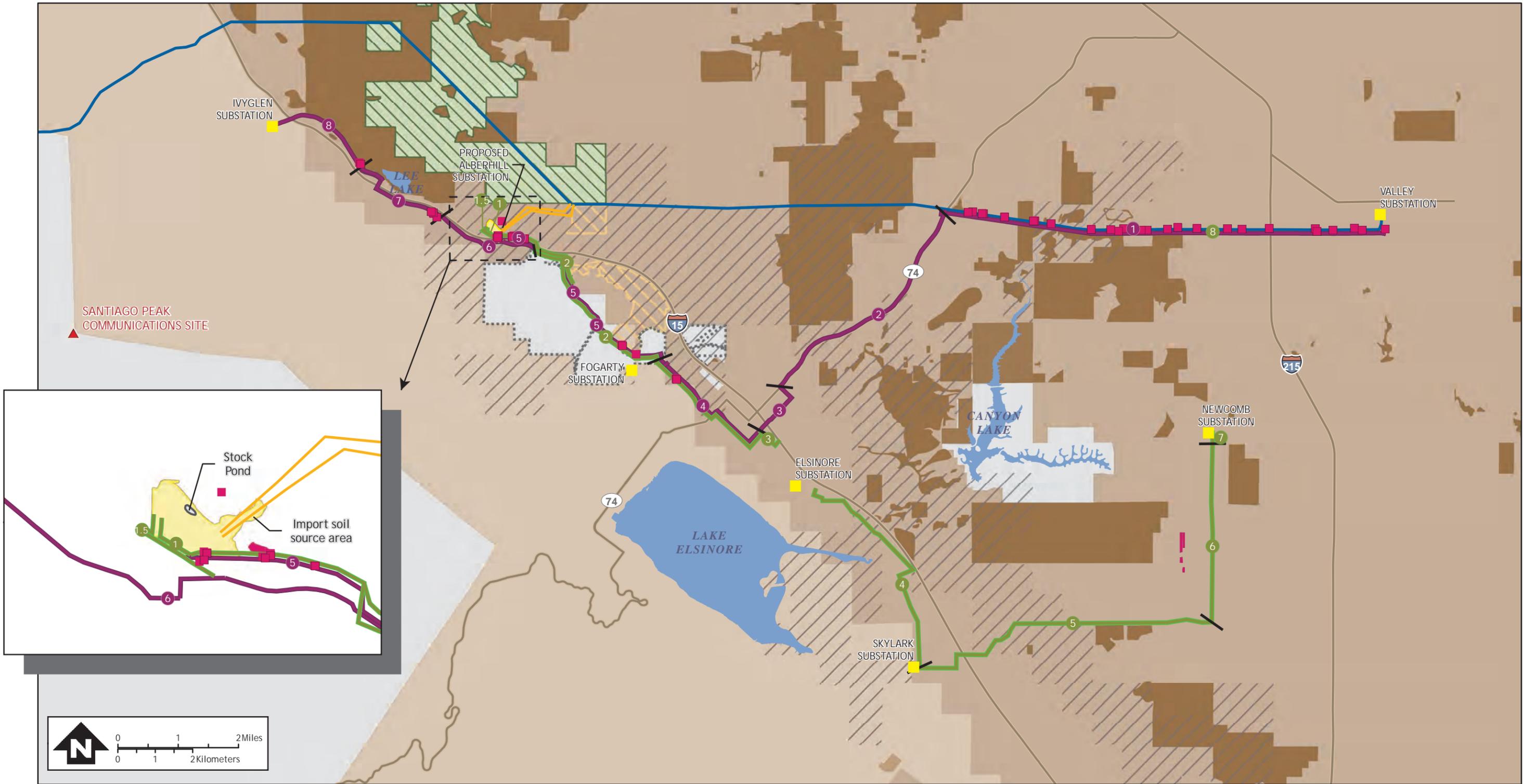
### ***Special Status Plants and Wildlife***

Many of the special status plants found within the project area, including those plants designated as Narrow Endemic and Criteria Area Survey Species by the MSHCP, have specific and narrow habitat requirements, such as associations with specific soils or vegetation communities (Figure 4.4-1). Additionally, many of these species have specific physiological requirements, such as a need for certain amounts of rainfall and dry periods in order to bloom.

Multi-year, applicant-conducted surveys and CNDDDB inquiry results for the topographic quadrangles in which the proposed Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill Project components are located indicate that numerous sensitive plant and wildlife species could potentially occur in the proposed project area. Focused surveys for covered species were conducted as required under the MSHCP.

Focused or protocol-level surveys<sup>2</sup> were conducted for several threatened or endangered wildlife and plant species with the potential to occur within the project area, including SKR, least Bell's vireo, vernal pool fairy shrimp, Riverside fairy shrimp, coastal California gnatcatcher, Munz's onion, San Diego ambrosia, smooth tarplant, many-stemmed dudleya, spreading navarretia, California orcutt grass, Wright's trichocoronis, slender-horned spineflower, San Miguel savory, and Hammitt's clay cress. Appendix G (Tables 1 and 2) list all special status species with the potential to occur in the project area for the proposed Alberhill Project and the Valley-Ivyglen Projects.

<sup>2</sup> Focused wildlife surveys are those undertaken according to methods outlined by the Western Riverside MSCHP ([e.g the Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area \[County of Riverside 2006\]](#)). Protocol-level surveys are those undertaken according to standards or guidelines published by wildlife agencies (e.g., CDFW, USFWS) or professional wildlife organizations (e.g., California Burrowing Owl Consortium).



Source: AMEC 2011, ESRI 2010, SCE 2011, 2013, SJM 2010b, 2011, WRCRCA 2010, RCHCA 2007

- |        |            |        |   |                                   |  |
|--------|------------|--------|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 VIG1 | 1 ASP1     | 5 ASP5 | Existing Substations                    | SKR occurrence / occurrences area | MSHCP sensitive soils                            |
| 2 VIG2 | 1.5 ASP1.5 | 6 ASP6 | Proposed Alberhill Substation           | RCHCA core reserve                | RCHCA SKR HCP area                               |
| 3 VIG3 | 2 ASP2     | 7 ASP7 | Proposed 500-kV transmission lines      | WRCRCA MSHCP                      | High-quality habitat identified in RCHCA SKR HCP |
| 4 VIG4 | 3 ASP3     | 8 ASP8 | 500-kV Serrano Valley Transmission Line | Additional Reserve Land           | Castle & Cooke Property (MSHCP does not apply)   |
| 5 VIG5 | 4 ASP4     |        | Segment begin / end                     | WRCRCA MSHCP area                 |  |
| 6 VIG6 |            |        |   |                                   |  |
| 7 VIG7 |            |        |   |                                   |  |
| 8 VIG8 |            |        |   |                                   |  |

Figure 4.4-1  
 Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Conservation Areas and Occurrences  
 Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects  
 Riverside County, California

1 **4.4.1.5 Wildlife Corridors**  
2

3 A wildlife corridor is defined as a linear landscape feature that allows animal movement between two  
4 patches of habitat or between habitat and geographically discrete resources such as water (SDMMP  
5 2011). Connections between extensive areas of open space are integral to maintaining regional biological  
6 diversity and population viability. Areas that serve as wildlife movement corridors are considered  
7 biologically sensitive because they can facilitate the persistence of special status species. In the absence of  
8 corridors, habitats become fragmented, isolated islands surrounded by development. Fragmented habitats  
9 support much lower numbers of species and increase the likelihood of extinction for select species.

10  
11 Important distinctions exist between regional and local corridors. Regional corridors link two or more  
12 large areas of natural open space and maintain demographic and genetic exchange between wildlife  
13 populations residing within these geographically distinct areas, whereas local corridors give resident  
14 animals access to essential resources (water, food, cover, or den sites) within a large habitat patch and  
15 may also function as secondary connections to the regional corridor system. Different species have  
16 different corridor use potentials. For example, a landscape feature that functions as a corridor for a  
17 songbird may not suffice for a mountain lion or a reptile. Another useful distinction can be drawn  
18 between natural and constructed corridor elements. Natural elements are features of the landscape, such as  
19 canyons or riparian strips, which are conducive to animal movement. Constructed elements, such as  
20 roadway bridges and drainage culverts, are often part of a corridor. Wildlife corridors in a partially  
21 developed landscape generally include both natural and constructed elements. The MSHCP identifies  
22 blocks of contiguous habitat for covered species (“cores”) and corridors for movement between cores  
23 (“linkages”) (Riverside County 2003b). Analyses of impacts on MSHCP Schematic Cores and Linkages  
24 are included in this EIR under Impact BR-4 (ASP).  
25

26 In the proposed project area, riparian corridors provide shade, cover, water, food, and discrete corridors  
27 for wildlife movement. Barriers to movement include the highways and paved roads (such as I-15 and  
28 State Route 74), as well as the numerous residential neighborhoods along the proposed transmission  
29 corridor. Areas of mountainous terrain, while providing corridors, may also present barriers to some  
30 species unable to navigate the steep topography. The MSHCP has identified numerous species that may  
31 utilize habitat corridors for movement, including coastal California gnatcatcher, SKR, bobcat, mountain  
32 lion, least Bell’s vireo, Belding’s orange-throated whiptail, and Quino checkerspot butterfly (Riverside  
33 County 2003a). The MSHCP promotes the conservation of contiguous habitat for these species, especially  
34 habitat containing appropriate refugia, foraging, and breeding habitat.  
35

36 **4.4.2 Regulatory Setting**  
37

38 **4.4.2.1 Federal**  
39

40 ***Federal Endangered Species Act***

41 Enacted to protect threatened and endangered (T&E) species and the ecosystems upon which they  
42 depend, the ESA (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] 1531 *et seq.*) is administered by USFWS and the  
43 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The USFWS has primary responsibility for terrestrial and  
44 freshwater organisms, while the NMFS is mainly responsible for marine wildlife such as whales and  
45 anadromous fish such as salmon. The ESA makes it unlawful for any person to take a listed T&E species  
46 without a permit. Take is defined as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or  
47 collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct.” Section 7 of the ESA requires a federal agency to  
48 consult with the USFWS when any action it carries out, funds, or authorizes may affect a listed T&E  
49 species. For projects that are not carried out, funded, or authorized by a federal agency, Section 10 of the

1 ESA allows the USFWS to issue a permit to the project proponent to take listed T&E species incidental to  
2 otherwise legal activity.

### 3 4 **Migratory Bird Treaty Act**

5 The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) makes it illegal to “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to  
6 take, capture, kill, possess, sell, and barter” native migratory bird species without a permit. The MBTA  
7 (16 U.S.C. 703–712) was enacted in response to the decline of migratory bird populations from  
8 uncontrolled commercial uses. The MBTA is a multi-national effort to protect migratory birds and bird  
9 parts, including eggs, young, nests, and feathers. This act extends to almost all migratory birds and  
10 includes 836 species, including 58 species that may be legally hunted. The MBTA excludes certain game  
11 birds and non-native species (e.g., quail, turkeys, European starlings).

### 12 13 **Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act**

14 The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668–668d, 54 Stat. 250) was enacted in 1940 to  
15 preserve eagle populations from wanton killing and population declines. This act makes it illegal to take  
16 bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) or golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) eagles or to trade in eagle  
17 parts, eggs, or feathers. Take has been broadly interpreted to include altering or disturbing nesting habitat.

18  
19 Additionally, this act prohibits molestation and disturbance. Rule changes made on September 11, 2009,  
20 Eagle Rule, 50 CFR Parts 13 and 22, finalized permit regulations to authorize limited take associated with  
21 otherwise lawful activities (74 Federal Register 175 [11 September 2009]). These new regulations  
22 established permit provisions for intentional take of eagle nests under particular limited circumstances.

### 23 24 **Clean Water Act**

#### 25 **Section 404**

26 The Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. 1251 *et seq.*) regulates the discharge of pollutants into waters of  
27 the U.S. with the objective to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the  
28 nation’s waters. Under Section 404 of the CWA, the USACE is authorized to regulate the discharge of fill  
29 or dredged material into waters of the U.S., which includes wetlands. Wetlands are defined as land  
30 “inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency or duration sufficient to support, and  
31 that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in  
32 saturated soil conditions” (33 CFR 328.3; 40 CFR 230.3). The USACE has the authority to determine if a  
33 wetland or waterbody is subject to regulatory jurisdiction under Section 404. A Section 404 nationwide or  
34 individual permit from the USACE is required if the project would dredge or fill waters of the U.S.

35  
36 The USACE evaluates permit applications for all construction activities that may impact waters of the  
37 U.S., including navigable waters. The USACE either performs or receives jurisdictional delineations for  
38 proposed developments and then provides a jurisdictional determination. The jurisdictional review  
39 performed by the USACE may require modifications of development plans to avoid or reduce impacts on  
40 waters of the U.S.

#### 41 42 **Section 401**

43 Section 401 of the CWA stipulates that a federal agency cannot issue a permit or license for an activity  
44 that may result in a discharge to waters of the U.S. unless the state or tribe where the discharge would  
45 originate has granted or waived Section 401 water quality certification. The state or tribe may grant, grant  
46 with conditions, deny, or waive certification. In California, the State Water Resources Control Board  
47 (SWRCB)~~RWQCB~~ administers the Section 401 Water Quality Certification Program. Section 401  
48 certification is required before the USACE may issue a Section 404 permit for discharge of dredged or fill

1 material into waters of the U.S. Many states, including California, rely on Section 401 certification as a  
2 primary regulatory tool for protecting wetlands and other aquatic resources.

#### 3 4 **4.4.2.2 State**

##### 5 6 ***California Endangered Species Act***

7 The CESA (California Fish and Game Code [CFGF] Section 2050 *et seq.*) establishes legal protection for  
8 state-listed T&E plants and wildlife under the guidance of the CDFW. The CDFW also identifies species  
9 of concern as those that may become listed as threatened or endangered due to loss of habitat, limited  
10 distributions, and diminishing population sizes or because the species is deemed to have scientific,  
11 recreational, or educational value. CFGF Section 2081 provides a permit process for incidental take of  
12 species listed as T&E pursuant to CESA when certain permit conditions are met.

##### 13 14 ***California Fish and Game Code Section 1600 et seq.***

15 Pursuant to CFGF Section 1600 *et seq.*, CDFW has authority over all perennial, intermittent, and  
16 ephemeral rivers, streams, and lakes in the state, and requires any person, state, or local governmental  
17 agency, or public utility to notify the CDFW before beginning any activity that would “substantially  
18 divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or  
19 bank of, any river, stream, or lake, or deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing  
20 crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake” that supports fish  
21 or wildlife resources. A Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement may be required for any proposed  
22 project that would result in an adverse impact to a river, stream, or lake. CDFW jurisdiction typically  
23 extends to the top of the bank and out to the outer edge of adjacent riparian vegetation, if present.

##### 24 25 ***Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act***

26 The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act defines waters of the state as “any surface water or  
27 groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state.” These waters include those  
28 considered waters of the U.S. under the jurisdiction of the USACE, as well as waters not covered by the  
29 USACE. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act established state and regional water quality  
30 control boards as the primary agencies responsible for the coordination and control over water quality in  
31 waters of the state. Pursuant to California Water Code Section 13260, a “person discharging waste, or  
32 proposing to discharge waste, within any region that could affect the quality of the waters of the state,  
33 other than into a community sewer system” must file a report of the discharge and application for waste  
34 discharge requirements with the appropriate RWQCB.

##### 35 36 ***California Fish and Game Code, Sections 3503, 3503.5, 3511, and 5050***

37 According to CFGF Section 1802, the CDFW has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and  
38 management of all California wildlife, fish, native plants (including state-listed T&E and other special  
39 status species), and their habitats necessary to maintain biologically sustainable populations. CFGF  
40 Section 3503 specifies the following general provision for birds: “it is unlawful to take, possess, or  
41 needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any  
42 regulation made pursuant thereto.” Section 3503.5 states that it is “unlawful to take, possess, or destroy  
43 any birds in the orders Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds-of-prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the  
44 nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted  
45 pursuant thereto.” Construction disturbance during the breeding season that results in the incidental loss  
46 of fertile eggs or nestlings or otherwise leads to nest abandonment is considered take. The CDFW also  
47 considers disturbance that causes nest abandonment or loss of reproductive effort to be take. Sections  
48 3511 and 5050 prohibit the taking and possession without a permit of birds and reptiles listed as “fully  
49 protected.”

1  
2 **California Native Plant Protection Act of 1977**

3 CFGC Section 1900 establishes the California Native Plant Protection Act, which includes provisions that  
4 prohibit the taking of listed rare or endangered plants from the wild. The act also includes a salvage  
5 requirement for landowners. Furthermore, it gives the CDFW authority to designate native plants as  
6 endangered or rare and establishes protection measures.

7  
8 **California Code of Regulations**

9 Sections 670.2 and 670.5 list wildlife and plant species listed as threatened or endangered in California or  
10 by the federal government under the ESA. Species considered future protected species by the CDFW are  
11 designated California Species of Special Concern. Species of Special Concern currently have no legal  
12 status but are considered indicator species that are useful for monitoring regional habitat changes.

13  
14 **CEQA Guidelines Section 15380**

15 In addition to species listed on the federal and state lists of protected species, CEQA Guidelines Section  
16 15380(d) provides that a species shall be considered endangered, rare, or threatened if the species can be  
17 shown to meet certain specified criteria. A species may be considered “endangered” when its survival and  
18 reproduction in the wild are immediately threatened. A species may be considered “rare” when the  
19 species exists in such small numbers or in only a small portion of its range so that it may become  
20 endangered if the conditions of its habitat worsen. A species may be considered “threatened” if it meets  
21 the federal ESA criteria.

22  
23 Non-listed species that may be considered under CEQA include, but are not limited to, plants categorized  
24 by the CNPS as rare or endangered (including those species considered rare and endangered only within  
25 California) or any plants considered locally or regionally significant by local governments or agencies.  
26 Because CEQA does not limit the discussion of impacts on species listed as T&E by either the federal or  
27 state governments, biological impacts are assessed and mitigation measures are assigned on a case-by-  
28 case basis, accounting for the scope of the project, the specifics of the site, and the individual species in  
29 question, among other factors.

30  
31 **4.4.2.3 Regional and Local**

32  
33 The CPUC has sole and exclusive state jurisdiction over the siting and design of the proposed Project.  
34 Pursuant to General Order No. 131-D, Section XIV.B, "Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local  
35 authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or  
36 electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC's jurisdiction. However, in locating  
37 such projects, the public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies  
38 regarding land use matters." Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and  
39 consult with local agencies, but the county and cities' regulations are not applicable as the county and  
40 cities do not have jurisdiction over the proposed Project. Accordingly, a discussion of local land use  
41 regulations is provided in the following subsections for informational purposes only.

42  
43 **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan**

44 The MSHCP serves as an HCP pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA and a Natural Communities  
45 Conservation Plan pursuant to the California Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act. The  
46 MSHCP was adopted by the County of Riverside in 2003 and is administered by the Western Riverside  
47 County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA). The MSHCP is one of several large, multi-jurisdictional  
48 habitat conservation planning efforts in Southern California that are designed to maintain biological  
49 diversity within rapidly urbanizing areas. The MSHCP provides conservation for 146 special status

1 species, including federal and state listed endangered and threatened species, and provides incidental take  
2 permits for development projects that may impact these species. MSHCP areas are shown on Figure  
3 4.4-1.

4  
5 All components of the proposed project would be located within the MSHCP area. Portions of ~~except for~~  
6 the 115-kV Segment ASP2 and VIG5 sections that traverse the Castle and Cooke property (Figure 4.4-1),  
7 some of which are exempt from MSHCP requirements per the terms of a settlement agreement. While the  
8 settlement agreement may have excluded ~~)-~~ The Castle and Cooke from the requirements of the MSHCP,  
9 their properties are still within the boundaries of the MSHCP and incidental take authorization will be  
10 extended to SCE on these properties pursuant to the PSE process. The MSHCP's original CEQA and  
11 NEPA analysis and the language ~~property is exempt from measures or restrictions presented in the~~  
12 MSHCP documents that the MSHCP, including the PSE process, will be implemented as originally  
13 described even on the settlement agreement properties. SCE has coordinated extensively. However, the  
14 applicant is entering into an agreement with the RCA, USFWS, and CDFW, and is currently in the  
15 process of obtaining PSE status, through a Certificate of Inclusion, to allow for coverage of the entire  
16 proposed project alignment, including areas that traverse under the MSHCP on Castle and Cooke  
17 exempted property.

18  
19 The MSHCP requires that project sites be evaluated for a number of factors to assess how they meet  
20 criteria identified in the MSHCP. As part of this evaluation, MSHCP provisions require:

- 21  
22 • Site-specific focused surveys for Narrow Endemic Plant Species and for all public and private  
23 projects where appropriate habitat is present. A narrow endemic species has a limited geographic  
24 distribution (e.g., Santa Rosa Plateau or San Jacinto River Valley), an affinity for a particular soil  
25 type (e.g., Domino, Travers, or Willow), or is restricted to a specific habitat (e.g., coastal sage  
26 scrub, vernal pools);
- 27 • Focused surveys must follow MSHCP protocol guidelines (i.e., surveys are limited to certain time  
28 periods, or a certain number of surveys must be conducted);
- 29 • Surveys for Criteria Area Wildlife Species where suitable habitat is present. Criteria Areas are  
30 identified within the MSHCP as geographic areas, soils, or habitat that support, or have the  
31 potential to support, covered species;
- 32 • Site surveys of riparian, riverine, and vernal pool resources in order to conserve these resources  
33 and the species that use them;
- 34 • Habitat compensation measures in the event that sensitive habitat is removed or adversely  
35 affected during project construction;
- 36 • Fee payment to the appropriate permit agency when work is conducted within certain  
37 jurisdictional areas of the MSHCP; and
- 38 • The MSHCP requires that focused habitat assessments be conducted for covered wildlife species  
39 when a project is located within suitable habitat. Certain species require the payment of an HCP  
40 fee. The MSHCP has also identified specific survey areas for certain wildlife species with the  
41 potential to occur within previously mapped habitat types. Focused habitat assessments or  
42 focused presence-absence surveys were undertaken in these areas for Munz's onion, San Diego  
43 ambrosia, smooth tarplant, arroyo toad, western burrowing owl, least Bell's vireo, Los Angeles  
44 pocket mouse, and San Bernardino kangaroo rat.

45  
46 With regards to critical habitat within the MSHCP, according to the MSHCP, the USFWS has  
47 acknowledged and agreed that the MSHCP and the implementing Agreement (IA) provide a  
48 comprehensive, habitat-based approach to the protection of covered species by focusing on the lands

1 essential for the long term conservation of the covered species and appropriate management for those  
2 lands. This approach is consistent with the overall purposes of FESA to provide a means whereby the  
3 ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved. FESA regulations  
4 specify that the criteria to be used in designating critical habitat include “those physical and biological  
5 features that are essential to the conservation of a given species and that may require special management  
6 considerations or protection.” (50 C.F.R. § 424.12(b).

7  
8 The MSHCP and the IA provide for the protection of “those physical and biological features essential to  
9 the conservation” of the covered species in a manner consistent with USFWS regulations concerning the  
10 designation of Critical Habitat. The USFWS agreed that in the event that a critical habitat determination is  
11 made for any covered species, and unless the USFWS finds that the MSHCP is not being implemented,  
12 lands within the boundaries of the MSHCP shall not be designated as critical habitat. In addition, if  
13 critical habitat is designated within the MSHCP boundaries, pursuant to Section 14.12 of the IA and  
14 except as expressly provided in Section 14.12 of the IA and Section 6.8 of the MSHCP regarding  
15 unforeseen circumstances, no subsequent evaluation of the covered species, nor any mitigation,  
16 compensation, conservation enhancement or other protective measures other than those set forth in the  
17 MSHCP shall be required.

18  
19 The RCA has issued the applicant a Certificate of Inclusion (COI) to become a Participating Special  
20 Entity (PSE) for the Valley-Ivyglen Phase 1 Project (SCE 2014b). ~~The), and the applicant submitted a~~  
21 ~~plans to submit PSE application applications to the RCA for the Valley –Ivyglen Phase 2 in March 2016~~  
22 ~~and plans to submit a PSE application for and the Alberhill Project in 2016 or 2017 August and October~~  
23 ~~2015, respectively.~~ To comply with PSE requirements, the applicant must follow all applicable provisions  
24 of the MSHCP. However, because components of the proposed projects also fall within the boundaries of  
25 the SKR HCP area, take of SKR must be obtained separately through the SKR HCP, as described below.

#### 26 27 *Additional Reserve Land*

28 The MSHCP includes provisions for the acquisition of Additional Reserve Land (ARL) to conserve  
29 habitat needed to meet the goals and objectives of the MSHCP. Figure 4.4-1 show the locations of ARLs  
30 along the proposed projects. All MSHCP requirements apply to activities within Western Riverside  
31 County RCA ARL. ~~Where ARL is also located within SKR HCP areas (Figure 4.4-1), all SKR HCP~~  
32 ~~requirements also apply. SKR HCP core reserve requirements (e.g., requirements for the Lake Mathews-~~  
33 ~~Estelle Mountain Core Reserve; Figure 4.4-1) do not apply to ARL.~~

#### 34 35 ***Stephens’ Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan***

36 The RCHCA, a Joint Powers Agreement agency, implements the SKR HCP, which was established in  
37 April 1996 (RCHCA 2007). Incidental take authorization for SKR can be authorized in accordance with  
38 the HCP by the USFWS pursuant to Section 10(a)(1)(B) of the ESA and a 30-year California Endangered  
39 Species Permit from the CDFW regarding management take of the same species, pursuant to CFGC  
40 Section 2081. The HCP describes the conservation, mitigation, and monitoring measures implemented to  
41 protect SKR and its habitat. The SKR HCP does not include other species and habitat types. The RCHCA  
42 currently manages several core reserves that have been set aside for SKR conservation and habitat  
43 preservation, including the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve, which is located adjacent to  
44 the northern terminus of the proposed Alberhill 500-kV transmission line routes (Figure 4.4-1).

45  
46 Projects located within both the MSHCP and the SKR HCP cannot obtain incidental take authorization  
47 for SKR through the MSHCP, and must instead obtain take authorization through the SKR HCP. SKR  
48 conservation areas and confirmed locations of SKR in the proposed project area are shown in Figure  
49 4.4-1.

## Riverside County

The Riverside County General Plan (2014) establishes the following policies regarding biological resources that are relevant to the proposed projects:

- **Policy OS 17.1:** *Enforce the provisions of applicable MSHCPs, if adopted, when conducting review of development applications.*
- **Policy OS 18.1:** *Preserve multi-species habitat resources in the County of Riverside through the enforcement of the provisions of applicable MSHCPs, if adopted.*
- **Policy ELAP 18.1:** *Protect viable oak woodlands through adherence to the Oak Tree Management Guidelines adopted by Riverside County and the Vegetation section of the Multipurpose Open Space Element of the General Plan.*
- **Policy ELAP 19.1:** *Protect sensitive biological resources in the Elsinore Area Plan through adherence to General Plan policies found in the General Plan Multipurpose Open Space Element.*
- **Policy ELAP 19.5:** *Conserve wetlands including Temescal Wash, Collier Marsh, Alberhill Creek, Wasson Creek, and the lower San Jacinto River, (including marsh habitats and maintaining water quality).*

The Riverside County Oak Tree Management Guidelines are intended to address the treatment of oak woodlands in areas where zoning and/or general plan density restrictions would allow the effective use of clustering (Riverside County 1993). Permits from Riverside County are required for mature tree and oak woodland removal.

### County of Riverside Roadside Tree Ordinance

The Riverside County Roadside Tree Ordinance 12.08.050 specifies that permits must be obtained from the County Transportation Director to remove or substantially trim trees planted in the ROW of County highways. Conditions may include requirements for the work to be done only by qualified tree surgeons or trimmers and for bond, insurance, or security to protect the local area and facilities from damage.

### City of Lake Elsinore

The City of Lake Elsinore General Plan (2011) establishes the following goals and policies regarding biological resources that are relevant to the proposed projects:

- **Policy 1.4:** *Encourage revegetation with native plants compatible with natural surrounding habitat where soils have been disturbed during construction, and discourage plants identified in the MSHCP as unsuitable for conservation areas.*
- **Policy 2.1:** *Biological resources analyses of proposed projects shall include discussion of potential impacts on any plant or wildlife species that is officially listed as threatened or endangered by the USFWS and/or CDFW but not covered by the MSHCP.*
- **Policy 2.2:** *Development or modification shall be discouraged in areas containing riparian habitat of high functions and values or corridors with 80% or more of natural native habitat that link larger patches of natural native habitat containing 80% or more native plant species. Further, development in areas described for conservation, including areas planned for riparian/riverine restoration included in the MSHCP shall also be discouraged.*

1 In addition, Section 5.116 of the City of Lake Elsinore Municipal Code requires that permits be obtained  
2 for the removal or relocation of *significant palms*. Significant palms are defined by the Code as species of  
3 the family Palmaceae that, unless specifically provided otherwise, exceed 5 feet in height measured from  
4 the ground at the base of the trunk to the base of the crown.

### 6 **City of Menifee**

7 The City of Menifee General Plan (2013) establishes the following goals and policies regarding open  
8 space conservation and biological resources that are relevant to the proposed projects:

- 9
- 10 • **Policy OSC-3.4:** *Support the preservation of natural vegetation and rock outcroppings during*  
11 *and after the construction process.*
- 12 • **Policy OSC-8.1:** *Work to implement the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat*  
13 *Conservation Plan in coordination with the Regional Conservation Authority.*
- 14 • **Policy OSC-8.3:** *Partner with non-profit agencies at the local, regional, state, and federal level*  
15 *to fulfill the obligations of the MSHCP to preserve and protect significant biological resources.*
- 16 • **Policy OSC-8.5:** *Recognize the impacts new development will have on the City's natural*  
17 *resources and identify ways to reduce these impacts.*
- 18

### 19 **City of Wildomar**

20 At the time of preparation of this EIR, the City of Wildomar has not adopted a general plan. The city was  
21 incorporated in 2008 and adopted all County of Riverside ordinances at that time. County ordinances  
22 remain in effect until the city enacts ordinances superseding them. Policies listed above under the  
23 Riverside County General Plan as applicable to the proposed Alberhill Project also apply to the City of  
24 Wildomar. No components of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project are located within the City of  
25 Wildomar.

## 27 **4.4.3 Methodology and Significance Criteria**

### 29 **4.4.3.1 Methodology**

30

31 The impact analysis for biological resources was conducted by: (1) gathering and analyzing information  
32 from numerous sources (see description of sources below) in addition to the data provided by the  
33 applicant and (2) evaluating temporal and spatial effects to habitats and organisms that may be present  
34 within the project area and within a regional geographic context. Recent survey data provided by the  
35 applicant were assessed for accuracy and appropriate implementation of resource agency protocols.  
36 Calculations for temporary and permanent disturbance to vegetation habitat were based on the applicant's  
37 projections of land disturbance resulting from construction of project components. Potential impacts and  
38 appropriate general minimization and mitigation measures were developed using guidelines or input from  
39 resource agencies, specifically the USFWS, CDFW, and USACE, and regional authorities such as the  
40 RCHCA and the RCA. Biologists with specific local and regional knowledge were consulted to determine  
41 potential impacts. Occurrence maps in the area were reviewed to determine resource location,  
42 distribution, and seasonality.

43

44 The impacts analysis identifies and describes impacts on biological resources within the proposed project  
45 area. In addition to the proposed project components, the analysis considers impacts caused by staging  
46 areas and access roads, and impacts on habitat adjacent to project components. The analyses focus on  
47 foreseeable changes to the baseline conditions in the context of the significance criteria presented above

1 and retained below for ease of reference. The analysis includes evaluations of direct and indirect effects,  
2 which are defined as follow:

- 3
- 4 • *Direct effects*, or primary effects, are those effects that are caused by the project and occur at the  
5 same time and place (CEQA Guideline Section 15358). Examples include incidental take during  
6 construction, or elimination or degradation of suitable habitat due to construction-related  
7 activities.
- 8 • *Indirect effects*, or secondary effects, are those effects which are caused by the project and are  
9 later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable (CEQA Guideline  
10 Section 15358). Examples include the discharge of sediment or chemicals that adversely affect  
11 water quality downstream of the project site or an increase in human activity during project  
12 operations.

13  
14 Cumulative effects (CEQA Guideline Section 15130 *et seq.*) are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.0.

#### 15 16 **4.4.3.2 Significance Criteria**

17  
18 Potential impacts on biological resources were evaluated according to the following significance criteria.  
19 The criteria were defined based on the checklist items presented in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines.  
20 The proposed projects would cause a significant impact on biological resources if they would:

- 21
- 22 a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species  
23 identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or  
24 regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS;
- 25 b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community  
26 identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS;
- 27 c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the  
28 CWA (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal,  
29 filling, hydrological interruption, or other means;
- 30 d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife  
31 species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of  
32 native wildlife nursery sites;
- 33 e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree  
34 preservation policy or ordinance; or
- 35 f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted HCP, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other  
36 approved local, regional, or state HCP.

#### 37 38 **4.4.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures (Valley-Ivyglen Project)**

##### 39 40 **4.4.4.1 Project Commitments (Valley-Ivyglen Project)**

41  
42 The applicant has committed to undertaking impact reduction measures as part of the design of the  
43 proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project. These measures, referred to in this document as Project Commitments,  
44 are the same for the proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects, with the exception of Project  
45 Commitment A (see Section 4.4.5.1). These Project Commitments are considered to be part of the project  
46 description, and would be undertaken for all portions of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill  
47 Projects, including portions within the MSHCP. However, these commitments alone would not reduce

1 associated impacts on biological resources to less than significant levels. Therefore, additional mitigation  
2 measures have been developed to further reduce impacts on biological resources.

- 3
- 4 • **Project Commitment B: Worker Environmental Awareness Plan.** Prior to construction, a  
5 Worker Environmental Awareness Plan would be developed based on final engineering designs,  
6 the results of preconstruction surveys, and mitigation measures developed by the California  
7 Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). A presentation would be prepared by the applicant and  
8 shown to all site workers prior to their start of work. A record of all trained personnel would be  
9 kept with the construction foreman. In addition to the instruction for compliance with any site-  
10 specific biological or cultural resource protective measures and project mitigation measures, all  
11 construction personnel would also receive the following:
  - 12 – A list of phone numbers of the applicant’s personnel (i.e., archeologist, biologist,  
13 environmental compliance coordinator, and regional spill response coordinator);
  - 14 – Instruction on the South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 403 for control of dust;
  - 15 – Instruction on what typical cultural resources look like, and if discovered during construction,  
16 to suspend work in the vicinity of any find and contact the site foreman and archeologist or  
17 environmental compliance coordinator;
  - 18 – Instruction on washing the wheels, tracks, and underbodies of construction vehicles to  
19 minimize the spread of invasive species;
  - 20 – Instruction on individual responsibilities under the CWA, the Storm Water Pollution  
21 Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the proposed projects, site-specific Best Management Practices  
22 (BMPs), and the location of Material Safety Data Sheets for the proposed projects;
  - 23 – Instructions to notify the foreman and regional spill response coordinator in case of hazardous  
24 materials spills and leaks from equipment or upon the discovery of soil or groundwater  
25 contamination;
  - 26 – A copy of the truck routes to be used for material delivery; and
  - 27 – Instruction that noncompliance with any laws, rules, regulations, or mitigation measures  
28 could result in being barred from participating in any remaining construction activities  
29 associated with the proposed projects.
- 30 • **Project Commitment C: Raptor Protection on Power Lines.** The applicant would design all  
31 115-kV subtransmission structures consistent with the *Suggested Practices for ~~Avian~~Raptor*  
32 *Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006* (APLIC 2006).
- 33 • **Project Commitment D: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan.** With input from the  
34 appropriate resource agencies, the applicant would develop and implement a Habitat Restoration  
35 and Revegetation Plan to restore temporarily impacted areas where construction of the proposed  
36 projects would be unable to avoid impacts on native vegetation and sensitive resources, such as  
37 wetlands, wetland buffer areas, riparian habitat, and other sensitive natural communities. The  
38 applicant would restore all temporarily disturbed areas disturbed during construction of the  
39 proposed projects, including staging areas and pull, tension, and splicing sites, to as close to pre-  
40 construction conditions as possible, or to the conditions agreed upon between the applicant and  
41 landowner. Replanting and reseeding would be conducted under the direction the applicant or  
42 contract biologists. If revegetation would occur on private property, revegetation conditions  
43 would be part of the agreement between the applicant and the landowner.

- 1 • **Project Commitment H: Noise Control.** All construction and general maintenance activities,  
2 except in an emergency or within enclosed structures which reduce the noise to less than  
3 significant, would be limited to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and prohibited on Sundays  
4 and ~~all legally proclaimed holidays recognized by~~. ~~If the California Independent System Operator~~  
5 ~~and/or California Department of Transportation require that conductor stringing over freeways or~~  
6 ~~highways occur after 7:00 p.m., or on a Sunday, the local applicant would obtain variances from~~  
7 ~~all applicable jurisdictions.~~ In the event that construction activities are necessary on days or hours  
8 outside of what is specified by the local ordinance, SCE would provide advance notification,  
9 including a general description of the work to be performed, location and hours of construction  
10 anticipated, to the CPUC, the local jurisdiction and residents within 300 feet of the anticipated  
11 work.

12 Construction equipment would use noise reduction features (e.g., mufflers and engine shrouds)  
13 that are no less effective than those originally installed by the manufacturer.

14 Construction traffic would be routed away from residences and schools where feasible.

15 Unnecessary construction vehicle use and idling time would be minimized to the extent feasible.  
16 The ability to limit construction vehicle idling time is dependent upon the sequence of  
17 construction activities and when and where vehicles are needed or staged. A “common sense”  
18 approach to vehicle use would be applied; if a vehicle is not required for use immediately or  
19 continuously for construction activities, its engine should be shut off. Note: certain equipment,  
20 such as large diesel-powered vehicles, require extended idling for warm-up and repetitive  
21 construction tasks.

22 The applicant would notify all receptors within ~~300~~500 feet of construction of the potential to  
23 experience significant noise levels during construction.

24 During construction, the applicant would use a temporary noise barrier between the construction  
25 area and the residences ~~sound walls, noise reduction blankets, or other noise reduction measures~~  
26 ~~prior to developing the project site~~ in areas where sensitive receptors would be subjected to  
27 significant noise impacts.

28 The applicant would shield small stationary equipment with portable barriers within 100 feet of  
29 residences, where feasible.

30 The applicant would minimize engine idling and turn off engines when not in use.

31 Where blasting is required, the applicant would conduct additional pre-blast notification and  
32 coordination with residents, utilities, and others that may be affected by blasting operations.  
33

- 34 • **Project Commitment I: San Diego Ambrosia.** During construction, ground-disturbing activities  
35 including parking and staging of equipment and vehicles off-road within 50 feet of known  
36 populations of San Diego Ambrosia, the following will be implemented: Work should occur in  
37 the late summer/early fall (August to October) to avoid: 1) the San Diego ambrosia blooming  
38 season and 2) wet soil conditions during the rainy season when work could result in damage to  
39 the growing plant/rhizomes. If work, such as pole brushing, is required at other times, a  
40 biological monitor will be present to locate the San Diego ambrosia for avoidance. As a general  
41 rule, no work is allowed within 72 hours following a rain event but dry site conditions will be  
42 verified by crews prior to initiation of work. If equipment and vehicles need to be situated over  
43 the plant population, metal grates or plywood sheets (depending on the size of equipment) will be  
44 placed over the plants temporarily. A biological monitor will be present during ground disturbing  
45 activities to ensure avoidance and minimization of impacts to San Diego Ambrosia.  
46

- 1 • **Project Commitment J: ARL Land.** Temporary impacts to MSHCP ARLs will be restored to  
2 greatest extent practicable using species present prior to disturbance. Should any permanent  
3 impacts to ARL result during construction, the Applicant will dedicate biologically equivalent or  
4 superior land to the MSHCP. The Applicant will prepare an ARL equivalency analysis to be  
5 included as part of the MSHCP PSE submittal. This equivalency analysis will compare the  
6 potential effects on the ARL to the benefits of proposed replacement land, including  
7 compensation for potentially lost conservation functions and values. The analysis will consider  
8 specific project design features, siting and design, and MSHCP BMPs, as well as address effects  
9 on covered species and habitats, core areas, linkages, constrained linkages, MSHCP Conservation  
10 Area configuration and management, and ecotones. The replacement land ratio is anticipated to  
11 be not less than 2:1 within MSHCP Core 1 but will ultimately be determined through MSHCP  
12 consistency findings made by RCA, CDFW and USFWS concurrence as part of the MSHCP PSE  
13 process.
- 14 • **Project Commitment K: Wildlife Movement.** In the event that retaining walls or some other  
15 structural method of slope stabilization would be needed, walls will be sited, designed, and  
16 oriented to minimize impacts to movement of native resident wildlife species and established  
17 wildlife corridors, in coordination with the RCA, USFWS, and CDFW.

#### 20 4.4.4.2 Impacts Analysis (Valley-Ivyglen Project)

21  
22 **Impact BR-1 (VIG):** Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat  
23 **modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special**  
24 **status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the**  
25 **CDFW or USFWS.**  
26 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

27  
28 Direct, indirect, temporary, and permanent impacts on special status species and their habitats are  
29 discussed below. The discussion is organized according to impacts associated with all components of the  
30 proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project, including the proposed 115-kV subtransmission line routes, staging  
31 areas, and access roads. The analysis determines that impacts on special status species and their habitats  
32 would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

33  
34 Impacts would be most severe during construction, and would diminish during operations. Mitigation  
35 measures are intended to reduce potentially significant impacts during construction. No impacts would  
36 remain potentially significant during operations if mitigation measures are properly implemented to  
37 address the impact during construction.

38  
39 The applicant has received a COI for Valley-Ivyglen Project Phase 1 in the Western Riverside MSHCP  
40 (SCE 2014b), which confirms the applicant's status as a PSE in the MSHCP. With the exception of SKR  
41 and birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the MSHCP outlines species-specific avoidance,  
42 mitigation, and compensation measures (Appendix H), and the applicant would be responsible for  
43 adhering to these requirements as a PSE. The applicant would also be responsible for adhering to the  
44 mitigation and compensation requirements outlined in the SKR HCP as a participant in this plan. In  
45 addition to these measures, the mitigation measures outlined below would be implemented to reduce  
46 potentially significant impacts on special status species to less than significant.

#### 47 **Special Status Plants**

48  
49 Permanent loss of special status plant species may result from impacts associated with permanent project  
50 features (e.g., new subtransmission structures and roadways), as well as the potential direct mortality of

1 individuals (incidental take) due to project construction. The 115-kV structures and new access roads  
2 would permanently disturb approximately 141.5 acres of land (Table 2-5). Areas anticipated to be  
3 disturbed by construction include habitat supporting populations of special status plants, including small-  
4 flowered morning glory, Munz’s onion, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crowscale, smooth  
5 tarplant, paniculate tarplant, slender-horned spineflower, Coulter’s matilija poppy, Coulter’s goldfields,  
6 white rabbit tobacco, chaparral sand verbena, Robinson’s peppergrass, and small-flowered microseris.  
7 These species, and others with potential to occur along the 115-kV subtransmission line, could also be  
8 indirectly or temporarily impacted through increased dust, hydrologic changes, and ground disturbance  
9 related to trenching activities during construction. Populations of paniculate tarplant along Segment VIG-  
10 1 and populations of Coulter’s matilija poppy along Segment VIG-6 may be directly impacted by  
11 blasting.

12  
13 These impacts would be reduced with the implementation of Project Commitments B and D. However,  
14 populations of special status plants could be disturbed or removed by construction. Impacts from the  
15 construction and operation of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project would be significant. Implementation  
16 of MM BR-1 through MM BR-4 and MM BR-6 through MM BR-9 would restrict construction to certain  
17 work areas, require worker environmental training, limit the amount of native vegetation that is disturbed  
18 during construction, and require development of a restoration and revegetation plan. Implementation of  
19 these mitigation measures would reduce these impacts to less than significant by reducing the likelihood  
20 that special status plant populations in or near project areas would be removed or disturbed.

21  
22 *Critical Habitat for Coastal California Gnatcatcher, Munz’s Onion, Thread-leaved Brodiaea, and*  
23 *San Diego Ambrosia*

24 As shown in Figure 4.4-2 and detailed in Table 4.4-1, portions of the Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV  
25 subtransmission line occur within USFWS-designated critical habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher,  
26 Munz’s onion, thread-leaved brodiaea, and San Diego ambrosia. Table 4.4-1 details the acreage of critical  
27 habitat that could be permanently or temporarily impacted by the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project.  
28

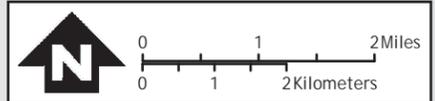
Table 4.4-1 Critical Habitat Acreage by Valley-Ivyglen Project Component

Critical Habitat Type	Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV Subtransmission Line Segments <sup>1</sup>							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Coastal California gnatcatcher	182.80	57.81	0.71	---	172.66	34.96	30.39	36.18
Munz's onion	---	---	---	0.20	0.36	---	10.46	3.18
San Diego ambrosia	---	---	---	.41	35.84	---	---	---
Thread-leaved brodiaea	39.20	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Source: USFWS 2011, SCE 2014a

Note: <sup>1</sup> Acreages include temporary and permanent impacts.

29  
30  
31 As mentioned in above, in Section 4.4.2.3, designated critical habitat within the MSHCP boundaries is  
32 not subject to any mitigation, compensation, conservation enhancement or other protective measures other  
33 than those set forth in the MSHCP. However, impacts on critical habitat for these species would  
34 be minimized reduced through the implementation of Project Commitments B and D. Furthermore,  
35 implementation However, impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen  
36 Project would be significant. Implementation of MMs BR-1 through BR-9, which restrict construction to  
37 certain work areas, require worker environmental training, limit the amount of native vegetation that is  
38 disturbed during construction, restrict disturbance near active gnatcatcher nests, and require development  
39 of a restoration and revegetation plan, would ensure reduce these impacts to less than significant by  
40 reducing the amount of disturbance to critical habitat for these species and requiring that disturbed areas  
41 be restored post-construction.  
42  
43



Source: ESRI 2010, SCE 2011, 2013, USFWS 2015

- |        |            |        |   |
|--------|------------|--------|---|
| 1 VIG1 | 1 ASP1     | 5 ASP5 | Existing Substations                    |
| 2 VIG2 | 1.5 ASP1.5 | 6 ASP6 | Proposed Alberhill Substation           |
| 3 VIG3 | 2 ASP2     | 7 ASP7 | Proposed 500-kV transmission lines      |
| 4 VIG4 | 3 ASP3     | 8 ASP8 | 500-kV Serrano Valley Transmission Line |
| 5 VIG5 | 4 ASP4     |        | Segment begin / end                     |
| 6 VIG6 |            |        |   |
| 7 VIG7 |            |        |   |
| 8 VIG8 |            |        |   |

- USFWS Critical Habitat
- Arroyo southwestern toad
  - Coastal California gnatcatcher
  - Riverside fairy shrimp
  - San Diego ambrosia
  - Spreading navarretia
  - Thread-leaved brodiaea

Figure 4.4-2  
 USFWS Critical Habitat  
 Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects  
 Riverside County, California

## 1 **Special Status Wildlife**

2 Construction, operation, and maintenance of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project could impact the  
3 following wildlife species and their habitats: western spadefoot, SKR, Southern California rufous-  
4 crowned sparrow, burrowing owl, white-tailed kite, coastal California gnatcatcher, yellow warbler, Los  
5 Angeles pocket mouse, least Bell's vireo, San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit, coastal western whiptail, and  
6 Belding's orange-throated whiptail. Table 4.4-2 depicts the presence of these species by Valley-Ivyglen  
7 Project component and several of these species are discussed in detail below. Impacts on special status  
8 species are anticipated to be largely temporary. However, the project would permanently disturb 141.5  
9 acres of wildlife habitat, including habitat for special status species. Permanent disturbance would result  
10 from new 115-kV subtransmission line structures and access roads.

11  
12 Special status wildlife species and their habitat would also be impacted temporarily. Trenching along  
13 Segments VIG1 and VIG8, and the telecommunications route would also temporarily disturb  
14 approximately 25.2 acres, or 21,000 linear feet, of potential wildlife habitat (Table 2-5). Blasting or  
15 fracturing may also occur in certain areas along the 115-kV subtransmission line during construction.  
16 Both of these activities would temporarily increase levels of noise, light, dust, vibrations, and human  
17 disturbance within and adjacent to the project area, and could contribute to the release of hazardous  
18 materials.

19  
20 Impacts on all special status species in all project areas within MSHCP boundaries are covered under the  
21 MSHCP, with the exception of impacts on SKR, which are covered under the SKR HCP. Therefore, the  
22 MSHCP would dictate the type and extent of avoidance, mitigation, and compensation measures for each  
23 covered species, unless otherwise specified in project-specific mitigation measures. The applicant has  
24 already obtained status as a PSE for Phase 1 of its entering into an agreement with the proposed project,  
25 and is in the process of obtaining PSE status for Phase 2. ~~RCA~~ to allow for coverage of the proposed  
26 projects' entire alignments project under the MSHCP, including the on Castle and Cooke property, which  
27 is outside MSHCP boundaries. Should this agreement not be finalized, MM BR-14 outlines options for  
28 take coverage or avoidance of impacts to special status species on Castle and Cooke property.  
29

### 30 *Western Spadefoot*

31 Western spadefoots were observed in a small depression approximately 300 feet south of Segment VIG1  
32 during spring 2012 vernal pool branchiopod surveys. Spadefoot could be impacted directly and indirectly  
33 by construction activities. Increased sedimentation, dust, noise, and human activities could temporarily  
34 alter spadefoot habitat or disturb individuals during construction. Night lighting may disrupt spadefoot  
35 behavior or attract predators. Spadefoot habitat may be replaced by permanent project components such  
36 as new 115-kV subtransmission line structures and access roads.

37  
38 Impacts on western spadefoot would be reduced by implementing Project Commitments B, D, and H;  
39 however, impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project would still  
40 be significant. Impacts to the western spadefoot would be reduced to less than significant through the  
41 implementation of MM BR-1 through MM BR-4, MM BR-7, and MM BR-10. Implementation of these  
42 measures would ensure construction is limited to designated areas, nighttime lighting would be shielded,  
43 and fine-gauge fencing would be used to prevent western spadefoot from falling into trenches.  
44 Preconstruction surveys for the spadefoot will be completed by a qualified biologist and a biological  
45 monitor will be onsite during construction. MM BR-7 would ensure development of a habitat restoration  
46 and revegetation plan, which would include additional measures for each impacted special status species.  
47

1

Table 4.4-2 Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Species and Critical Habitat Presence by Valley-Ivyglen Project Component

Species	Proposed Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV Subtransmission Line Segments							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Plants</b>								
Long-spined spineflower	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Thread-leaved brodiaea	CHP	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Paniculate tarplant	P	---	---	P	P	---	P	---
Coulter's matilija poppy	---	---	---	---	---	P	P	P
Slender-horned spineflower	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---
Robinson's pepper grass	---	---	---	---	P	P	P	---
Munz's onion	---	---	---	P; CHP	---	---	P	---
San Diego ambrosia	---	---	---	P	P; CHP	P	---	---
Smooth tarplant	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---
Chaparral sand verbena	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	P
Coast live oak	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	P
Coulter's goldfields	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---
San Jacinto Valley crownscale	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---
Small-flowered microseris	P	---	---	P	---	---	P	---
Small-flowered morning glory	P	---	---	P	P	---	P	---
Roundleaf stork's bill	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---
White rabbit tobacco	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	P
<b>Wildlife</b>								
Western spadefoot	P	---	---	---	P	---	---	---
Belding's orange-throated whiptail	P	P	---	---	P	P	P	P
Coastal western whiptail	P	---	---	---	---	P	P	P
Northern red-diamond rattlesnake	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---
Coastal California gnatcatcher	P; CHP	P	CHP	---	CHP	CHP	CHP	CHP
Least Bell's vireo	P	P	---	P	P	P	---	P
Western burrowing owl	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Golden eagle	P	---	---	---	P	---	---	---
White-tailed kite	P	P	---	P	P	P	---	P
Yellow warbler	P	P	---	P	P	P	P	P
Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Swainson's hawk	P	---	---	P	---	---	P	---
Stephens' kangaroo rat	P	---	---	P	P	---	P	---
Los Angeles pocket mouse	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	P
Black-tailed jackrabbit	P	---	---	P	P	---	---	---
Willow Flycatcher	P	---	---	---	P	---	P	---
Peregrine Falcon	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---

Sources: AMEC 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, CNDDDB 2015

Key:

P = Present

CHP = Critical Habitat Present

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*Stephens' Kangaroo Rat*

SKRs were observed along the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project during trapping surveys in 2011 (Table 4.4-2). Construction of the Valley-Ivyglen project could potentially impact SKR and its habitat. The use of temporary staging and work areas and the creation of new access roads would require vegetation to be removed or crushed, potentially damaging SKR burrows or injuring or killing individuals. Permanent impacts on SKR would occur from loss of habitat due to construction of permanent project components such as 115-kV subtransmission line structures and access roads. Vehicles or equipment may strike SKR on access roads. Trash left at work sites could attract SKR predators, such as coyotes or common ravens. SKR could also be harmed by inadvertent hazardous materials spills, including fuel and hydraulic fluid leaks. Introduced noxious and invasive plant species could out-compete existing annual vegetation that SKR feed upon and forage within.

The ~~entire majority of the project would be covered under~~ located within the SKR HCP area ~~except for the central portion of Segment VIG5, which crosses private land.~~ Project-related impacts on SKR and associated burrows would be authorized through the SKR HCP. In October 2012, the applicant finalized the SKR HCP Implementation Agreement with the RCHCA (SCE 2014b). This agreement provides a process through which the applicant may obtain take authorization of SKR through the SKR HCP for the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project. The USFWS and the CDFW provided a joint letter of concurrence with the agreement. This take authorization is in accordance with the terms and conditions in the USFWS Management Authorization (or USFWS' Federal Permit), the SKR HCP, and the SKR HCP Implementation Agreement.

~~To reduce impacts on SKR in areas where take is not authorized through the SKR HCP, the applicant will implement Project Commitments B and D. The Project Commitments require an employee environmental training program and development of a habitat restoration and revegetation plan. These measures will reduce the likelihood that SKR would be disturbed or killed or have its habitat removed.~~

~~However, impacts to SKR in areas outside the SKR HCP would remain. Implementation of MM BR-1 through MM BR-4, MM BR-9, and MM BR-10 would reduce impacts to SKR to less than significant. The mitigation measures would require the applicant to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive plants and entrapment of wildlife, restore native vegetation communities disturbed by construction, and use qualified biological monitors and preconstruction surveys to identify and relocate wildlife, including SKR, from areas that would be disturbed by construction activities. These measures would further reduce the likelihood that SKR are disturbed or killed during construction in areas outside the SKR HCP.~~

*Belding's Orange-Throated Whiptail and Coastal Western Whiptail*

~~Belding's orange~~Orange-throated and coastal western whiptails were observed along the proposed 115-kV subtransmission lines during biological surveys. These species inhabit chaparral and scrub vegetation areas with sandy soils. If either of these species are present during construction, construction of the substation could result in direct mortality of individuals and temporary and permanent habitat loss. Project Commitments B and D reduce the likelihood that the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project would kill or injure these species by requiring a worker environmental training and habitat restoration plan. However, impacts on these species habitat would remain significant. Implementation of MM BR-1 through MM BR-4, MM BR-7, and MM BR-10 would reduce these impacts to less than significant levels by minimizing the chance that whiptails would be injured or killed during construction.

1 **Special Status Birds**

2 Construction of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project could potentially impact special status and  
3 migratory birds. Impacts could be most severe during the breeding season when construction activities  
4 could disturb nesting birds or the nests themselves. Because the project involves construction of  
5 subtransmission line poles in areas where subtransmission lines currently do not exist, birds may  
6 accidentally strike poles or lines. Construction would require the trimming of vegetation, including  
7 riparian vegetation, within and adjacent to work areas, potentially reducing the availability of nesting  
8 habitat or disturbing nesting birds. Light-duty helicopters may be used along 115-kV Segments VIG1 and  
9 VIG4 to VIG7, which may impact nesting and foraging behavior, through increased noise and from rotor  
10 wash. In addition to common migratory species, several special status species could potentially be  
11 impacted by construction. These include Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, least Bell’s vireo,  
12 coastal California gnatcatcher, burrowing owl, white-tailed kite, and yellow warbler.

13  
14 Golden eagles were observed foraging during the 2010 surveys along Segments 1 and 5 of the proposed  
15 115-kV subtransmission line. A peregrine falcon was observed during surveys along Segment VIG-4 and  
16 suitable foraging habitat is present along the proposed 115-kV subtransmission line. White-tailed kites  
17 have also been observed in the project area. Golden eagles, peregrine falcons, white-tailed kites, and other  
18 raptors may collide with transmission lines or be electrocuted by electrified components, especially if the  
19 line is new and the birds are not acclimated to its presence. However, with the implementation of Project  
20 Commitment C avian-safe transmission structures would be incorporated into the design of the 115-kV  
21 subtransmission line. Such structures provide adequate clearances to accommodate a large bird between  
22 energized or grounded parts, as recommended by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC)  
23 (APLIC 2006). Construction of the project may directly disturb or destroy nests of breeding raptors.  
24 Therefore, MM BR-11 requires the development and implementation of a Nesting Bird Management Plan  
25 for the protection of breeding birds. These two measures would ensure that impacts on golden eagles and  
26 other raptors are reduced to less than significant levels.

27  
28 Table 4.4-2 details where least Bell’s vireo, coastal California gnatcatcher, and southwestern willow  
29 flycatchers ~~as well as critical habitat~~ have been observed along the Valley-Ivyglen Project. These species  
30 require specific habitat parameters and vegetation communities in order to reproduce. Construction of the  
31 project may directly impact habitat for these species and may directly disturb or destroy nests. Project  
32 Commitments B and D would reduce impacts to these species through implementing a worker  
33 environmental training program and habitat restoration plan; however, impacts would remain that are still  
34 significant. MMs BR-1 through 7 and MM BR-12 would reduce impacts to less than significant levels  
35 for these species. The mitigation measures require preconstruction surveys, biological monitoring,  
36 avoidance or restoration of or compensation for impacts on riparian habitat or native vegetation, and the  
37 development of a Nesting Bird Management Plan. Collectively, these measures reduce direct disturbance  
38 of habitat for these species, require restoration of disturbed habitat, and reduce the likelihood that nests  
39 would be disturbed or destroyed during construction.

40  
41 **Western Burrowing Owl**

42 Annual protocol-level surveys were conducted between 2006 and 2014 (Appendix E). Extensive  
43 burrowing owl habitat is present along the 115-kV subtransmission line. However, burrowing owls have  
44 only been observed along 115-kV Segment VIG1 (Table 4.4-2). Surveys of additional staging areas in  
45 September 2015 identified suitable burrows and habitat within staging areas VIG10 and VIG11. While no  
46 owls were observed during surveys, there are several occurrences documented in the area.

47  
48 Owls may be struck by vehicles and burrows may be crushed by construction equipment. Breeding pairs  
49 may be indirectly impacted through increased noise, dust, and human disturbance. Should burrowing owls  
50 nest in close proximity to construction, construction-related impacts would be significant. Trash left in

work areas could attract owl predators such as common ravens and coyotes. The applicant shall implement Project Commitments B and H, which require a worker environmental awareness program and limit the noise from construction; however, impacts may still be significant. As a PSE in the MSHCP, the applicant would be required to conduct surveys for burrowing owl and provide compensation for impacted habitat. MM BR-12 requires preconstruction surveys for burrowing owls and avoidance of active nest burrows. MM BR-13 would require the applicant to keep work areas free of trash that may attract owl predators. Implementation of MM BR-12 and MM BR-13 would reduce impacts on burrowing owls to less than significant.

In addition, to ensure that the applicant adheres to all Project Commitments, MM BR-18 would be required. MM BR-18 clarifies that the applicant's Project Commitments would be incorporated into the Mitigation Monitoring and Compliance Reporting Program. With the implementation of MM BR-18, in addition to the implementation of all measures listed above, impacts would be reduced to less than significant.

### **Operation and Maintenance**

Impacts due to operation of the proposed project could include an increase in light pollution on permanent structures, trespassing and dumping of trash, increased fire risk, and the potential spread of invasive species. These impacts would be mitigated by following the guidelines provided in Section 6.14 of the MSHCP, Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines. Night lighting shall be directed away from the MSHCP Conservation Areas, and shielding shall be incorporated into project design. Noise generating land uses affecting the MSHCP Conservation Area shall incorporate setbacks, berms or walls to minimize the effects of noise. Proposed land uses adjacent to the MSHCP Conservation Area shall incorporate barriers where appropriate, to minimize unauthorized public access, illegal trespass, dumping and domestic animal predation. SCE would avoid the planting of any invasive species listed within the MSHCP, as part of landscaping plans after the construction of the proposed project. In addition, an Invasive Species Management Plan will be developed to address the spread of invasive species during construction and operation. In addition, SCE would perform routine vegetation maintenance, trimming vegetation within the ROW and around project components to help reduce fire risk.

### **Mitigation Measures**

MSHCP mitigation measures and BMPs are included in Appendix H.

**MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland Areas.** Vehicular~~Outside MSHCP boundaries, vehicular~~ traffic (including movement of all equipment) shall be restricted to approved access roads and established construction areas shown in Figure 2.64 of the EIR. These areas shall be delineated in the field with flagging and signage. If disturbance is required outside the established construction areas, CPUC notification and approval shall be required. Sensitive resources such as waterbodies, oak trees, and special status plant populations shall be clearly marked for avoidance with flagging and signage. Nighttime lighting, if necessary adjacent to aquatic areas, shall be shielded away from these areas to prevent impacts on aquatic wildlife.

**MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.** Qualified biologists shall conduct preconstruction surveys within two weeks of~~no less than seven days prior to~~ the start of construction in any given project construction area. Surveyors shall focus on areas proposed for vegetation removal or ground disturbance that are within habitat that a qualified biologist has deemed suitable for sensitive species. As part of preconstruction surveys, the composition of the vegetation community shall be surveyed to establish baseline conditions prior to construction and to guide post-construction restoration efforts. The surveys shall be conducted to determine the presence of special status plants, noxious weeds, and all wildlife species for the purpose of preventing direct loss of vegetation and wildlife and the spread of noxious plant species. Preconstruction surveys shall be performed for each discrete work area prior to the start of

1 ground disturbance, or if work has lapsed for longer than 30 days~~one week~~. Biologists shall document  
2 survey results in a daily logbook or report.

3  
4 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.** In areas where sensitive resources may be  
5 impacted by construction activities, a qualified biological monitor shall be present during construction  
6 activities. The monitor shall have the authority to temporarily stop work that he or she determines to be  
7 threatening to a special status wildlife or plant species or nesting bird.- The monitor shall determine  
8 appropriate action, and work will resume once the monitor determines there is no longer a threat to the  
9 special status species or approval has been obtained from the appropriate wildlife agencies or CPUC.  
10 Biologists shall document monitoring observations in a daily logbook.

11  
12 **MM BR-4: Limit Removal of Native Vegetation Communities and Trees.** ~~The~~For project areas  
13 ~~located outside the MSHCP boundaries,~~ the removal of native vegetation and trees shall be limited to the  
14 minimum practicable area required for construction of the project. Grading, grubbing, graveling, or  
15 paving shall only occur where required for construction and operations for permanent project  
16 components. The applicant shall use temporary staging areas in a way that facilitates post-construction  
17 restoration, and shall restore these areas to as close to pre-construction conditions as possible, or to the  
18 conditions agreed upon between the applicant and landowner.

19  
20 **MM BR-5: California gnatcatcher protection measures.** In accordance with the MSHCP, A qualified  
21 ~~biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys no more than seven days prior to removal of Riversidean~~  
22 ~~sage scrub habitat will not occur during the coastal California gnatcatcher breeding season, (15 February~~  
23 ~~through 15 to August 15).)-~~ Should nesting coastal California gnatcatcher be observed during  
24 preconstruction surveys, outside of the breeding season, vegetation removal and other construction-  
25 related disturbance shall not commence within the applicable nest buffer area, as identified in the  
26 projects' Nesting Bird Management Plan, until the nest is determined to be inactive.

27  
28 **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.** This measure applies to oak trees in all project areas.  
29 Preventive measures shall be taken during construction activities to minimize impacts in the protected  
30 zone of each oak tree. The protected zone commences at a point 5 feet outside the dripline and extends  
31 inward to the trunk of the tree. All work conducted in the protected zone of oak trees shall be performed  
32 using hand implements and in the presence of a certified arborist. If it is determined that oak tree removal  
33 is necessary, the applicant shall relocate oak trees to a place outside of the area of anticipated impacts  
34 under the direction of the certified arborist.

35  
36 If the applicant cannot feasibly relocate oak trees that are removed, ~~15~~-gallon oak trees ~~or larger~~ shall be  
37 planted at a ~~122~~:1 ratio within the appropriate habitat to replace removed trees. These replacement trees  
38 shall be indigenous coast live oak trees that have been grown in a natural form (no topping or street tree  
39 forming).

40  
41 The applicant shall be responsible for monitoring and maintaining the relocated or replacement trees for a  
42 minimum of two years (to include at least two complete California rainy seasons, here defined as the  
43 period of the year from November – May).-

44  
45 In addition, the following minimization measures shall be implemented under the direction of the certified  
46 arborist:

- 47  
48 • Equipment, materials, and vehicles shall not be stored, parked, or operated within the protected  
49 zone of an oak tree, except on sites approved for this use by a certified arborist.

- 1 • Removal of the natural leaf mulch within the protected zone of oak trees is prohibited except  
2 where absolutely necessary.
- 3 • All trees not approved for removal shall be fenced or flagged for avoidance and to designate the  
4 protected zone.
- 5 • Any pruning, including removal of dead wood, shall be performed in compliance with the latest  
6 American National Standards Institute pruning standards by a certified arborist (or certified tree  
7 worker).
- 8 • Any root-pruning required within the protected zone of an oak shall be limited to the minimum  
9 amount necessary. All root-pruning shall consist of clean, 90-degree angle cuts utilizing sharp  
10 hand tools. Any major roots (2 inches or greater in diameter) encountered shall be preserved to  
11 the extent possible and wrapped in moist burlap until the soil is replaced. Soil shall be replaced  
12 around preserved roots as soon as possible.

13  
14 To evaluate whether or not this type of mitigation is successful over the long-term, the relocated oak trees  
15 and replacement oaks will be revisited by a certified arborist in the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth years after  
16 relocation or planting to assess the survival/mortality rate of these oaks, and to evaluate the health of the  
17 surviving individuals. The applicant will prepare an initial report on the implementation of this measure  
18 after the second year of monitoring and maintenance has been completed. A Final Report will be  
19 prepared after the Year-15 assessment has been carried out; the Final Report will be submitted to the  
20 CPUC, and copies shall be sent to the USFWS (Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office), to the CDFW  
21 (Inland/Desert Regional Office), and to the California Native Plant Society's Conservation Program staff.  
22

23 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.** Pursuant to Project  
24 Commitment D, the applicant shall develop a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan to address  
25 ground disturbance in all project areas. In addition to including the provisions set forth in Project  
26 Commitment D, the Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan shall detail topsoil segregation and  
27 conservation methodology; restoration of special status plant species habitat; vegetation removal and  
28 revegetation methods, including seed mixes, rates, and transplants; criteria to monitor and evaluate  
29 revegetation success; and alternative restoration and revegetation methods in the event that the  
30 revegetation success criteria are not initially reached. The applicant shall implement the Habitat  
31 Restoration and Revegetation Plan until the restoration success criteria are achieved. Appropriate  
32 agencies (CPUC, USFWS, and CDFW) shall be consulted during the preparation of the Habitat  
33 Restoration and Revegetation Plan. A copy of the final Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan, along  
34 with documentation of agency review and incorporation of comments into the final version, shall be  
35 provided to the CPUC, the USFWS, and the CDFW for approval prior to the CPUC issuing a notice to  
36 proceed.  
37

38 **MM BR-8: Special Status Plant Avoidance and Mitigation Measures.** For project areas not covered  
39 by the relocated outside MSHCP boundaries, the applicant shall avoid the special status plant populations  
40 listed in Appendix G, Table 1. However, where avoidance is not feasible, special status plants in project  
41 work areas shall be identified in the field, and the following avoidance measures shall be implemented to  
42 minimize the possibility of inadvertent encroachment:  
43

- 44 • A qualified biologist shall flag or otherwise mark special status plants. Construction crews will  
45 avoid direct or indirect impacts on these flagged areas. Should impacts on special status plants be  
46 unavoidable, the applicant will implement the following measures:
  - 47 - A qualified botanist shall determine if transplantation is feasible. If determined feasible, a  
48 qualified botanist shall develop and implement a transplantation plan in coordination with  
49 appropriate agencies (CDFW, USFWS, RCA). The special status plant transplantation plan

1 shall identify a suitable transplant site, moving the plant material and seed bank to the  
2 transplant site, collecting seed material and propagating it in a nursery, and monitoring the  
3 transplant sites to document recruitment and survival rates.

- 4 - If transplantation is infeasible, the applicant shall replace impacted special status plants at a  
5 2:1 ratio within the project area within one year of the end of construction. Measures to  
6 restore special status plants shall be implemented in accordance with the Habitat Restoration  
7 and Revegetation Plan (MM BR-7).  
8

9 **MM BR-9: Invasive Plant Control Measures.** The applicant shall develop an Invasive Plant  
10 Management Plan outlining measures to prevent the spread of invasive plants such as tamarisk (*Tamarix*  
11 sp.) and giant reed (*Arundo donax*) during construction of the projects. The Invasive Plant Management  
12 Plan shall include, but is not limited to, the following measures:  
13

- 14 • All vehicles and equipment shall be cleaned prior to arrival at the work site.  
15 • Straw or hay bales used for sediment barrier installations or mulch distribution shall be obtained  
16 from weed-free sources.  
17

18 The Invasive Plant Management Plan will be submitted to the CDFW and CPUC for review and comment  
19 no more than three months prior to the start of construction. A copy of the final Invasive Plant  
20 Management Plan, along with documentation of agency review (CDFW and CPUC) and incorporation of  
21 comments into the final version, shall be provided to the CPUC for approval prior to the CPUC issuing a  
22 notice to proceed.  
23

24 **MM BR-10: Prevent Wildlife Entrapment.** In all project work areas, the applicant shall install covers,  
25 ramps, and/or fencing to avoid trapping wildlife in excavations or trenches. Covers must be weighted at  
26 the edges or installed in a way that prevent wildlife from attempting to burrow beneath the cover. Fine-  
27 gauge fencing shall be used to prevent small animals from passing through the fence. Ramps with an  
28 angle of less than 45 degrees shall be utilized. The applicant's biological monitor will check open  
29 trenches and excavations for trapped wildlife each morning prior to the start of work on the trench or  
30 excavation. Trenches and excavations that are covered for more than one week will be inspected on a  
31 weekly basis. In addition, where retaining walls or another method of slope stabilization are required, the  
32 facility shall be sited, designed, and oriented to avoid impacts on the movement of native wildlife species  
33 and established wildlife corridors in coordination with the wildlife agencies (USFWS, CDFW, RCA).  
34

35 **MM BR-11: Migratory Birds and Raptors Impact Reduction Measures.** The applicant shall develop  
36 a Nesting Bird Management Plan in consultation with the USFWS and CDFW that outlines protective  
37 measures and BMPs that shall be employed in all project work areas to prevent disturbance of active  
38 nests. The final Plan shall be submitted to the CPUC for approval. The Nesting Bird Management Plan  
39 shall include the following components: species-specific buffer distances (including vertical buffers in  
40 areas where helicopters will be used) and conditions under which these buffer distances can be reduced,  
41 including concurrence by the CDFW, USFWS, and CPUC for special status species; dates of local  
42 breeding seasons during which nest surveys shall be conducted; preconstruction nest survey timing,  
43 methods, and surveyor qualifications; nest deterrent methods, including vegetation clearing; monitoring  
44 and reporting protocols during construction; protocols for determining whether a nest is active; protocols  
45 for documenting, reporting, and protecting active nests within construction areas; and avian monitor  
46 qualifications. If preconstruction survey protocols exist for a certain species, the Nesting Bird  
47 Management Plan shall incorporate these protocols. The survey area shall include the construction area,  
48 plus an additional distance large enough to accommodate the protective buffer of bird species likely to  
49 occur in proximity to the construction area.  
50

1 The Nesting Bird Management Plan shall further specify that active bird nests shall not be removed  
2 during breeding season unless the projects are expressly permitted to do so by the USFWS or CDFW; all  
3 project-related nest failures shall be reported to the USFWS and CDFW; and the biological monitor shall  
4 halt work if he or she determines that active nests would be disturbed by construction activities. If  
5 construction begins during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31), the Nesting Bird  
6 Management Plan shall be submitted to the USFWS and CDFW for review and comment no less than  
7 ~~two~~ months prior to the start of construction, with the intent that the plan will be finalized no less than  
8 ~~one~~ month prior to the start of construction. A copy of the final Nesting Bird Management Plan,  
9 along with documentation of agency review (CDFW, USFWS, CPUC) and incorporation of comments  
10 into the final version, shall be provided to the CPUC for approval prior to the CPUC issuing a notice to  
11 proceed during the breeding season.  
12

13 **MM BR-12: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures.** To reduce impacts on burrowing owls, the  
14 applicant shall implement the following measures in all project work areas:  
15

- 16 • Surveys for burrowing owls will be conducted by a qualified biologist within 30 days of  
17 construction during the non-breeding season and within 14 days of construction during the  
18 breeding season (February 1 through August 31) to confirm whether burrowing owls occupy the  
19 site. Surveys shall be performed throughout the project areas that contain suitable burrowing owl  
20 habitat, with a potential to be impacted by construction activities, plus an additional area  
21 extending 300 feet from the projects' boundaries.
- 22 • If an occupied burrow is identified, the applicant shall adhere to buffer distances detailed in the  
23 *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012).
- 24 • The biologist will report all project-related impacts on burrowing owl to the appropriate resource  
25 agencies (CDFW and RCA, ~~depending on the location of the impact~~).
- 26 • If appropriate buffers cannot be maintained, and if impacts on burrowing owls or occupied  
27 burrows are unavoidable, the applicant shall develop and implement a *Determination of*  
28 *Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (DBESP)*, in compliance with MSHCP Section  
29 6.3.2, and as approved by CDFW and RCA. The DBESP ~~Burrowing Owl Compensation Plan~~ in  
30 consultation with the CDFW and RCA that is consistent with mitigation guidelines as outlined in  
31 the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012) or MSHCP guidelines for burrowing  
32 owl mitigation and compensation, as appropriate. The Burrowing Owl Compensation Plan shall  
33 describe the compensatory measures that will be undertaken to address the loss of burrowing owl  
34 burrows within the project area. The compensatory mitigation shall be determined on a site-  
35 specific analysis, but may include restoration of temporarily impacted habitat and acquisition and  
36 or enhancement of off-site mitigation lands as determined in consultation with CDFW. If, in  
37 consultation with CDFW it is determined that project activities require removal of occupied  
38 burrows, eviction and burrow closure may be required to ensure against "take" of owls or nests.  
39 However, this will only occur after the preparation of a Burrowing Owl Exclusion Plan, as  
40 approved by CDFW include mitigation for permanent impacts on nesting, occupied, and satellite  
41 burrows and occupied burrowing owl habitat by permanent conservation of vegetation  
42 communities comparable to or better than the impacted area on sufficiently large acreage  
43 containing fossorial mammals.  
44

45 **MM BR-13: Trash Abatement.** The applicant shall keep project areas free of trash and debris. Food-  
46 related trash items shall be stored in enclosed containers and regularly removed from site.  
47

48 **MM BR-14: Protection of Special Status Species on Castle and Cooke Land.** The applicant is  
49 entering into an agreement with the RCA, with USFWS and CDFW concurrence, to allow for coverage of

the Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill Projects’ obligations under the MSHCP on Castle and Cooke property, which falls outside MSHCP boundaries and thus is exempt from mitigation under the MSHCP. If this agreement is finalized prior to the start of construction, it shall be in effect for the duration of the projects or until SCE opts out. Should SCE opt out of the MSHCP, or if this agreement with the RCA is not finalized, the applicant shall implement the same or a greater level of species-specific avoidance, mitigation, restoration, and compensation measures as would have been required under the MSHCP. This may include additional consultation with USFWS and CDFW to obtain Incidental Take Authorization pursuant to the Federal California Endangered Species Acts. These additional measures would include MM BR-1, MM BR-4, and MM BR-8.

**MM BR-18: Implementation of All Project Commitments.** The applicant will implement all Project Commitments as stated in this EIR, except in cases where they are superseded or modified by Mitigation Measures. The Project Commitments will be incorporated into the Mitigation Monitoring and Compliance Reporting Program.

**Impact BR-2 (VIG): Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS.**  
*LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

Construction of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project would have a direct, permanent impact on riparian habitat and several vegetation communities that are listed as special status by CDFW (Table 4.4-3). Impacts on riparian habitat and wetlands are further discussed in Impact BR-3 (VIG) below. The MSHCP outlines mitigation and compensation measures for impacts on riparian habitat, vernal pools, and Covered Species’ habitat.

Table 4.4-3 CNDDDB Sensitive Vegetation Communities along Components of the Valley-Ivyglen Project (in acres)

Vegetation Community	Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV Segment								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Chamise Chaparral	---	---	---	---	4.69	31.94	0.61	---	37.24
Coast Live Oak Woodland	---	---	---	---	---	0.06	1.01	1.24	2.31
Riversidean Alluvial Fan Scrub	---	---	---	---	5.74	---	---	---	5.74
Riversidean Sage Scrub <sup>2</sup>	100.40	21.07	0.11	0.28	47.13	133.05	22.39	7.49	331.92
Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Woodland <sup>1</sup>	.79	---	---	2.38	7.47	9.34	---	---	19.98
Southern Sycamore-Alder Riparian Woodland <sup>1</sup>	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.34	0.34

Source: SCE 2013a, 2014a

<sup>1</sup> CNDDDB sensitive community is entitled “California sycamore woodland”

<sup>2</sup> Riversidean sage scrub is a type of coastal sage scrub (Holland 1986), which is part of sensitive natural community alliances according to CNDDDB; coastal sage scrub is also a sensitive community under the MSHCP.

<sup>3</sup> Acreages provided in this table include total vegetation communities present within the project study area, not acres to be impacted. Based on final engineering design and construction details, potential impacts to vegetation communities will be substantially less than acreages provided.

1  
2 Special status vegetation communities present along the 115-kV subtransmission line include chamise  
3 chaparral, coast live oak woodland, Riversidean sage scrub, Southern cottonwood-willow riparian  
4 woodland, Southern sycamore-alder riparian woodland, and Southern willow scrub. In addition, local  
5 policies protect certain vegetation communities. The City of Lake Elsinore General Plan Policy 2.2  
6 discourages development within high-quality riparian habitat or high concentrations of (80 percent or  
7 more) natural native habitat and native plant species. The Riverside County General Plan establishes  
8 policies to protect oak woodlands.  
9

10 Direct, permanent impacts on special status natural communities would result from the removal of  
11 vegetation for 115-kV installation and access road construction. Impacts may also result from the use of  
12 staging yards and wire-stringing sites. Trees or native vegetation may be trimmed or crushed during  
13 construction to accommodate equipment. For the purpose of this analysis, all special status natural  
14 communities that intersect with the disturbance buffers for the Valley-Ivyglen project are considered to  
15 be directly and permanently impacted, unless otherwise noted.  
16

17 Special status natural communities may be disturbed or removed during construction. Project  
18 Commitment B would require a worker environmental training program and Project Commitment D  
19 would require development of a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan. Implementation of these  
20 project commitments would reduce impacts to special status natural communities; however, impacts  
21 would still be significant. MM BR-1 through MM BR-4 would limit construction to designated areas,  
22 require preconstruction surveys and biological monitoring, and would limit the removal of native  
23 vegetation. MM BR-6 would limit the removal oak trees within the project area. MM BR-7 would clarify  
24 what must be included in the Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan mentioned in Project  
25 Commitment D. MM BR-9 would require implementation of an Invasive Plant Management Plan, which  
26 would help prevent the spread of invasive species in the project area. Implementation of these mitigation  
27 measures would reduce impacts to special status species to less than significant, through avoidance and  
28 vegetation restoration measures.  
29

### 30 ***Mitigation Measures***

31 **MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland**  
32 **Areas.**

33  
34 **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

35  
36 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**

37  
38 **MM BR-4: Limit Removal of Native Vegetation Communities and Trees.**

39  
40 **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.**

41  
42 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

43  
44 **MM BR-9: Invasive Plant Control Measures.**  
45  
46

1 **Impact BR-3 (VIG): Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined**  
2 **by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh,**  
3 **vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological**  
4 **interruption, or other means.**  
5 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*  
6

7 Numerous hydrologic features that are subject to state and federal jurisdiction are present along the 115-  
8 kV subtransmission line and could be impacted by construction. Direct, permanent impacts on wetland  
9 habitat may result from grading and clearing of vegetation during construction of the proposed Valley-  
10 Ivyglen Project. Grading and vegetation removal can remove or destabilize topsoil necessary for plant  
11 growth and contribute to soil erosion and sedimentation. New structures and access roads placed within  
12 existing hydrologic features may reroute surface flow, deposit fill into hydrologic features, or  
13 permanently remove aquatic habitat. The applicant anticipates that approximately 0.4637 acres of  
14 wetlands under the jurisdiction of USACE and 1.41089 acres under the jurisdiction of the CDFW would  
15 be permanently impacted by construction (Appendix G, Table 3). Segment VIG8 would permanently  
16 impact less than 0.1 acres of jurisdictional waters.  
17

18 Federally and state protected wetlands may also be temporarily impacted by construction. Approximately  
19 4 acres under the jurisdiction of the USACE and 5 acres under the jurisdiction of the CDFW are  
20 anticipated to be temporarily impacted. Trenching along Segment VIG1, VIG8, and the  
21 telecommunications route could temporarily deposit fill into hydrologic features, reroute surface flow, or  
22 contribute to sedimentation. The blasting that is anticipated to be needed along Segments VIG-1, VIG-2,  
23 VIG-5, VIG-6, and VIG-8 may directly impact drainages within or adjacent to the project ROW.  
24 However, the applicant has stated that trenching along Segment VIG8 would mostly occur within the road  
25 shoulder, limiting impacts on jurisdictional features and special status species. Construction of  
26 underground line along VIG8 would temporarily impact approximately 3 acres of jurisdictional waters.  
27 Construction of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project may directly impact wetlands through soil  
28 disturbance, crossing by vehicles, topographic changes that affect wetland hydrology, removal of wetland  
29 vegetation, and erosion, sedimentation, and input of pollutants. Potential impacts on wetlands would be  
30 reduced to less than significant by MMs BR-1, BR-2, and BR-3, which would limit construction to  
31 designated areas and protect aquatic resources, require site specific surveys, and biological monitoring.  
32 MM BR-15 would control erosion, sedimentation, and input of pollutants.  
33

34 Numerous vernal pools representing marginally suitable habitat for Riverside fairy shrimp and vernal  
35 pool fairy shrimp were identified along the 115-kV subtransmission line route during vernal pool  
36 branchiopod surveys (Appendix E). The applicant conducted protocol-level surveys per USFWS and  
37 MSHCP requirements in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013. A total of 156 vernal pools were surveyed,  
38 and none contained federally listed vernal pool branchiopods. Therefore, this species is confirmed absent  
39 along the Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV subtransmission line. In addition, the applicant has provided  
40 confirmation that construction activities would not contribute to changes to topography that would impact  
41 vernal pool hydrology (CGR 2013). Therefore, no impacts to vernal pools are expected to result from  
42 construction of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen project.  
43

#### 44 **Mitigation Measures**

45 **MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland**  
46 **Areas.**

47  
48 **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

49  
50 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**  
51

1 **MM BR-15: Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).** The SWPPP shall include Best  
2 Management Practices (BMPs) sufficient to acquire authorization under the Construction General Permit  
3 and protect waters in the project vicinity from sediment and other pollutants during construction. Per  
4 SCE, BMPs from the California Stormwater BMP Handbook that would be included in the SWPPP  
5 include but are not limited to WM-1 Material and Delivery Storage, WM-4 Spill Prevention and Control,  
6 WM-5 Solid Waste Management, WM-6 Hazardous Waste Management, WM-8 Concrete Waste  
7 Management, NS-9 Vehicle and Equipment Fueling, and NS-10 Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance.  
8 Verification of Construction General Permit authorization and the associated SWPPP shall be provided to  
9 the CPUC at least 15 days prior to start of construction. Updated SWPPPs shall be provided to the CPUC  
10 during construction upon request.

11  
12  
13 ~~Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs to be included in the SWPPP shall include, but are not~~  
14 ~~limited to, the following:~~

- 15 ~~● The applicant shall not stockpile brush, loose soils, excavation spoils, or other similar debris~~  
16 ~~material within sensitive habitats.~~
- 17  
18 ~~● If visible dust is present during construction activities, standard dust suppression techniques (e.g.,~~  
19 ~~water spraying) shall be used in all ground disturbance areas.~~
- 20  
21 ~~● During construction activities, measures shall be in place to ensure that contaminants are not~~  
22 ~~discharged from construction sites. The SWPPP shall define areas where hazardous materials and~~  
23 ~~trash will be stored; vehicles will be parked, fueled, and serviced; and construction materials will~~  
24 ~~be stored.~~
- 25  
26 ~~● Runoff, sedimentation, and erosion shall be minimized through the use of water bars, silt fences,~~  
27 ~~staked straw bales, wattles, and mulching and seeding of all disturbed areas. These measures shall~~  
28 ~~be designed to minimize ponding, eliminate flood hazards, and avoid erosion and siltation into~~  
29 ~~any creeks, streams, rivers, or bodies of water, and to preserve roadways and adjacent properties.~~  
30 ~~BMPs shall be included for helicopter landing, fueling, and servicing areas and areas where~~  
31 ~~helicopters are used for construction activities. For the proposed Valley Ivyglen Project, BMPs~~  
32 ~~shall also be included for blasting.~~
- 33  
34 ~~● Equipment storage, fueling, and staging areas shall be located in upland sites away from riparian~~  
35 ~~areas or other sensitive habitats. These designated areas shall be located to prevent any runoff~~  
36 ~~from entering sensitive habitat. Where vehicle maintenance (excluding fueling) cannot be avoided~~  
37 ~~in areas outside those previously identified, these maintenance activities shall be performed at~~  
38 ~~least 150 feet from all aquatic resources, or as specified by agency permits, on an impermeable~~  
39 ~~bladder or tarp specified for such maintenance activities. Project related spills of hazardous~~  
40 ~~materials shall be cleaned up immediately and contaminated soils removed to approved disposal~~  
41 ~~areas.~~

42 ~~Verification of Construction General Permit coverage approval and the approved SWPPP(s) shall be~~  
43 ~~provided to the CPUC at least 30 days prior to start of construction. Updated SWPPPs shall be provided~~  
44 ~~to the CPUC on request during construction.~~

1 **Impact BR-4 (VIG): Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or**  
2 **migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or**  
3 **migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery**  
4 **sites.**

5 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

6  
7 The proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project would interfere with the movement of native resident wildlife  
8 species and/or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites. The MSHCP Conservation Area is  
9 comprised of a variety of existing and proposed cores, extensions of existing cores, linkages, constrained  
10 linkages, and non-contiguous habitat blocks are shown on Figure 4.1.3 of the MSHCP. No existing cores  
11 or linkages are located within the project area. However, the 115-kV subtransmission line would intersect  
12 Proposed Linkages 1, 2 5, 6, and 19, Core 1, and Extension of Existing Core 2 (Riverside County 2003b;  
13 Figure 4.1.3).

14  
15 The 115-kV subtransmission line is overhead in the areas where the notable proposed linkages and cores  
16 are located. The 115-kV structures would be widely spaced and are not anticipated to restrict the regional  
17 movement of native fish or wildlife. However, migrating wildlife could be significantly affected on a  
18 local scale during construction. For example, wildlife could become trapped in excavations. In addition,  
19 vegetation removal from construction may fragment normally contiguous areas of wildlife habitat used  
20 for movement. Project Commitment B would require a worker environmental awareness program, which  
21 would educate construction workers on potential wildlife interactions with the job sites; however, impacts  
22 could still be significant. MM BR-7 requires the development of a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation  
23 Plan that describes the restoration of terrestrial and aquatic movement corridors that may have been  
24 interrupted during construction. MM BR-10 would be implemented to prevent wildlife moving through  
25 work sites from becoming trapped in trenches or excavations. SCE would also implement MM BR-11 and  
26 MM BR-12, which would require the implementation of a Nesting Bird Management Plan and burrowing  
27 owl impact reduction measures. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts under this  
28 criterion would be less than significant.

29  
30 ***Mitigation Measures***

31 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

32  
33 **MM BR-10: Prevent Wildlife Entrapment.**

34  
35 **MM BR-11: Migratory Birds and Raptors Impact Reduction Measures.**

36  
37 **MM BR-12: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures.**

38  
39 **Impact BR-5 (VIG): Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources,**  
40 **such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.**

41 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*

42  
43 The proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project is not anticipated to conflict with any local policies or ordinances.  
44 Construction of the 115-kV subtransmission line would require the removal or trimming of oak trees,  
45 which are protected by Riverside County and Lake Elsinore Municipal policies (e.g., Riverside County  
46 Roadside Tree Ordinance 12.08.050, Section 5.116 of the City of Lake Elsinore Municipal Code,  
47 Riverside County's General Plan, and City of Lake Elsinore General Plan Policy 2.2). These ordinances  
48 require permits for the removal or trimming of certain types of trees, including oak trees. The applicant  
49 would obtain all necessary permits prior to the removal or trimming of these trees. For a further  
50 discussion about impacts on oak trees, native plants and riparian environments, refer to Impacts BR-1 and  
51 BR-2.

1  
2 **Impact BR-6 (VIG): Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan,**  
3 **Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional,**  
4 **or state habitat conservation plan.**  
5 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*  
6

7 The entirety of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV subtransmission line is located within the plan areas  
8 of the MSHCP and SKR HCP (Figure 4.4-1), with the exception of the center portion of Segment VIG5,  
9 which is located on private land.  
10

11 Unlike the MSHCP, the SKR HCP does not include a PSE provision in which applicants may streamline  
12 the take permitting process. The applicant was required to pursue an alternative mechanism for obtaining  
13 SKR take authorization for both proposed projects. The applicant worked with the RCHCA to amend the  
14 SKR HCP to allow the applicant to obtain SKR incidental take authorization within SKR HCP areas for  
15 both the Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen projects. As of October 15, 2012 the applicant finalized an SKR  
16 HCP Implementation Agreement with the RCHCA, which provides a process through which the applicant  
17 may obtain take authorization of SKR pursuant to the SKR HCP (AMEC 2014a). ~~The Implementation~~  
18 ~~Agreement also applies to work within MSHCP areas identified as ARL because SKR HCP core reserve~~  
19 ~~requirements do not apply to ARL (Figure 4.4-1).~~ The Implementation Agreement also allows the  
20 applicant to obtain take for SKR on lands owned by Castle and Cooke. As of June, 2015, the RCHCA is  
21 processing a COI to formalize this take agreement and identify the applicant as a participant in the SKR  
22 HCP for both the Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill Projects. The COIs will be finalized prior to  
23 construction and will be included in the Notice to Proceed request for each project.  
24

25 As a PSE under the MSHCP, the applicant is required to prepare an MSHCP consistency report and  
26 Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation, to provide to the Wildlife Agencies  
27 for review and comment, and for approval by the RCA. If work occurs within a MSHCP Criteria Area, a  
28 DBESP must also be included in the Joint Project Review package and reviewed by the RCA, for  
29 approval by the RCA. In addition, under MM BR-7 (Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan), the  
30 applicant would consult with the USFWS and CDFW prior to start of construction to develop a Habitat  
31 Restoration and Revegetation Plan for native vegetation and sensitive resources including wetlands,  
32 wetland buffer areas, riparian habitat, and natural communities. The applicant would also consult with the  
33 agencies after construction of the Valley-Ivyglen Project to ensure that areas are adequately restored or  
34 compensation is provided. Under MM BR-6, MM BR-7, MM BR-8, MM BR-11, and MM BR-12, the  
35 applicant would consult with the USFWS, CDFW, RCA, and RCHCA prior to, during, and after  
36 construction of the Valley-Ivyglen Project (as applicable) regarding oak trees, special status plants,  
37 nesting birds, and burrowing owl impact avoidance and reduction. ~~MSHCP critical habitat and protected~~  
38 ~~species, the SKR HCP, and impacts on SKR are further discussed under Impact BR-1 (VIG).~~  
39

40 The applicant obtained a COI from RCA for Phase 1 of the VIG project. A PSE application for Phase 2  
41 of the VIG project was submitted to RCA in March 2016. A PSE application for Alberhill will be  
42 submitted in 2016 or 2017.  
43

44 The USFWS and CDFW have authorized the applicant's entry into the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain  
45 Core Reserve for clipping and snubbing during construction of the Alberhill 500-kV transmission lines  
46 under the applicant's existing maintenance agreement with the RCHCA (USFWS and CDFW 2013a). A  
47 description of this work is provided in Section 4.4.5.2 (SKR).  
48  
49

1 **Mitigation Measures**

2 **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.**

3  
4 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

5  
6 **MM BR-8: Special Status Plant Avoidance and Mitigation Measures.**

7  
8 **MM BR-11: Migratory Birds and Raptors Impact Reduction Measures.**

9  
10 **MM BR-12: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures.**

11  
12 **4.4.5 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures (Alberhill Project)**

13  
14 **4.4.5.1 Project Commitments (Alberhill Project)**

15  
16 The applicant has committed to undertaking impact reduction measures as part of the design of the  
17 proposed Alberhill Project. These measures, referred to in this document as Project Commitments, are the  
18 same for the proposed Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects (see Section 4.4.4.1).

19  
20 **4.4.5.2 Impacts Analysis (Alberhill Project)**

21  
22 **Impact BR-1 (ASP): Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat**  
23 **modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special**  
24 **status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the**  
25 **CDFW or USFWS.**

26 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

27  
28 Direct, indirect, temporary, and permanent impacts on special status species, migratory bird species, and  
29 vegetation communities are discussed below. The discussion is organized according to impacts associated  
30 with all components of the proposed Alberhill Project, the proposed substation site, the proposed 500-kV  
31 transmission line routes, and the proposed 115-kV subtransmission line routes.

32  
33 Impacts would be most severe during construction, and would diminish during operations. Mitigation  
34 measures are intended to reduce potentially significant impacts during construction. No impacts would  
35 remain potentially significant during operations if mitigation measures are properly implemented to  
36 address the impact during construction.

37  
38 Impacts on all special status species in all project areas within MSHCP boundaries are covered under the  
39 MSHCP, with the exception of impacts on SKR, which are covered under the SKR HCP. Therefore, the  
40 MSHCP would dictate the type and extent of avoidance, mitigation, and compensation measures for each  
41 covered species, unless otherwise specified in project-specific mitigation measures. In addition to these  
42 measures, the mitigation measures outlined below would be implemented to reduce potentially significant  
43 impacts on special status species to less than significant. The applicant is obtaining Participating Special  
44 Entity (PSE) status through issuance of a Certificate of Inclusion (COI) from entering into an agreement  
45 with the RCA, with USFWS and CDFW concurrence, to allow for MSHCP coverage for of the entire  
46 alignment of both the proposed Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill Projects, projects under the MSHCP on  
47 Castle and Cooke property, which is outside MSHCP boundaries. Should the COI this agreement not be  
48 finalized, MM BR-14 outlines options for take coverage or avoidance of impacts to special status species  
49 on Castle and Cooke property.

1 Direct, permanent impacts on special status species or their habitat are associated with the installation of  
2 permanent components of the proposed Alberhill Project (e.g., proposed substation, 500-kV tower and  
3 115-kV pole footings, and new access roads) and the potential direct incidental take caused by  
4 construction of the proposed Alberhill Project. Permanent components would require the complete  
5 removal of vegetation within their footprint. Overall, the project would permanently impact 87.9 acres of  
6 land, using the conventional method for constructing the 500 -kV Line and 68.8 acres if using the  
7 helicopter method for constructing the 500-kV Line (see Tables 2-6 and 2-7 in Chapter 2, “Project  
8 Description”). Temporary impacts on special status species would result from the temporary use of  
9 staging areas, conductor pulling, stringing, and tensioning areas, the improvement and use of existing  
10 access roads, and the removal of existing towers. In addition, construction activities would produce  
11 elevated levels of dust, night light, and noise within and adjacent to the components of the proposed  
12 Alberhill Project. The proposed Alberhill Project would temporarily disturb 269.4 acres using the  
13 conventional method for constructing the 500-kV Line and 245 acres if using the helicopter method for  
14 constructing the 500-kV Line of land (Table 2-6 and 2-7).

15  
16 Overall, construction and operation of the proposed Alberhill Project could negatively impact individuals  
17 of the following special status wildlife species and their habitats: Quino checkerspot butterfly, vernal pool  
18 fairy shrimp, Riverside fairy shrimp, Belding’s orange-throated whiptail, western spadefoot, coastal  
19 California gnatcatcher, least Bell’s vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher, western burrowing owl, golden  
20 eagle, San Bernardino kangaroo rat, and SKR (Table 4.4-4). Dulzura kangaroo rat, a species protected  
21 under the MSHCP, may also be impacted. Construction and operation of the proposed Alberhill Project  
22 could also result in adverse impacts on the following special status plants: long-spined spineflower,  
23 Munz’s onion, paniculate tarplant, Coulter’s matilija poppy, Parry’s spineflower, Robinson’s pepper  
24 grass, San Diego ambrosia, and smooth tarplant (Table 4.4-1). Table 4.4-4 details the presence of these  
25 species within the Alberhill Project area by project component. These species were analyzed in this  
26 document because of their moderate to high potential to occur within the proposed Alberhill Project area,  
27 their elevated conservation status (i.e., listed as threatened or endangered), or the necessity to obtain a  
28 permit or provide compensation for impacts on the species or its habitat. Construction and operation of  
29 the proposed Alberhill Project could also result in adverse impacts on migratory bird species and special  
30 status vegetation communities.

### 31 32 ***Critical Habitat for Coastal California Gnatcatcher, Munz’s Onion, and San Diego*** 33 ***Ambrosia***

34 Portions of the proposed Alberhill substation site, 500-kV transmission lines, and 115-kV  
35 subtransmission lines occur within USFWS-designated critical habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher,  
36 Munz’s onion, and San Diego ambrosia (Figure 4.4-2). Each of these project components cross critical  
37 habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher. This species was confirmed to be present adjacent to 115-kV  
38 Segment ASP5 in 2011. Critical habitat for Munz’s onion and San Diego ambrosia and a known  
39 population of San Diego ambrosia occur adjacent to 115-kV Segment ASP2. Impacts on the critical  
40 habitat for these species are presented in Table 4.4-5.

41  
42 Temporary impacts on critical habitat are related to project construction. Construction activities would  
43 temporarily disturb or remove vegetation and produce elevated levels of noise, dust, and light within and  
44 adjacent to the project area. These impacts are associated with construction staging areas, wire stringing  
45 sites, the removal of existing towers, and the use and improvement of existing access roads. The impacts  
46 along the 500-kV Line Route to Coastal California gnatcatcher habitat would be less than those presented  
47 in Table 4.4-5 if helicopters are used in conjunction with the conventional method.

1

Table 4.4-4 Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Species and Critical Habitat Presence by Alberhill Project Component

Species	Proposed Substation Site	Proposed 500-kV Lines	Proposed Alberhill 115-kV Subtransmission Line Segments									
			1	1.5	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
<b>Plants</b>												
Long-spined spineflower	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	
Paniculate tarplant	---	P	---	---	P	---	P	Pt	P	---	---	
Coulter's matilija poppy	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Parry's spineflower	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	P	P	---	---	
Robinson's pepper grass	P	P	P	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Munz's onion	---	CHP	---	---	P; CHP	---	---	---	---	---	---	
San Diego ambrosia	---	---	---	---	P; CHP	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Smooth tarplant	---	---	---	---	P	---	P	---	P	---	P	
Chaparral sand verbena	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Palmer's grapplinghook	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	
Coast live oak	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	---	
Coulter's goldfields	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
San Jacinto Valley crownscale	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Small-flowered microseris	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Small-flowered morning glory	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
<b>Wildlife</b>												
Quino checkerspot butterfly	HPP	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Vernal pool fairy shrimp	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	PHP	PHP	---	---	
Riverside fairy shrimp	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	PHP	PHP	---	---	
Western spadefoot	PHP	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Belding's orange-throated whiptail	P	P	P	---	P	---	---	P	---	---	---	
Coastal California gnatcatcher	P;CHP	Present	---	---	CHP	---	---	P; CHP	---	---	---	
Least Bell's vireo	P	---	---	P	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	---	
Western burrowing owl	PHP	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	
Golden eagle	P	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
White-tailed kite	P	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	---	---	---	---	P	---	P	---	---	---	---	
Yellow Warbler	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	
Peregrine Falcon	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	
Stephens' kangaroo rat	P	PHP	PHP	P	---	---	P	P	P	---	---	
Dulzura kangaroo rat	P	P	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	
San Diego woodrat	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	
Black-tailed jackrabbit	---	---	---	---	P	---	---	---	P	---	---	

Sources: AECOM 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2011e, 2011f, 2011g, 2012b, 2012c, 2014; AMEC 2006a, 2006b, 2009a, 2009b, 2011, 2012; Bloom Biological 2011; CNDDb 2015; Kidd 2013, 2014; Read 2010; Read and Forde 2010; Faulkner 2009; SJM Biological Consultants 2010a, 2010b, 2011

Key:  
CHP = Critical Habitat Present  
HPP = Host Plant Present  
P= Present  
PHP = Potential Habitat Present

2

Table 4.4-5 California Gnatcatcher, San Diego Ambrosia, and Munz’s Onion Critical Habitat  
Acres by Project Component

Species	Alberhill Project Components <sup>1</sup>		
	Proposed Alberhill Substation Site	Proposed Alberhill 500-kV Transmission Line Routes	Proposed Alberhill 115-kV Subtransmission Line Routes
Coastal California gnatcatcher	42.94 acres	51.49 acres	134.81 acres
Munz’s onion	--	--	0.25 acres
San Diego ambrosia	--	--	8.80 acres

Source: USFWS 2011, SCE 2013b

Note:

<sup>1</sup>Acres include temporary and permanent impacts.

Permanent impacts on the critical habitat for these three species are associated with permanent project features (e.g., substation, new towers, access roads) that would remain throughout the life of the project, as well as the potential for direct, incidental take of individuals during project construction. The project would require the permanent removal of these species’ critical habitat for the construction of the proposed substation, pole and tower footings, and access roads.

USFWS acknowledged that the MSHCP and the IA provide a comprehensive, habitat-based approach to the protection of covered species by focusing impacts on the lands essential for the long-term conservation of the covered species and appropriate management for those lands. The MSHCP and the IA provide for the protection of the covered species in a manner consistent with USFWS regulations concerning the designation of Critical Habitat. Although critical habitat is absorbed into the regional planning effort of the MSHCP and no additional mitigation is specifically required for critical habitat, potential impacts to for these species would be minimized through reduced with the standard implementation of Project Commitments B and D, which require a worker environmental awareness program and a habitat restoration and revegetation plan; however, impacts would still be significant. MMs BR-1 through BR-4 and MM BR 7 through MM BR-9 would be implemented which restrict construction to certain work areas, require worker environmental training, preconstruction surveys, require biological monitoring, limit the amount of native vegetation that is disturbed during construction, restrict disturbance near active gnatcatcher nests, help reduce the spread of invasive species, and require development of a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan. Through, required avoidance of special status plant species, and help reduce the spread of invasive species. Within MSHCP boundaries, these and other impacts would be reduced to less than significant through MSHCP-specific mitigation measures and BMPs (Appendix H) impacts would remain at less than significant levels.)

**Special Status Plants**

Construction-related activities such as site preparation, vegetation removal, installation of poles or towers and the use of construction equipment could cause permanent and temporary direct and indirect impacts through the loss of special status plants or their habitat, root or seed damage, or changes in soil chemistry or composition. Permanent direct impacts include result from new access roads, clearing of vegetation at tower footing locations, or the application of herbicides for fire prevention and weed control. Indirect impacts on special status plants may be caused by soil disturbance, sedimentation or runoff, and increased dust levels during construction.

Construction of the substation would require the removal of three valley oaks protected under the 1996 County of Riverside Open Space and Conservation Element. In addition, the establishment of the 5-acre Import Soil Source Area extending from the northeast corner of the substation may result in the permanent removal of approximately 12 oaks.

1  
2 Pole footings would avoid populations of special status plant species where possible and impacts of  
3 project construction, operation, and maintenance to special status plants would be reduced by Project  
4 Commitments B and D, which require a worker environmental awareness program and a habitat  
5 restoration and revegetation plan; however, impacts would still be significant. MMs BR-1 through BR-4  
6 and MM BR-6 through BR-9 would reduce the impacts to special status plant species to less than  
7 significant. In areas where the removal of special status plants cannot be avoided, MM BR-8 provides  
8 conditions for the restoration of and compensation for impacted special status plant species. MM BR-9  
9 outlines measures to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plant species. MM BR-4 limits the  
10 removal of native vegetation during construction activities, and MM BR-7 provides for the creation and  
11 implementation of a post-construction Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan for temporarily  
12 impacted native vegetation. The removal of oak trees would be avoided to the fullest extent practicable.  
13 However, should the removal of these oaks be unavoidable, MM BR-6 would reduce impacts to less than  
14 significant levels.

15  
16 The applicant would become a PSE in the MSHCP. PSEs under the MSHCP are required to conduct site-  
17 specific focused surveys for Narrow Endemic Plant Species and provide compensation in the event that  
18 sensitive habitat is removed or adversely affected during project construction. The analysis determines  
19 that impacts on special status plants would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation  
20 measures.

### 21 ***Western Burrowing Owl***

23 Burrowing owls and burrows were observed at several locations along the Alberhill 115-kV  
24 subtransmission line while completing protocol-level surveys from 2011 to 2014 and have the potential to  
25 be impacted by project construction. Owls may be struck by vehicles and burrows may be crushed by  
26 construction equipment. Breeding pairs may be indirectly impacted through increased noise, dust, and  
27 human disturbance. Should burrowing owls nest in close proximity to construction, construction-related  
28 impacts would be significant. Trash left in work areas could attract owl predators such as common ravens  
29 and coyotes. The applicant shall implement Project Commitments B and H, which require a worker  
30 environmental awareness program and limit the noise from construction; however, impacts may still be  
31 significant. As a PSE in the MSHCP, the applicant would be required to conduct surveys for burrowing  
32 owl and provide compensation for impacted habitat. MM BR-12 requires preconstruction surveys for  
33 burrowing owls and avoidance of active nest burrows. MM BR-13 would require the applicant to keep  
34 work areas free of trash that may attract owl predators. Implementation of MM BR-12 and MM BR-13  
35 would reduce impacts on burrowing owls to less than significant.

### 36 37 ***Stephens' Kangaroo Rat***

38 Construction of the proposed Alberhill Project would cause adverse impacts on SKR and its habitat. All  
39 major project components cross or are adjacent to habitat known to be suitable for SKR. Table 4.4-4  
40 describes where SKR are present. The impacts would be temporary and permanent, direct and indirect.  
41 SKR are present along the project alignment, and SKR that maintain territories in areas adjacent to work  
42 areas could be impacted by construction and operations. SKR maintain territories between 0.1 and 0.4  
43 acres (USFWS 1997). In general, construction of the project, including clearing and grading and areas  
44 where matting or crushing of vegetation would occur, would result in temporary impacts. Permanent  
45 impacts on SKR would occur from loss of habitat (e.g., within the substation footprint and at tower sites)  
46 and would be localized.

47  
48 SKR would be susceptible to death or injury from project vehicles and equipment during clearing and  
49 grading, or any activities where ground is disturbed or vegetation crushed. Project-related traffic on  
50 access roads and construction activities at work sites could also result in the death or injury of SKR. SKR

1 could also be harmed by inadvertent hazardous materials spills, including fuel and hydraulic fluid leaks.  
2 All crew activities, as well as trash and debris associated with construction of the project could attract  
3 predators of SKR, including coyotes and domestic dogs.  
4

5 SKR habitat would be lost in project areas where permanent structures, access roads, or the proposed  
6 substation would be located. With a total area of approximately 42.9 acres, the proposed substation site  
7 and adjacent Import Soil Source Area would result in the largest project-related loss of suitable SKR  
8 habitat in a single area. In all areas of the project where vegetation and soil would be disturbed, but  
9 especially in areas that would be cleared or graded, the quality of SKR habitat would be negatively  
10 affected. Introduced noxious and invasive plant species could out-compete existing annual vegetation that  
11 SKR forage within.  
12

13 ~~Project-related~~ To reduce impacts on SKR and associated burrows, a number of avoidance and  
14 minimization measures are provided, including Project Commitments B, D, and H. The Project  
15 Commitments require worker environmental training, require development of a Habitat Restoration and  
16 Revegetation Plan, and require construction noise control. Even with the implementation of these Project  
17 Commitments, impacts to SKR would still be authorized significant. MM BR-1 through the SKR HCP. In  
18 October 2012, MM BR-3 would limit construction to designated areas, and require preconstruction  
19 surveys and biological monitoring. MM BR-7 requires the applicant finalized to develop a Habitat  
20 Restoration and Revegetation plan, including additional measures not described in Project Commitment  
21 D. MM BR-10 would prevent the entrapment of SKR HCP Implementation Agreement with the RHCHA  
22 (SCE 2014b). This agreement provides a process through which the applicant may obtain take  
23 authorization of SKR through the SKR HCP for the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project. USFWS and  
24 CDFW provided a joint letter of concurrence with the agreement.- MM BR-16 outlines ~~pertains to~~  
25 protective measures that would be implemented ~~used~~ during construction access to the lake ~~Lake~~ Mathews-  
26 Estelle Mountain Core Reserve. Collectively, these measures would reduce the likelihood that SKR are  
27 injured or killed, or that their habitat is adversely modified during construction.- ~~With implementation of~~  
28 ~~these measures, impacts would be reduced to less than significant.~~  
29

### 30 **Migratory Birds**

31 Construction activities, such as noise, human presence, and habitat alteration due to tree trimming or  
32 vegetation removal, can affect the nesting behavior of migratory bird species. Construction of the 500-kV  
33 Line and segment ASP 5 may require the use of helicopters. Helicopters would be used for the 500-kV  
34 transmission line if the helicopter method is chosen in place of the conventional method for eight towers.  
35 The choice between methods is detailed in Section 2.4.5.2. Impacts from the use of helicopters to  
36 migratory birds could include changes in nesting and foraging behavior in the vicinity of the 500-kV  
37 transmission line due to rotor wash and noise. Under certain conditions, impacts on bird species could be  
38 considered a take under the MBTA, ESA, CESA or CFGCs 3503 and 3503.5. In addition, some bird  
39 species may be at increased risk of colliding with new transmission structures and lines.  
40

41 However, these impacts on sensitive and migratory bird populations would be minimized by adoption of  
42 Project Commitment C, MM BR-1, MM BR-2, MM BR-3, MM BR-5, and MM BR-11. Project  
43 Commitment C states that subtransmission line poles would be designed to be raptor-safe in accordance  
44 with APLIC standards. MM BR-2 requires preconstruction surveys to ensure that existing nests are  
45 located and protected before construction begins and MM BR-3 requires biological monitoring during  
46 construction. MM BR-5 outlines protection measures for coastal California gnatcatchers and MM BR-11  
47 requires the development and implementation of a Nesting Bird Management Plan to protect birds during  
48 the breeding season. These measures collectively will reduce the likelihood that birds are injured or killed  
49 or their nests or habitat disturbed during construction. With implementation of these measures, impacts  
50 will be reduced to less than significant.  
51

1 **Special Status Birds**

2 The construction of the proposed substation, 500-kV lines, and 115-kV lines may negatively impact  
3 special status birds, including least Bell’s vireo, yellow warblers, coastal California gnatcatcher, golden  
4 eagles, white-tailed kites, and peregrine falcons. Table 4.4-4 details the project components where these  
5 species have been observed.

6  
7 Yellow warblers, least Bell’s vireos, white-tailed kites, and peregrine falcons have been observed during  
8 bird surveys at the proposed substation site or along the 115-kV subtransmission line (see Table 4.4-4).  
9 Construction may indirectly impact these species through increased human presence, noise (from  
10 helicopters, construction equipment, and increased traffic) and dust, and directly impact them through the  
11 removal of habitat and direct disturbance of nests during the breeding season. These impacts would be  
12 considered significant. Project Commitments B and D would reduce impacts to these species through  
13 implementing a worker environmental training program and habitat restoration plan; however, impacts  
14 would remain that are still significant. MMs BR-1 through BR-4 and MM BR-11 would reduce impacts  
15 to less than significant levels for these species. The mitigation measures require preconstruction surveys,  
16 biological monitoring, avoidance or restoration of or compensation for impacts on riparian habitat or  
17 native vegetation, and the development of a Nesting Bird Management Plan. Collectively, these measures  
18 reduce direct disturbance of habitat for these species, require restoration of disturbed habitat, and reduce  
19 the likelihood that nests would be disturbed or destroyed during construction.

20  
21 Golden eagles can be attracted to transmission structures because they provide a perch for hunting, and on  
22 rare occasion, nesting. Eagles, falcons, and other birds may also collide with transmission lines, which  
23 can be difficult for birds to detect during inclement weather or at night. The 500-kV line is not preexisting  
24 like the 115-kV line, and may pose an increased risk to golden eagles and other birds because resident  
25 birds would not be acclimated to the presence of the new lines. However, with the implementation of  
26 Project Commitment C, avian-safe transmission structures would be incorporated into the design of the  
27 115-kV and 500-kV lines. Such structures provide adequate clearances to accommodate a large bird  
28 between energized or grounded parts, as recommended by APLIC (APLIC 2006). Construction of the  
29 project may directly disturb or destroy nests of breeding raptors. Therefore, MM BR-11 requires the  
30 development and implementation of a Nesting Bird Management Plan for the protection of breeding  
31 birds. This measure would ensure that impacts on golden eagles and other raptors are reduced to less than  
32 significant levels. With implementation of this measure, the project is not anticipated to significantly  
33 impact golden eagles through risk of collision with the 500-kV line.

34  
35 **Quino Checkerspot Butterfly**

36 Quino checkerspot butterfly habitat exists within the footprint of the proposed substation site and Import  
37 Soil Source Area (Table 4.4-4). Populations of foothill plantain, a critically important host plant for  
38 Quino checkerspot larvae, were recorded present in 2009 in the southeastern portion of the substation  
39 footprint and within the central portion of the Import Soil Source Area. While Quino checkerspot  
40 butterfly host plants would likely be removed during construction; no butterflies or larvae were  
41 identified during the 2009 Quino survey. ~~Therefore, construction of the proposed project is not anticipated~~  
42 ~~to impact Quino checkerspot butterflies.~~

43  
44 SCE is currently in the process of obtaining PSE status in the MSHCP, through a Certificate of Inclusion,  
45 to allow for coverage of the entire proposed project alignment. The COI will include incidental take  
46 authorization for covered species and require contribution of funds for land acquisition, management, and  
47 monitoring. In addition, SCE would implement MM BR-1 through MM BR-4, requiring work to occur  
48 only within designated areas and avoid impacting more habitat than is absolutely necessary;  
49 preconstruction surveys for sensitive species in each discrete work area; biological monitoring during  
50 construction in areas where sensitive species have been observed or have the potential to occur; and

1 | avoidance of special status vegetation communities, where feasible. Therefore, construction of the  
2 | proposed project would not have a significant impact Quino checkerspot butterflies.

### 4 | ***Special Status Reptiles and Amphibians***

5 | In 2013, a Belding's orange throated whiptail was observed within the disturbance area for the  
6 | proposed substation. Western spadefoot has not been observed within the substation footprint. No arroyo  
7 | toad adults, larvae, or eggs were observed during protocol-level surveys in 2010. Construction of the  
8 | proposed project is not anticipated to significantly impact Belding's orange-throated whiptail, western  
9 | spadefoot, or arroyo toad.

### 11 | ***Riverside Fairy Shrimp and Vernal Pool Fairy Shrimp***

12 | Surveys were undertaken in 2009 and 2010 to identify vernal pools that may provide for vernal pool  
13 | branchiopods, specifically Santa Rosa Plateau fairy shrimp, Riverside fairy shrimp, and vernal pool fairy  
14 | shrimp. In 2012 and 2013, protocol-level vernal pool branchiopod surveys conducted for the Valley-  
15 | Ivyglen project identified numerous vernal pools along Segments ASP1.5 and ASP2. Surveys determined  
16 | that no listed vernal pool branchiopods were present in these pools. Therefore, construction of the  
17 | proposed project is not anticipated to impact Riverside or vernal pool fairy shrimp.

19 | In addition, to ensure that the applicant adheres to all Project Commitments, MM BR-18 would be  
20 | required. MM BR-18 clarifies that the applicant's Project Commitments would be incorporated into the  
21 | Mitigation Monitoring and Compliance Reporting Program. With the implementation of MM BR-18, in  
22 | addition to the implementation of all measures listed above, impacts would be reduced to less than  
23 | significant.

### 25 | ***Mitigation Measures***

26 | **MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland**  
27 | **Areas.**

29 | **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

31 | **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**

33 | **MM BR-4: Limit Removal of Native Vegetation Communities and Trees.**

35 | **MM BR-5: California gnatcatcher protection measures.**

37 | **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.**

39 | **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

41 | **MM BR-8: Special Status Plant Avoidance and Mitigation Measures.**

43 | **MM BR-9: Invasive Plant Control Measures.**

45 | **MM BR-10: Prevent Wildlife Entrapment.**

47 | **MM BR-11: Migratory Birds and Raptors Impact Reduction Measures.**

49 | **MM BR-12: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures.**

1 **MM BR-13: Trash Abatement.**

2  
3 **MM BR-14: Protection of Special Status Species on Castle and Cooke Land.**

4  
5 **MM BR-16: Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Take Avoidance within Core Reserve.** The applicant shall  
6 ensure that take of SKR within the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve does not occur during  
7 any project construction activity. To avoid take of SKR, the following measures shall be implemented:

8  
9 ***Daylight Hours Only***

- 10
- 11 • No vehicle or equipment use for any project construction activity shall occur within the Core  
12 Reserve or on its roadways within 30 minutes prior to sunset or 30 minutes after sunrise except  
13 during an emergency condition. If an emergency condition occurs and nighttime access or use is  
14 necessary, the CPUC shall be notified within 24 hours. To the extent feasible, biological monitors  
qualified to monitor for SKR shall be present during emergency access to the Core Reserve.

15 ***Monitoring***

- 16
- 17 • No more than 14 days prior to conducting any project construction activity within the Core  
18 Reserve, biological monitors qualified to monitor for SKR shall complete preconstruction surveys  
19 and flag confirmed and potential SKR burrow complexes (including burrows that may be used by  
20 other kangaroo rat species) for avoidance. ~~Survey areas shall include Lake Street and all access~~  
21 ~~roads to 500-kV tower sites evaluated in the EIR and approved by the CPUC for construction~~  
22 ~~access, plus a 25-foot buffer area (except in areas inaccessible by foot) on each side of these~~  
23 ~~roads. Surveyed and flagged areas shall also include all 500-kV ROWs to be accessed within the~~  
24 ~~Core Reserve plus a 25-foot buffer area (except in areas inaccessible by foot) on each side of~~  
these roads.

25 ***Vehicle Use***

- 26
- 27 • Vehicle use and worker access within the Core Reserve shall be minimal. Vehicles shall not  
28 travel faster than 10 miles per hour within the Core Reserve. All construction vehicles and  
29 equipment shall remain on existing access and maintenance roads used to access the applicant's  
500-kV towers within the Core Reserve.
  - 30 • Biological monitors qualified to monitor for SKR shall accompany all workers to and from all  
31 work sites within the Core Reserve, and shall conduct daily clearance sweeps immediately prior  
32 to any project construction activity for all areas within the Core Reserve to be accessed that day.
  - 33 • If activities at 500-kV tower sites adjacent to the Core Reserve require equipment to back up into  
34 the Core Reserve on areas that are not existing access roads, biological monitors qualified to  
35 monitor for SKR shall monitor the process of backing up and exiting the Core Reserve areas and  
36 all activities that occur in proximity to the equipment while it is located within the Core Reserve  
37 area. Equipment shall be carefully inspected by the monitors for SKR prior to backing up or  
38 exiting the Core Reserve area. If SKR are present, the equipment shall not be moved until all  
39 SKR have left the equipment and all areas within 20 feet of the equipment.

40 ***Signage***

- 41
- 42 • Clearly marked and visible signs listing the required speed limit and reminding drivers to watch  
43 for and avoid kangaroo rats shall be posted at the entry point into the Core Reserve and at regular  
44 intervals thereafter (at minimum every 0.25 miles) along all roads to be accessed within the Core  
Reserve.

1 ***Other Requirements***

- 2 • The applicant shall not access the 0.5-mile ~~access road~~~~Hilltop Road~~ segment located within the  
3 Core Reserve between 500-kV Towers M13-~~T2-42~~ and M13-T1 other than by foot or  
4 helicopter. If accessed by foot or helicopter, no more than 14 days prior to access,  
5 preconstruction surveys shall be conducted along the 0.5-mile Hilltop Road segment to identify  
6 and flag potential kangaroo rat burrow complexes for avoidance.

7 No activities other than grounding and wire snubbing and vehicle use required for these activities shall  
8 occur at 500-kV tower sites located within the Core Reserve.

9  
10 **MM BR-18: Implementation of All Project Commitments**

11  
12 **Impact BR-2 (ASP): Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive**  
13 **natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or**  
14 **regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS.**  
15 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*  
16

17 Riparian habitat and special status natural communities are present within the proposed Alberhill Project  
18 area. Impacts on riparian habitat and wetlands are further discussed in Impact BR-3 (ASP). Several  
19 natural communities designated as special status by the CDFW are present at the proposed substation site  
20 and along the proposed 500-kV transmission line and 115-kV subtransmission line routes, including  
21 chamise chaparral, coast live oak woodland, Riversidean sage scrub, Southern cottonwood-willow  
22 riparian woodland, and Southern sycamore-alder riparian woodland (Table 4.4-6). In addition, Riverside  
23 County's General Plan establishes policies to protect oak woodlands and the City of Lake Elsinore  
24 General Plan Policy 2.2 discourages development within high-quality riparian habitat or high  
25 concentrations (80 percent or more) of natural native habitat and native plant species.

26  
27 Direct, permanent impacts on special status natural communities would result from the removal of  
28 vegetation for substation construction, pole and tower installation, helicopter pads (if helicopter  
29 construction method is used for the 500-kV transmission lines), and access road construction. Impacts  
30 may also result from the use of temporary staging yards and wire-stringing sites. In addition, trees or  
31 native vegetation may require trimming, crushing, or removal to accommodate construction of the  
32 proposed Alberhill Project. The impacts along the 500-kV transmission line to Riversidean Sage Scrub  
33 and Southern Sycamore-Alder Riparian Woodland habitat would be less than those presented in Table  
34 4.4-6 if helicopters are used in conjunction with the conventional method.

35  
36 Impacts analyses for special status natural communities were completed by overlaying the applicant-  
37 provided GIS data for the vegetation communities over the general disturbance area for the proposed  
38 Alberhill Project (SCE 2013d). Special status natural communities may be disturbed or removed during  
39 construction. Project Commitment B would provide a worker environmental awareness program to ensure  
40 compliance with onsite biological resource protection measures. Project Commitment D would require  
41 development of a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan. However, populations of special status  
42 plants could be disturbed or removed by construction. Impacts from the construction and operation of the  
43 proposed Alberhill Project would be significant.

44  
45 MMs BR-1 through BR-4, MM BR-6, MM BR-7, and MM BR-9 would limit construction to designated  
46 areas, require preconstruction surveys and biological monitoring, and would limit the removal of native  
47 vegetation and oak trees. MMs BR-1 through BR-4 would limit construction to designated areas, require  
48 preconstruction surveys and biological monitoring, and would limit the removal of native vegetation. MM  
49 BR-6 would limit the removal of oak trees within the project area. MM BR-7 would require the inclusion  
50 of additional provisions in the Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan that will be developed pursuant

1 to Project Commitment D. MM BR-9 would require implementation of an Invasive Plant Management  
2 Plan, which would help prevent the spread of invasive species in the project area. Implementation of these  
3 mitigation measures would reduce impacts to special status natural communities to less than significant,  
4 through avoidance and vegetation restoration measures. Therefore, impacts under this criterion would be  
5 less than significant with mitigation.

6  
7 **Mitigation Measures**

8 **MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland**  
9 **Areas.**

10  
11 **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

12  
13 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**

14  
15 **MM BR-4: Limit Removal of Native Vegetation Communities and Trees.**

16  
17 **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.**

18  
19 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

20  
21 **MM BR-9: Invasive Plant Control Measures.**

22  
23  
24 **Impact BR-3 (ASP): Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined**  
25 **by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh,**  
26 **vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological**  
27 **interruption, or other means.**

28 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

29  
30 Numerous wetlands, drainages, or riparian areas, including many known to be subject to federal  
31 jurisdiction, have been identified in proximity to components of the proposed Alberhill Project.  
32 Numerous vernal pools were also identified and surveyed as potential habitat for vernal pool  
33 branchiopods. Construction of new access roads; clearing vegetation, which exposes topsoil to weathering  
34 and erosion; and installing facilities within wetland or upland drainage areas would result in direct,  
35 permanent impacts on federally protected wetlands (including upland areas and drainages) as defined by  
36 Section 404 of the CWA. These vernal pools, along with Riverside fairy shrimp and vernal pool fairy  
37 shrimp, are discussed above under Impact BR-1 (ASP).

38  
39 The applicant anticipates that approximately 0.3 acres of federally jurisdictional waters would be  
40 permanently impacted by construction (Appendix G, Table 4). Although not all of the features are  
41 considered to be federally protected wetland systems, several potentially support sensitive wildlife  
42 species, and may fall under the jurisdiction of the CDFW. Approximately 0.8 acres of waters under the  
43 jurisdiction of the CDFW may be permanently impacted. These features would generally be impacted  
44 only temporarily and would be restored following construction. These temporary impacts would total  
45 approximately 0.5 acres under the jurisdiction of the USACE and 1.71 acres under the jurisdiction of the  
46 CDFW (Appendix G, Table 4). However, permanent, direct impacts on wetlands may result from placing  
47 project elements within these features.

Table 4.4-6 Vegetation Types along Components of the Alberhill Project (in Acres)

Vegetation Community	Alberhill Substation	500-kV Transmission Lines	115-kV Subtransmission Segments									Total	
			1	1.5	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Chamise Chaparral	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	1.66	1.98	---	---	3.64
Coast Live Oak Woodland	---	---	---	---	1.64	---	---	---	3.38	---	---	---	5.02
Riversidean Alluvial Fan Scrub	---	---	---	---	<u>0.29</u>	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	<u>0.29</u>
Riversidean Sage Scrub <sup>2</sup>	4.47	30.17	---	---	15.06	0.93	1.62	2.22	0.86	---	---	---	55.33
Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Woodland	---	---	---	0.76	1.38	---	0.57	---	---	---	---	---	2.71
Southern Sycamore-Alder Riparian Woodland <sup>1</sup>	---	0.58	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.58
Southern Willow Scrub	0.80	---	---	3.19	6.97	---	---	0.69	0.06	---	---	---	11.71

Source: SCE 2013a, 2014a

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> CNDDDB sensitive community is entitled "California sycamore woodland"

<sup>2</sup> Riversidean sage scrub is a type of coastal sage scrub (Holland 1986), which is part of sensitive natural community alliances according to the CNDDDB; coastal sage scrub is also a sensitive community under the MSHCP.

Key:

CNDDDB = California Natural Diversity Database

kV = kilovolt

MSHCP = Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

1 ASP-13, an artificial 0.84-acre stock pond that supports riparian vegetation, is located within the proposed  
2 Alberhill substation site (Figure 2-2i). The stock pond will be removed during construction of the proposed  
3 substation.

4  
5 ASP-8 is an unvegetated channel that drains southward towards Staging Area ASP1 and eventually flows  
6 into a concrete channel (ASP-9) located along the staging area's eastern boundary and into a culvert  
7 beneath I-15. The feature is subject to state and federal jurisdiction. The northern portion of this feature  
8 west of Lake Street at 500-kV Tower R15X/SA6 would be directly and permanently impacted by the access  
9 road for Tower R13/SA5.

10  
11 In addition to impacts on ASP-13 and ASP-8, several other small, unvegetated channels (ASP-10, ASP-11,  
12 and ASP-12) would be impacted during construction of the 500-kV transmission line.

13  
14 Construction of the project may directly impact wetlands through soil disturbance, crossing by vehicles,  
15 topographic changes that affect wetland hydrology, removal of wetland vegetation, and erosion,  
16 sedimentation, and input of pollutants. Potential impacts on wetlands would be reduced to less than  
17 significant by MMs BR-1, BR-2 and BR-3, which would limit construction to designated areas and protect  
18 aquatic resources, require site-specific surveys, and biological monitoring. MM BR-15 would control  
19 erosion, sedimentation, and input of pollutants. Collectively, these measures would reduce impacts under  
20 this criterion to less than significant.

### 21 **Mitigation Measures**

22  
23 **MM BR-1: Limit Construction to Designated Areas and Avoid Riparian, Aquatic, and Wetland**  
24 **Areas.**

25  
26 **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

27  
28 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**

29  
30 **MM BR-15: Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) Best Management Practices (BMPs).**

31  
32 **Impact BR-4 (ASP): Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory**  
33 **fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife**  
34 **corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.**

35 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*

36  
37 The MSHCP identifies blocks of contiguous habitat for covered species ("cores") and corridors for  
38 movement between cores ("linkages") (Riverside County 2003b; Figure 4.1-3). No component of the  
39 proposed Alberhill Project would be located in existing core or linkage areas identified by the MSHCP,  
40 although access into the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve (Core C), would be required (see  
41 discussion under Impact BR-6 [ASP]). However, the Alberhill substation; 500-kV transmission lines; and  
42 Segments ASP1, ASP 1.5, and ASP 2 would transect Proposed Core 1. Segment ASP4 would cross  
43 Proposed Linkage 2 and Proposed Extension to Existing Core 3 (Riverside County 2003b).

44  
45 Construction of the proposed Alberhill Project would not significantly interfere with the movement of  
46 wildlife species because the proposed 500-kV transmission line and 115-kV subtransmission line structures  
47 would be sufficiently spaced to allow wildlife movement. Although the proposed substation would be  
48 surrounded by a perimeter wall, sufficient open space would surround the proposed substation to allow  
49 wildlife to move freely around the substation. There are no known native wildlife nursery sites within the  
50 project area. Therefore, construction and operation of the project is not anticipated to interfere with the  
51 movement of wildlife species or impede the use of nursery sites.

1  
2 Feature ASP-8, discussed in Impact BR-3 (ASP) above, would be crossed by an access road to 500-kV  
3 Tower SA5. This feature is connected to Temescal Wash, which is a tributary of the Santa Ana River, and  
4 thus could potentially allow for the movement of fish and aquatic wildlife during peak flow periods.  
5 However, the installation of a crossing at this location is not expected to interfere with the movement of  
6 water within the drainage, and would therefore not have a significant impact on the movement of migratory  
7 fish.

8  
9 **Impact BR-5 (ASP): Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources,**  
10 **such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.**  
11 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*

12  
13 The proposed Alberhill Project would comply with all applicable local ordinances and policies.  
14 Construction of the substation and other project components would require the removal of approximately 12  
15 oak trees and the trimming of numerous more, and several local policies and ordinances govern the removal  
16 or trimming of such trees (e.g., Riverside County Roadside Tree Ordinance 12.08.050, Section 5.116 of the  
17 City of Lake Elsinore Municipal Code, Riverside County's General Plan, City of Lake Elsinore General  
18 Plan Policy 2.2). These ordinances require permits for the removal or trimming of certain types of trees.  
19 The applicant would obtain all necessary permits prior to the removal or trimming of these trees. For a  
20 further discussion about impacts on oak trees, native plants, and riparian environments, refer to Impacts  
21 BR-1 and BR-2.

22  
23 **Impact BR-6 (ASP): Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural**  
24 **Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state**  
25 **habitat conservation plan.**  
26 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION*

27  
28 With the exception of an approximately 2-mile-long section of 115-kV Segment ASP2, each component of  
29 the proposed Alberhill Project would be constructed within the plan areas of the MSHCP and SKR HCP  
30 (Figure 4.4-1); however, the entire project would be covered under the SKR HCP and SCE is entering into  
31 an agreement with the RCA to allow for coverage of this section of ASP2 under the MSHCP. The  
32 applicant consulted with the USFWS, CDFW, Western Riverside County RCA, and RCHCA and would  
33 continue consultation with these agencies prior to, during, and after construction of the proposed Alberhill  
34 Project to ensure that no violations of the ESA, CESA, MSHCP, or SKR HCP occur during construction or  
35 operation of the proposed Alberhill Project.

36  
37 ***MSHCP and SKR HCP***

38 | The majority of the proposed project would be covered under located within the SKR HCP area except for a  
39 section in the center of the proposed 115-kV Segment ASP2 route. The HCP was implemented to protect  
40 the SKR and its habitat and to put forth conservation, mitigation, and monitoring measures for projects that  
41 impact the species within the plan area. The HCP area would be impacted through the direct removal of  
42 suitable SKR habitat during the construction of project components.

43  
44 As of October 15, 2012, the applicant finalized an SKR HCP Implementation Agreement with the RCHCA,  
45 which provides a process through which the applicant may obtain take authorization of SKR pursuant to the  
46 SKR HCP (AMEC 2014a). ~~The Implementation Agreement also applies to work within MSHCP areas~~  
47 ~~identified as Additional Reserve Land because SKR HCP core reserve requirements do not apply to~~  
48 ~~Additional Reserve Land (Figure 4.4-1).~~ The Implementation Agreement also allows the applicant to obtain  
49 take for SKR on lands owned by Castle and Cooke. As of June, 2015, the RCHCA is processing a COI to  
50 formalize this take agreement and identify the applicant as a participant in the SKR HCP for both the

1 Valley-Ivyglen and Alberhill projects. The COIs will be finalized prior to construction and will be included  
2 in the Notice to Proceed request for each project.

3  
4 The applicant would be a PSE under the MSHCP, which requires that the applicant prepare a MSHCP  
5 consistency report and Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation for approval by  
6 the RCA. In addition, under MM BR-7 the applicant would consult with the USFWS and CDFW prior to  
7 start of construction to develop a Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan for native vegetation and  
8 sensitive resources including wetlands, wetland buffer areas, riparian habitat, and natural communities. The  
9 applicant would also consult with the agencies after construction of the proposed Alberhill Project to ensure  
10 that areas are adequately restored or compensation is provided. Under MM BR-6, MM BR-8, MM BR-9,  
11 MM BR-11, and MM BR-12 the applicant would consult with the USFWS, CDFW, RCA, and RCHCA  
12 prior to, during, and after construction of the proposed Alberhill Project (as applicable) regarding oak trees,  
13 special status plants, nesting birds, burrowing owl impact avoidance and reduction. MSHCP protected  
14 species, the SKR HCP, and impacts on SKR are further discussed under Impact BR-1 (ASP).

### 15 **Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve**

16  
17 The RCHCA currently manages several core reserves that have been set aside for SKR conservation and  
18 habitat preservation, including the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve. The applicant would be  
19 able to obtain SKR take authorization for work within MSHCP and SKR HCP areas, but would not be able  
20 to obtain SKR take authorization for work within the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve.  
21 Although work within the reserve is allowed for the maintenance of existing infrastructure, including  
22 transmission facilities, it is not allowed for the construction of new infrastructure unless the new  
23 construction work is conducted by a public agency (SKR HCP Sections 5.c.1.s and 5.c.1.t, and  
24 Implementation Agreement Section III.A.1.a(4)).

25  
26 The proposed 500-kV transmission line routes would be adjacent to the reserve but not enter its boundaries  
27 (Figure 4.4-1). The use of helicopters to construct eight transmission structures along the 500-kV  
28 transmission line (if the helicopter construction method is chosen for the eight towers instead of the  
29 conventional method) would produce noise, especially if helicopters are used near the boundary of the  
30 reserve. Construction of the line would require entry into the reserve to access the applicant's existing 500-  
31 kV tower sites. USFWS and CDFW have authorized the applicant's entry into the reserve for clipping and  
32 snubbing work related to construction of the 500-kV transmission line under the applicant's existing  
33 maintenance agreement with the RCHCA (USFWS and CDFW 2013a). The existing access roads would  
34 also be used by tensioning and pulling equipment for conductor stringing (Figure 2-2i). The applicant  
35 would drive on Lake Street to an existing access road and on Hilltop Road.

36  
37 Construction of the proposed 500-kV transmission lines would also require minimal access to the reserve by  
38 construction crews for grounding and snubbing activities to ensure worker safety and may require limited  
39 access for wire stringing equipment positioning as described in Chapter 2, "Project Description," Section  
40 2.3.2.1, "Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Reserve," Section 2.4.5.3, "Grounding and Snubbing: Core  
41 Reserve Access," and under the heading, "500-kV Transmission Line Wire Stringing," in Section 2.4.5.5,  
42 "Wire Stringing." USFWS, CDFW, and RCHCA reviewed the applicant's description of these proposed  
43 activities within the reserve, the proposed locations for these activities, and SJM Biological Consultants'  
44 2012 live-trapping report for the locations (SJM Biological Consultants 2012).

45  
46 USFWS, CDFW, and RCHCA concurred that the grounding and snubbing activities as described by the  
47 applicant could be accommodated at the locations specified within the reserve pursuant to the SKR HCP's  
48 provisions for maintenance of existing facilities (SKR HCP Section 5.c.1.t). The agencies stated that the  
49 proposed activities within the Reserve are not expected to result in SKR take or have a long-term negative  
50 effect on the Reserve (RCHCA 2013; USFWS and CDFW 2013a, 2013b). In addition to the proposed

1 activities within the Reserve specified in the wildlife agency letters, the applicant's wire stinging equipment  
2 may need to be positioned such that it extends onto existing roadways within the Reserve or within areas at  
3 the perimeter of the reserve immediately adjacent to the proposed work areas at 500-kV Towers SA6 and  
4 VA6 and existing tower sites M13-T4, M13-T3, and M13-T2 (Figure 2-2i). Vegetation in these areas may  
5 be crushed as identified in the USFWS and CDFW letter (USFWS and CDFW 2013a).

6  
7 While the applicant has secured concurrence from USFWS, CDFW, and the RCHCA that work within the  
8 Reserve would not likely result in take of SKR, this agreement does not permit the applicant to take SKR  
9 during these activities. Should the applicant injure or kill SKR within the core reserve, this action would  
10 violate the terms of the HCP and the ESA and CESA.

11  
12 Measures would be put in place to avoid take of SKR within the Reserve and avoid disturbance of occupied  
13 SKR habitat to the maximum extent feasible (MM BR-2, MM BR-3, and MM BR-16). The proposed  
14 activities within the Reserve would not result in land disturbance and would be located on existing  
15 roadways and within the applicant's exiting transmission line corridor ROW. While it is the position of the  
16 USFWS, CDFW, and RCHCA that the proposed activities can be accommodated by the SKR HCP  
17 (RCHCA 2013; USFWS and CDFW 2013a, 2013b), if take occurs a conflict would occur. SKR may be  
18 taken by vehicular traffic or equipment use at the existing 500-kV tower sites within the Reserve. Although  
19 2011 and 2012 surveys and trapping results do not indicate the presence of SKR or suitable SKR habitat in  
20 areas where activities associated with construction of the proposed Alberhill Project would occur, the  
21 possibility of SKR take, however unlikely, still exists. MM BR-2, MM BR-3, and MM BR-16 would ensure  
22 that take of SKR would be avoided to the maximum extent feasible.

#### 23 24 ***Mitigation Measures***

25 **MM BR-2: Preconstruction Surveys.**

26  
27 **MM BR-3: Biological Monitoring During Construction.**

28  
29 **MM BR-6: Oak tree protection measures.**

30  
31 **MM BR-7: Habitat Restoration and Revegetation Plan Requirements.**

32  
33 **MM BR-8: Special Status Plant Avoidance and Mitigation Measures.**

34  
35 **MM BR-9: Invasive Plant Control Measures.**

36  
37 **MM BR-11: Migratory Birds and Raptors Impact Reduction Measures.**

38  
39 **MM BR-12: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures.**

40  
41 **MM BR-16: Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Take Avoidance within Core Reserve.**

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