

C.9 Agricultural Resources

This section discusses the effects of the construction and operation of the proposed Project on agricultural resources. The extent of the area to be analyzed for impacts to agriculture is considered the Agricultural Study Area. The Agricultural Study Area has been defined as agricultural resources that are traversed by or are adjacent to the proposed Project route, which includes land designated as important farmland by the Department of Conservation (DOC), lands under Williamson Act contracts, and other agricultural operations. See Figures C.9-1 through C.9-10 (at the end of this section) for the location of agricultural resources relative to the Project route. Effects on non-agricultural lands uses along the Project route are addressed in Section C.8 (Land Use and Public Recreation).

C.9.1 Environmental Setting

To facilitate the analysis of agricultural resources, the Agricultural Study Area has been divided into two segments (i.e., Segments 2 and 3). Segment 3 includes the construction of two substations, the construction of a 220-kV transmission line that connects the two substations, and the construction of a 500-kV transmission line that extends from Substation One to Antelope Substation. Segment 2 includes the construction of a 500-kV transmission line that extends from Antelope Substation to Vincent Substation, and the relocation of a portion of a 66-kV transmission line.

The proposed Project components would be located across or adjacent to important farmland along Segments 2 and 3. Important farmland is classified by the DOC Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) to include Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land (see discussion in Section C.9.2.2). Table C.9-1 describes the total amount of important farmland that would be traversed by the proposed Project. Further discussion of the important farmland types that are traversed by the Project is included in Sections C.9.1.1 and C.9.1.2.

Project Component	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing Land	Total Important Farmland ¹	Williamson Act Land (Type) ²
Substation Two (acres)	-	-	-	-	20.2	20.2	20.2 (M)
Substation One (acres)	-	-	-	-	53.7	53.7	-
TOTAL ACREAGE	-	-	-	-	73.9	73.9	20.2 (M)
Segment 3 (miles)	1.5	1.0	0.2	-	24.1	26.8	0.5 (P) 0.1 (M)
Segment 2 (miles)	0.1	-	-	-	4.2	4.3	-
TOTAL DISTANCE ³	1.6	1.0	0.2	-	28.3	31.1	0.5 (P) 0.1 (M)

Source: DOC, 2005; 2004; 2002.

¹ Total Important Farmland does not include Williamson Act Land.

² P = Prime Agricultural Land; M = Mixed Acreage Parcels.

³ Total Distance is the total linear miles crossed by the Project that is designated as Important Farmland by the DOC FMMP, or land under Williamson Act contracts that is traversed by Project components.

C.9.1.1 Segment 3

The majority of agricultural uses traversed by the proposed Project route are located along Segment 3 in Kern County. Southern Kern County is used for the production of a variety of crops, such as potato, oat, alfalfa,

barley, carrot, green onion, and dry onion (Kern County, 2006). The Segment 3 portion of the proposed route would traverse the following important farmland categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Grazing Land in unincorporated Kern County (see Figures C.9-1 through C.9-5), and Prime Farmland and Grazing Land in unincorporated Los Angeles County (see Figures C.9-5 through C.9-7). The Project would also traverse Williamson Act land designated as “Prime” and “Mixed” agricultural land in Kern County (see Figures C.9-1 and C.9-5). Table C.9-2 lists the important farmland traversed by Segment 3 and its relative location to the proposed Project.

Important Farmland Type	Length Traversed (miles)	Approximate No. Towers	Jurisdiction
Prime Farmland	1.5	8	Unincorporated Kern County, Unincorporated Los Angeles County
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1.0	4	Unincorporated Kern County
Unique Farmland	0.2	1	Unincorporated Kern County
Grazing Land	24.2	132	Unincorporated Kern County, Unincorporated Los Angeles County
Williamson Act Land (P)	0.5	3	Unincorporated Kern County
Williamson Act Land (M)	0.1	2	Unincorporated Kern County

Source: SCE, 2005a, 2005b; DOC, 2005, 2004, 2002.

Note: P = Prime Agricultural Land; M = Mixed Acreage Parcels

C.9.1.2 Segment 2

Segment 2 of the proposed Project route would traverse important farmland in Los Angeles County, which includes Prime Farmland and Grazing Land (see Figures C.9-7 and C.9-8). The Project would not traverse or be located adjacent to any Williamson Act lands along this segment. Table C.9-3 lists the important farmland traversed by Segment 2 and its relative location to the proposed Project.

Important Farmland Type	Length Traversed (miles)	Approximate No. Towers	Jurisdiction
Prime Farmland	0.1	1	Unincorporated Los Angeles County
Grazing Land	17.0	15	Unincorporated Los Angeles County

Source: DOC, 2005, 2004, 2002.

In addition to the proposed Project route, Segment 2 includes two route options. Option A would not traverse any important farmland as designated by the DOC (see Figures C.9-8 and C.9-9). Option B would traverse approximately 5.0 miles of Grazing Land (see Figure C.9-9).

C.9.2 Regulatory Framework

C.9.2.1 Federal

No federal plans or policies that are applicable to agricultural resources have been identified. Please see the remaining issue area sections for a discussion of federal policies applicable to each resource area.

C.9.2.2 State

California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Agricultural Land Classifications

The DOC established the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) in response to a critical need for assessing the location and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands to other uses. The DOC uses the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil classifications to identify agricultural lands in California. Agricultural lands designated by the DOC as important farmland are classified as the following:

- **Prime Farmland.** Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical properties for the production of crops (e.g., land must be irrigated as well as have prime soil attributes).
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Similar to Prime Farmland, but with minor shortcomings (e.g., steeper slopes, inability to hold water).
- **Unique Farmland.** Land of lesser quality soils, but recently used for the production of specific high economic value crops.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. (DOC, 2006b).

For the purposes of the impact evaluation, the term "Farmland" is used to collectively describe lands within the State of California that are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland by the DOC FMMP (DOC, 2006b). Every two years, FMMP updates maps and statistical data reflecting the location and classification of California's agricultural resources (DOC, 2006c). The FMMP data are used in elements of some county and city general plans, environmental documents, in regional studies on agricultural land conversion, and in assessing impacts of proposed projects on Farmland (DOC, 2006d).

Williamson Act Land Designations

The DOC also identifies lands under a Williamson Act contract as important agricultural lands. The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, or Williamson Act, is California's primary program for the conservation of private land in agricultural and open space use. The Williamson Act is a voluntary, locally administered program that offers preferential property taxes on lands that have enforceable restrictions on their use via contracts between individual landowners and local governments. The Williamson Act categorizes lands according to various classifications. Williamson Act lands in the vicinity of the proposed Project are classified as the following:¹

- **Prime Agricultural Land.** Land that is enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract which meets any of the following criteria:
 - Land that is class I or class II in the NRCS land use capability classification system;
 - Land that rates 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating system;
 - Land that supports livestock used for the production of food and fiber and that has an annual carrying capacity equivalent to at least one animal unit per acre as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture;

¹ In addition to Prime and Non-Prime Agricultural Land, DOC uses the designation "Mixed Acreage Parcels" to indicate Prime, Non-Prime, Open Space Easement, or other contracted or enrolled land that is not yet spatially defined by the Williamson Act Program (DOC, 2006a)

- Land planted with fruit or nut-bearing trees, vines, bushes or crops that have a nonbearing period of less than five years and that will normally return during the commercial bearing period on an annual basis from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production not less than two hundred dollars per acre; and
- Land that has returned from the production of unprocessed agricultural plant production with an annual gross value of not less than two hundred dollars per acre for three of the previous five years.
- **Non-Prime Agricultural Land.** Enrolled land that does not meet any of the criteria for classification as Prime Agricultural Land. Most Non-Prime Land is used for grazing or non-irrigated crops. However, Non-Prime Land may also include other open space uses compatible with agriculture and consistent with local general plans.

C.9.2.3 Local

Kern County General Plan

The Kern County General Plan identifies the goals, policies, and implementation measures that are applicable to the unincorporated areas within the county (Kern County, 2004). The following agricultural policies would be applicable to portions of the Project route that traverse unincorporated Kern County areas:

Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element

- Residential Policy 5: Discourage premature urban encroachment into areas of intense agriculture areas.

Consistency: The proposed Project would traverse active agricultural areas in Kern County. However, to minimize impacts to agricultural operations, Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction), AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners), and AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would be implemented. Incorporation of these mitigation measures into the proposed Project would avoid conflicts with this policy.

- Resource Policy 7: Areas designated for agricultural use, which include Class I and II and other enhanced agricultural soils with surface delivery water systems, should be protected from incompatible residential, commercial, and industrial subdivision and development activities.

Consistency: The proposed Project would traverse active agricultural areas in Kern County. However, to minimize impacts to agricultural operations, Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction), AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners), and AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would be implemented. Incorporation of these mitigation measures into the proposed Project would avoid conflicts with this policy.

- Resource Policy 12: Areas identified by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) as having high range-site value should be conserved for Extensive Agriculture uses or as Resource Reserve, if located within a County water district.

Consistency: The proposed Project would traverse a portion of a County water district along Segment 3. However, no Farmland was identified in this area by the DOC per the NRCS soil classifications. As such, the Project would not conflict with this policy.

County of Los Angeles General Plan, Land Use Element

The County of Los Angeles General Plan establishes goals and policies for the management of county resources (Los Angeles County, 1990). The following agricultural policy would be applicable to portions of the Project route that traverse unincorporated Los Angeles County areas:

- **Policy 20:** Protect identified Potential Agricultural Preserves by discouraging inappropriate land division and allowing only use types and intensities compatible with agriculture.

Consistency: The proposed Project would traverse agricultural areas in Los Angeles County. However, to minimize impacts to agricultural operations, Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction), AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners), and AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would be implemented. Incorporation of these mitigation measures into the proposed Project would avoid conflicts with this policy.

Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan

The Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan, and includes policies that are specific to the unincorporated county areas of Antelope Valley (Los Angeles County, 1986). The following policy is applicable to the portions of the Project route that traverse unincorporated Los Angeles County in the Antelope Valley area:

- **Land Use, Agricultural Lands, Policy 28:** Within designated “Agricultural Opportunity Areas,” carefully evaluate extension of urban and suburban uses (outside the urban areas and the rural communities) for their impact on adjacent agricultural operations.

Consistency: Within the unincorporated Los Angeles County areas of Antelope Valley, the proposed Project would traverse Agricultural Opportunity Areas. To minimize impacts to agricultural operations, Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction), AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners), and AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would be implemented. Incorporation of these mitigation measures into the proposed Project would avoid conflicts with this policy.

City of Lancaster 2020 General Plan

The City of Lancaster General Plan establishes local policies for the incorporated areas within the City of Lancaster (City of Lancaster, 2003). The following policy is applicable to the portions of the Project route along Segments 2 and 3 that traverse the City:

- **Policy 3.5.3:** Protect lands currently in agricultural production from the negative impacts created when urban and rural land uses exist in close proximity, while recognizing the possibility of their long-term conversion to urban or rural uses.

Consistency: The Project would incorporate the following Mitigation Measures to ensure to minimize impacts to the productivity of agricultural lands: Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction), AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners), and AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations). Implementation of these mitigation measures would avoid conflicts with this policy.

City of Palmdale General Plan

The City of Palmdale General Plan establishes local policies for the incorporated areas within the City of Palmdale (City of Palmdale, 1993). The following policies apply to portions of Segment 2 that traverse the City:

- **Policy ER8.1:** Encourage the preservation of agricultural lands in non-urban areas as an interim use where urban development is not anticipated for several years.

Consistency: The Project would not traverse important farmland within the City of Palmdale. As such, no conflicts with this policy would occur.

- **Policy ER8.2:** Preserve agricultural uses as a means of retaining aquifer recharge both naturally and through treated water sources.

Consistency: The Project would not traverse important farmland within the City of Palmdale. As such, no conflicts with this policy would occur.

C.9.3 Applicant-Proposed Measures (APMs)

In its PEA, SCE has listed a number of APMs that are designed to reduce impacts from the proposed Project. None of these APMs are specifically applicable to agricultural resources. The impact discussion in Section C.9.4 has introduced mitigation measures, where appropriate, to reduce adverse impacts.

C.9.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section explains how impacts to agricultural resources are assessed, and the significance criteria on which impact determinations are based have been presented in Section C.9.4.1. As described in Section C.9.2.2, “Farmland” is used to collectively describe lands that are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland by the DOC FMMP. The DOC recognizes Farmland as having national or State importance for agricultural production. As such, this section evaluates impacts that would result from the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

The conversion of Farmland would be considered significant if greater than 10 acres of Prime Farmland or Prime Williamson Act Land (i.e., Prime Agricultural Land) is converted to non-agricultural use, and if greater than 40 acres of non-Prime Farmland (i.e., Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland) or non-Prime Williamson Act Land (i.e., non-Prime Agricultural Land) is converted. These thresholds are used because they are the minimum acreage requirements for individual parcels able to enter into Williamson Act contracts as stated in Section 51222 of the California Government Code, and represent parcels or areas of agricultural land that are large enough to sustain agricultural uses.

C.9.4.1 Criteria for Determining Significance

The proposed Project would result in significant impacts to agricultural resources if it would:

- **Criterion AG1:** Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) to non-agricultural use.
- **Criterion AG2:** Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in interference with agricultural operations.
- **Criterion AG3:** Conflict with a Williamson Act contract.

C.9.4.2 Impact Analysis

The following discussion identifies the proposed Project’s impacts to agricultural resources, as determined by the significance criteria listed in Section C.9.4.1. Mitigation measures have been provided to reduce potentially significant impacts to less-than-significant levels.

C.9.4.2.1 Impact and Mitigation Summary

This section summarizes the conclusions of the impact analysis and associated mitigation measures presented in Section C.9.4.2.2. Table C.9-4 lists each impact identified for the proposed Project, along with the significance of each impact. Impacts are classified as Class I (significant, cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant), Class II (significant, can be mitigated to a level that is less than significant), Class III (adverse, but less than significant), or Class IV (beneficial). Detailed discussions of each impact and the specific locations where each is identified are presented in the following sections.

Table C.9-4. Impact and Mitigation Summary – Agricultural Resources		
Impact	Impact Significance	Mitigation Measures*
AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use.	Class III	None required
AG-2: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use.	Class III	None required
AG-3: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations.	Class II	N-3a, AG-3
AG-4: Operation would interfere with agricultural operations.	Class II	AG-4
AG-5: Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract.	Class III	None required
AG-6: Operation would conflict with a Williamson Act contract.	Class I	None identified

* Applicable to significant impacts only (i.e., Class I and Class II).

C.9.4.2.2 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to Non-Agricultural Use (Criterion AG1)

The proposed Project would result in a temporary and permanent conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. Approximately 1.9 acres of Farmland would be temporarily converted as a result of truck damage (associated with transmission tower footings), transmission tower laydown areas, crane pads, and splicing stations. Approximately 3.8 acres of Farmland would be permanently converted as a result of tower foundation holes and new access and spur roads. The following is a discussion of impacts resulting from Farmland conversion.

Impact AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. (Class III)

As listed in Table C.9-1, the proposed Project would be constructed over less than three miles of Farmland. Prime Farmland areas that would be traversed by the proposed Project include row crops located along 107th Street in unincorporated Kern County, and row crops located along Avenue H in addition to an olive orchard located on Avenue L in unincorporated Los Angeles County. Construction across Prime Farmland would include an estimated nine tubular steel poles (TSPs), as well as over 5,500 feet of new access and/or spur roads (SCE, 2005a; 2005b). The relocation of the existing 66-kV subtransmission line to the westerly edge of the proposed Project ROW would also involve the construction of one additional TSP on Prime Farmland (at Mile S2-2.2). Construction across Farmland of Statewide Importance would require an estimated four lattice steel towers (LSTs) and TSPs, as well as over 4,000 feet of new access and/or spur roads (SCE, 2005a;

2005b). Construction across Unique Farmland would require one TSP, as well as over 700 feet of new access and/or spur roads (SCE, 2005a; 2005b). In total, construction activities associated with LST footings and TSP foundations (i.e., truck damage, laydown and assembly areas, crane pads, and splicing stations) would temporarily disturb approximately 1.2 acres of Prime Farmland, 0.6 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland. The total temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1 (see Section C.9.4). As such, impacts resulting from the temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use would be less than significant (**Class III**), and no mitigation is required.

Option A

As shown in Figures C.9-8 and C.9-9, the Option A re-route would not traverse any areas designated as Farmland by the DOC, nor would it avoid the crossing of Farmland by the proposed Project. North of proposed Project Mile S2-5.7, Option A would not differ from the proposed Project route. As such, Option A would temporarily disturb the same amount of Farmland as the proposed Project (i.e., 1.2 acres of Prime Farmland, 0.6 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland). As discussed for the proposed Project, the estimated temporary disturbance would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1. Impacts resulting from the temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Option B

As shown in Figure C.9-9, the Option B re-route would not traverse any areas designated as Farmland by the DOC, nor would it avoid the crossing of Farmland by the proposed Project. North of proposed Project Mile S2-8.1, Option B would not differ from the proposed Project route. As such, Option B would temporarily disturb approximately the same amount of Farmland as the proposed Project (i.e., 1.2 acres of Prime Farmland, 0.6 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland). The estimated temporary disturbance would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1. Impacts resulting from the temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Impact AG-2: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. (Class III)

The proposed Project would create LST footing holes and TSP foundation holes, as well as require the creation of new access and spur roads that would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. Approximately 2.0 acres of Prime Farmland, 1.5 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.3 acres of Unique Farmland would be permanently disturbed from the Project components described in Impact AG-1, above. However, the total permanent conversion of Farmland would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1 (see Section C.9.4). As such, impacts resulting from the permanent conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Option A

Option A would not create new impacts to Farmland, nor would it avoid impacts resulting from the proposed Project route. As this optional route would be identical to the proposed Project north of proposed Project Mile

S2-5.7, it would continue to result in a permanent conversion of approximately 2.0 acres of Prime Farmland, 1.5 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.3 acres of Unique Farmland. Permanent Farmland conversion would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1. Therefore, impacts would remain less than significant under Option A (**Class III**).

Option B

Option B would not create new impacts to Farmland, nor would it avoid impacts resulting from the proposed Project route. This optional route would be identical to the proposed Project north of proposed Project Mile S2-8.1, and as such would continue to result in a permanent conversion of approximately 2.0 acres of Prime Farmland, 1.5 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.3 acres of Unique Farmland. Permanent Farmland conversion would not exceed 10 acres for Prime Farmland or 40 acres for non-Prime Farmland, which has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG1. Therefore, impacts would remain less than significant under Option B (**Class III**).

Involve other changes in the existing environment which could result in interference with agricultural operations (Criterion AG2)

The proposed Project would traverse cultivated agricultural areas in unincorporated Kern and Los Angeles Counties, which have not been designated as Farmland by the DOC. The following is a discussion of impacts to agricultural operations resulting from construction and operation of the proposed Project.

Impact AG-3: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations. (Class II)

The proposed Project would be constructed across less than three miles of designated Farmland. However, there may be other areas traversed by Segments 2 and 3 in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC. Construction activities that could interfere with agricultural operations would include the installation of 220-kV and 500-kV transmission structures, construction of new access and spur roads, and wire stringing (includes establishment of pulling and splicing stations). Construction activities and the presence of construction equipment could temporarily interfere with agricultural operations by damaging crops or soil, impeding access to certain fields or plots of land, obstructing farm vehicles, or potentially disrupting drainage and irrigation systems. These events would result in the temporary reduction of agricultural productivity, creating significant impacts (**Class II**). Implementation of Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction) and AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners) would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level. See Section C.10 (Noise) for a complete description of Mitigation Measure N-3a.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-3

AG-3 Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners. Sixty (60) days prior to the start of Project construction, SCE shall secure a signed agreement with property owners of active farmland (i.e., currently being prepared or used for agricultural production, or developed with agricultural infrastructure) that will be used for construction and operation of the Project, access and spur roads, staging areas, and other Project-related activities. The purpose of this agreement will be to set forth the use of farmland during construction in order to: (1) schedule proposed construction activities at a location and time when damage to agricultural operations would be minimized, and (2) ensure that any areas damaged or disturbed by construction are restored to a condition mutually agreed upon by the landowner and SCE.

SCE shall coordinate with the agricultural landowners in the affected areas where active farmland will be temporarily disturbed to determine when and where construction should occur in order to minimize damage to agricultural operations. This includes avoiding construction during peak planting, growing, and harvest seasons. If damage or destruction does occur, SCE shall perform restoration activities on the disturbed area in order to return the area to a pre-determined condition or the pre-construction condition, whichever option is agreed upon by the landowner and SCE. This could include activities such as soil preparation, regrading, and reseeding. This measure applies to agricultural landowners with land that is impacted by the Project. SCE shall provide proof of the continued use of farmland through the submittal of a signed agreement between an individual property owner and SCE. The signed agreements shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to the start of construction.

Option A

The Option A re-route would not traverse agricultural areas, nor would it avoid agricultural areas traversed by the proposed Project. North of proposed Project Mile S2-5.7, this route would be identical to the proposed Project. As such, construction of Option A within the proposed Project ROW could result in the same temporary reduction of agricultural productivity as the proposed Project, creating significant but mitigable impacts (**Class II**). Implementation of Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction) and AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners) would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Option B

The Option B re-route would not traverse agricultural areas, nor would it avoid agricultural areas traversed by the proposed Project. North of proposed Project Mile S2-8.1, this route would be identical to the proposed Project. As discussed for the proposed Project, construction within the Project ROW could result in the temporary reduction of agricultural productivity. Such impacts would be significant (**Class II**), but would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through implementation of Mitigation Measures N-3a (Provide Advance Notification of Construction) and AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners).

Impact AG-4: Operation would interfere with agricultural operations. (Class II)

Although the proposed Project would be located across less than three miles of designated Farmland, there may be other areas of active agricultural operations that are traversed by the Project. As partially discussed under Impact AG-3 above, the proposed Project would site transmission towers and construct new access and spur roads, which may interfere with agricultural operations. The presence of new access roads across agricultural areas could divide farm properties, which would create an obstacle to farming that impedes access to certain fields or plots, and creates irregularly shaped fields in which it would be difficult to maneuver farm equipment. A new roadway could also disrupt drainage and irrigation systems, affect the efficacy of windbreaks, fragment farms, and allow for the introduction of invasive weeds within disturbed areas. Similar to the presence of a new access road, the existence of new tower structures could also interfere with agricultural operations. These interferences would result in the permanent preclusion of agricultural productivity in the Project area, creating significant impacts (**Class II**). Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would serve to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-4

AG-4 Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations.

SCE shall site transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations in locations that minimize impacts to active agriculture (i.e., currently being prepared or used for agricultural production, or developed with agricultural infrastructure). Specifically, SCE shall comply with the following measures when siting transmission towers and splicing/pulling stations within areas where cultivated farmland would be removed through the presence of structures:

- SCE shall avoid orchards, vineyards, row crops, and furrow-irrigated crops where towers would interfere with irrigation and harvest activities.
- SCE shall avoid irrigation canals and ditches.
- SCE shall align towers adjacent to field boundaries and parallel to rows (if located in row crops), and shall avoid diagonal orientations and angular alignments within agricultural land.

SCE shall document and provide proof of compliance with the above listed items 90 days prior to the start of Project construction. This documentation shall be submitted to the CPUC for review and approval prior to the start of construction, and reviewed with affected landowners during coordination presented in Mitigation Measure AG-3 (Establish Agreement and Coordinate Construction Activities with Agricultural Landowners).

Option A

As discussed under Impact AG-3, Option A would not create new impacts or avoid proposed Project impacts to agricultural operations. This route would have impacts identical to the proposed Project north of proposed Project Mile S2-5.7. As with the proposed Project, the siting of new access and spur roads and new tower structures could interfere with agricultural operations and permanently preclude agricultural productivity in the Project area. Such impacts would be significant (**Class II**), but would be reduced to a less-than-significant level through implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations).

Option B

Option B would not create new impacts or avoid proposed Project impacts to agricultural operations. The siting of new access and spur roads and new tower structures north of proposed Project Mile S2-8.1 would be identical to the proposed Project. As such, Option B could interfere with agricultural operations and permanently preclude agricultural productivity in the Project area, creating significant impacts (**Class II**). Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-4 (Locate Transmission Towers and Pulling/Splicing Stations to Avoid Agricultural Operations) would serve to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Conflict with a Williamson Act contract (Criterion AG3)

The proposed Project would be sited across Williamson Act lands designated as Prime Agricultural Land and Mixed Acreage Parcels in Kern County. No Williamson Act lands are currently located in the mainland of Los Angeles County (DOC, 2006e). The following is a discussion of impacts to Williamson Act contracts resulting from construction and operation of the Project.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract. (Class III)

The proposed Project would be located across approximately 0.5 miles of land under Williamson Act contracts classified as Prime Agricultural Land, and approximately 0.1 miles of Williamson Act land classified as Mixed

Acreage Parcels.² Construction across Prime Agricultural Land would include an estimated three LSTs, as well as over 2,500 feet of new access and/or spur roads (SCE, 2005a; 2005b). Approximately 0.9 acres of Prime Agricultural Land would be temporarily disturbed during construction. Construction across the Mixed Acreage Parcels would include an estimated two LSTs, over 800 feet of new access and/or spur roads, and the proposed Substation Two (SCE, 2005a; 2005b). Approximately 0.6 acres of Mixed Acreage Parcels would be temporarily disturbed during construction. Overall, the amount of temporary disturbance of lands under a Williamson Act contract would not exceed the threshold set in Section C.9.4. Impacts would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Option A

The Option A re-route would not traverse Williamson Act lands in Los Angeles County. In Kern County, Option A would be located in the proposed Project ROW, and as such would have the same impacts as the proposed Project (i.e., temporary disturbance of approximately 0.9 acres of Williamson Act land classified as Prime Agricultural Land, and approximately 0.6 acres of Williamson Act land classified as Mixed Acreage Parcels). However, the amount of temporary disturbance would not exceed the established thresholds, and impacts would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Option B

Similar to Option A, the Option B re-route would not traverse Williamson Act lands in Los Angeles County. Option B would be located in the proposed Project ROW as it travels across Kern County, and would have the same impacts as the proposed Project (i.e., temporary disturbance of approximately 0.9 acres of Prime Agricultural Land and approximately 0.6 acres of Mixed Acreage Parcels). The amount of temporary disturbance would not exceed the established thresholds, and consequently, impacts would be less than significant (**Class III**).

Impact AG-6: Operation would conflict with a Williamson Act contract. (Class I)

As discussed in Impact AG-5, the proposed Project would construct LSTs and new access and spur roads across Williamson Act contracts classified as Prime Agricultural Land and Mixed Acreage Parcels. Segment 3 of the Project would also involve the siting of the 20.2-acre Substation Two on Mixed Acreage Parcels. In total, operation of the Project (i.e., tower footings, access and spur roads, substation pad) would permanently remove approximately 1.0 acre of Prime Agricultural Land and 28.6 acres of Mixed Acreage Parcels. Given that Mixed Acreage Parcels include Prime Agricultural Land in addition to Non-Prime Williamson Act lands, the total amount of Prime Agricultural Land that would be permanently disturbed may exceed the 10 acres for Prime Farmland that has been established as the threshold level of significance for Criterion AG3 (see Section C.9.4), resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts (**Class I**). This impact can only be avoided with a relocation of proposed Substation Two, such as the alternative Substation 2C site that has been proposed as part of Alternative 1. If alternative Substation 2C was selected, it would avoid this impact altogether.

Option A

As discussed in Impact AG-5, Option A would not affect Williamson Act parcels in Los Angeles County. In Kern County, this option would be identical to the proposed Project, and would involve the siting of a 20.2-acre substation on Mixed Acreage Parcels. Operational activities would permanently remove approximately 1.0 acre of Prime Agricultural Land and 28.6 acres of Mixed Acreage Parcels. Depending on the amount of

² Mixed acreage parcels contain Prime, Non-Prime, Open Space Easement, or other contracted or enrolled land that is not yet spatially defined by the Williamson Act Program (DOC, 2006a).

Prime Agricultural Land that is included in the Mixed Acreage Parcels, permanent disturbance of Williamson Act lands may exceed the threshold of significance, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts (**Class I**). As stated for the proposed Project, this impact can only be avoided with a relocation of proposed Substation Two, such as the alternative Substation 2C site that has been proposed as part of Alternative 1. If alternative Substation 2C was selected, it would avoid this impact altogether.

Option B

As discussed in Impact AG-5, Option B would not affect Williamson Act parcels in Los Angeles County. In Kern County, Option B would be identical to the proposed Project components (i.e., substation and transmission line construction), and would permanently remove approximately 1.0 acre of Prime Agricultural Land and 28.6 acres of Mixed Acreage Parcels. Depending on the amount of Prime Agricultural Land that is included in the Mixed Acreage Parcels, permanent disturbance of Williamson Act lands may exceed the threshold of significance, resulting in significant and unavoidable impacts (**Class I**). The selection of the alternative Substation 2C site that has been proposed as part of Alternative 1 would avoid this impact altogether.

Figure Links

(Click to activate)

page

C.9-1	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-0 to Mile S3-2.8	C.9-15
C.9-2	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-209 to Mile S3-12.8	C.9-16
C.9-3	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-12.9 to Mile S3-17.3	C.9-17
C.9-4	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-17.4 to Mile S3-21.9	C.9-18
C.9-5	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-22 to Mile S3-26.6	C.9-19
C.9-6	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-26.7 to Mile S3-31.1	C.9-20
C.9-7	Agricultural Lands: Mile S3-31.2 to Mile S2-1.2	C.9-21
C.9-8	Agricultural Lands: Mile S2-1.3 to Mile S2-6.8	C.9-22
C.9-9	Agricultural Lands: Mile S2-6.9 to Mile S2-16.6	C.9-23
C.9-10	Agricultural Lands: Mile S2-16.7 to Mile S2-21.6	C.9-24