D.6 Agriculture

This section discusses the effects of the construction and operation of the Proposed Project and alternatives on agricultural resources. Agricultural resources that exist along the route of the Proposed Project would include land designated as important farmland, other agricultural operations, and lands under Williamson Act contracts. Effects to other lands uses that would be present along this route are addressed in the following sections of this EIR/EIS: Section D.4, Land Use, and Section D.5, Wilderness and Recreation.

D.6.1 Regional Setting and Approach to Data Collection

The Proposed Project and alternatives would be located across agricultural land in Maricopa County in Arizona, and Riverside and San Bernardino Counties in California; however, the primary areas would be located in the Harquahala Valley region of Maricopa County, and the Palo Verde Valley area of Riverside County. The location of these agricultural lands is illustrated in Figures D.6-1 and D.6-2.

Two data sets were used in this EIR/EIS to identify agricultural land. For land in Arizona, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey information was used to identify important farmland. In California, the California Department of Conservation's (DOC) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was used. The DOC also provided data regarding lands under Williamson Act contracts. It should be noted that Williamson Act contract lands only apply to agricultural lands in the State of California.

Although the agricultural and grazing land data for Arizona and California was gathered from different sources, the DOC for California data and the NRCS for Arizona data, both data sources are based on the same NRCS soil survey data. The NRCS, which was the source for Arizona agricultural data, utilizes the NRCS soil survey data and assigns Important Farmland Map Categories to each map unit based upon soil and land use information. The DOC uses the same NRCS soil survey data, and also assigns important farmland mapping categories; however, the DOC has slightly modified the category definitions for specific use within California (DOC, 2004). Because Arizona does not produce State-specific agricultural mapping data similar to that produced by the DOC in California, this EIR/EIS uses the NRCS important farmland data[1] to identify agricultural lands within Arizona.

The sections below provide additional details on the NRCS and DOC agriculture data and classifications that were used for the Proposed Project and alternatives.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Important Farmland Map Categories

The NRCS (originally called the Soil Conservation Service) produces agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use. As part of this mapping project, the NRCS created a set of definitions

[1] Within this EIR/EIS, the term 'important farmland data' will be used to denote the agricultural classifications assigned to soil data by either the DOC for land in California or the NRCS for land in Arizona. Important farmland classifications include: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land. Other classifications, such as Urban and Built-Up Land and Other Land, also exist in the DOC classification system; however, the aforementioned classifications defined as 'important farmland' are the only categories that specifically apply to agriculture.

known as the Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. These criteria classify the land's suitability for agricultural production, including physical and chemical characteristics of soils as derived from NRCS soil survey data and maps, as well as specific land uses. Technical ratings of the soils and the land use information were combined to establish the appropriate map category (DOC, 2004). From the following Important Farmland Map Categories defined by the NRCS, the Proposed Project would traverse only Prime Farmland within Arizona (see Figure D.6-1).

- **Prime Farmland.** Land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Land that does not meet the criteria for Prime or Unique Farmland, and are defined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for Prime Farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
- **Unique Farmland.** Land other than Prime Farmland that has the soil characteristics needed to economically produce sustainable high yields of specific high-value food and fiber crops when properly managed. Unique Farmland is not based on national criteria, and therefore can differ by area.
- **Farmland of Local Importance.** Lands that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, but are identified by the appropriate local agencies as important for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops (NRCS, 2006).

The NRCS important farmland data was used to identify agricultural land in Arizona. The data was downloaded from the NRCS Soil Data Mart (http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/Default.aspx) in a Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) database. The data was downloaded into a geographic information system (GIS) that would allow for further analysis of the data and creation of maps based on the data.

The data was downloaded from the Soil Data Mart by individual soil survey area. The Proposed Project would include parts of the below two survey areas that were used with this EIR/EIS:

- Aguila-Carefree Area, Parts of Maricopa and Pinal Counties, Arizona
- Maricopa County, Arizona, Central Part

Field investigations and data collection for the above surveys were carried out in sufficient detail to name map units and to accurately and consistently identify areas of about 40 acres, which constitutes a third order soil survey. The soil survey order describes the level of detail or intensity in which the soil survey was conducted, and a third order survey is conducted for land uses that do not require precise knowledge of small areas or detailed soils information (NRCS, 1993). Therefore the minimum mapping unit, or smallest feature reported, for the important farmland data within Arizona is 40 acres.

No soil surveys have been conducted in some portions of La Paz County, Arizona; therefore no important farmland classifications have been assigned by the NRCS to these areas. Other areas within Maricopa County, Arizona have had soil surveys completed; however, the land has not been classified as one of the four important farmland classifications designated by the NRCS. This category is identified by the "No important farmland classifications" designation as illustrated in Figure D.6-1.

Figure D.6-1. Agricultural Lands: Harquahala to Kofa NWR MP E0.0–E53.3
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Figure D.6-2. Agricultural Lands: Palo Verde Valley MP E102.2–E113.7
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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 USDA NRCS soil classifications described above with slight modifications[2] to identify agricultural lands in California. The Proposed Project traverses land with the following DOC important farmland classifications (see Figure D.6-2 and Figures D.6-4 through D.6-9).

- **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. Below is the definition of Farmland of Local Importance for Riverside County:
    - **Riverside County.** Soils that would be classified as Prime and Statewide but lack available irrigation water. Lands planted to dryland crops of barley, oats, and wheat. Lands producing major crops for Riverside County but that are not listed as Unique crops. These crops are identified as returning one million or more dollars on the 1980 Riverside County Agricultural Crop Report. Crops identified are permanent pasture (irrigated), summer squash, okra, eggplant, radishes, and watermelons. Dairylands, including corrals, pasture, milking facilities, hay and manure storage areas if accompanied with permanent pasture or hayland or 10 acres or more. Lands identified by city or county ordinance as Agricultural Zones or Contracts, which includes Riverside City "Proposition R" lands. Lands planted to jojoba, which are under cultivation and are of producing age.
    - **San Bernardino County.** No Farmland of Local Importance is traversed by the Proposed Project within San Bernardino County.
- **Grazing Land.** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. (DOC, 2006a).

The DOC important farmland data was used to identify agricultural land in California. The Riverside County important farmland data was received from the Riverside County Assessor-Clerk-Recorder on November 16, 2005 (RCACR, 2005). The San Bernardino County important farmland data was downloaded from the DOC FMMP website (http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/map_products/download_gis_data.htm) on October 7, 2005 (DOC, 2005a). Both sets of data consisted of shapefiles and a geodatabase with 2004 data, which is the most current DOC important farmland data available, and was downloaded into a geographic information system (GIS) that would allow for further data analysis and map preparation.

[2] Modifications made by the DOC to NRCS important farmland classifications include the following: Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance must be irrigated; Farmland of Local Importance is identified by local advisory committees and varies by county; and the development and use of the "Grazing Land" designation, which is unique to California (DOC, 2004).

The Riverside and San Bernardino County important farmland includes a 10-acre minimum mapping unit, which means that units of land smaller than 10 acres are incorporated into the surrounding map classifications (DOC, 2004). Therefore, the smallest feature or area mapped in the DOC data was 10 acres.

The extent of the important farmland coverage within California corresponds to the availability of NRCS "modern soil surveys". In areas where no NRCS soil survey data exists, the DOC FMMP is not able to classify or map the land for important farmlands. This area is identified on the important farmland maps with the label "Not mapped for important farmland; no NRCS soil survey data available" as illustrated in Figure D.6-4.

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 promulgated in California Government Code Section 51200-51297.4, and therefore is applicable only to specific land within the State of California. There is no comparable Arizona State law that performs the same functions. 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 listed below. Williamson Act lands in the vicinity of the Proposed Project only occur within the Palo Verde Valley of Riverside County, California (see Figure D.6-3) and include the following:

- **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;
    - 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.

Figure D.6-3. Williamson Act Lands: Palo Verde Valley MP E102.2–E113.7
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- **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.

Williamson Act data for Riverside and San Bernardino Counties was received from the DOC (DOC, 2005b). This data was received as shapefiles and has been updated through 2004. The data was downloaded into GIS to allow for further data analysis and map preparation.

D.6.2 Environmental Setting for the Proposed Project – Devers-Harquahala

The following setting information utilizes linear miles to characterize the types and classifications of agricultural lands that would be traversed by the Proposed Project. The impact discussions in Sections D.6.6 and D.6.7 utilize acreages in order to more accurately represent temporary and permanent disturbance from the project components (e.g., tower structures, roads).

The Devers-Harquahala portion of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 17 miles of land classified as important farmland, including approximately three miles in Arizona and 14 miles in California. The primary areas of agriculture that would be traversed by the Devers-Harquahala portion of the Proposed Project are located in the Harquahala Valley, or Harquahala Plain, region of Maricopa County, Arizona; and the Palo Verde Valley in Riverside County, south of the City of Blythe. The Palo Verde Valley also contains the only Williamson Act lands that would be traversed by the Devers-Harquahala portion of the Proposed Project. Refer to Table D.6-1 for information on the total miles of important farmland and Williamson Act lands that would be traversed by the Devers-Harquahala portion of the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-1. Overview of Important Farmland and Williamson Act Land Traversed by the Proposed Project between Harquahala Generating Station and Devers Substation (miles)

Segment	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing Land	Total Agricultural Land	Williamson Act Land (Type)
Harquahala to Kofa National Wildlife Refuge	3.2	0	0	0	0	3.2	N/A
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Kofa National Wildlife Refuge to Colorado River	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Palo Verde Valley (Colorado River to Midpoint Substation)	6.1	4.0	0.1	0.9	0	11.1	2.4 (Prime)
Midpoint Substation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area	0	0	0	2.4	0	2.4	0
Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation	0.1	0	0.4	0.2	0	0.7	0
TOTAL DISTANCE[1]	9.4	4.0	0.5	3.5	0	17.4	2.4

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

N/A: Not Applicable

D.6.2.1 Harquahala to Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

The Harquahala to Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) segment would traverse approximately 53 miles through the western portion of Maricopa County and the eastern portion of La Paz County until its termination at the Kofa NWR boundary (see Figure D.6-1). The only agricultural lands that the Proposed Project would traverse within this segment are located in the Harquahala Valley region of Maricopa County. The Proposed Project would traverse 3.2 miles of Prime Farmland between Towers D-144 and D-129 as the proposed DPV2 transmission line route exits the Harquahala Switchyard and heads east along Thomas Road.

The Proposed Project would also be located slightly west of a small area of Prime Farmland between Towers D-115 and D-113 (at MP E-7) approximately 0.4 miles south of I-10. No other agricultural lands were identified through the NRCS important farmland data because the NRCS has not conducted soil surveys nor mapped some portions of this segment.

D.6.2.2 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

The Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project would be located entirely within Kofa NWR beginning at MP E53.3 and terminating at MP E77.6 (see Figure B-2).[3] Agriculture and grazing do not occur within the Kofa NWR; however, there are two grazing allotments located in the New Water Mountains Wilderness Area, which adjoins Kofa NWR to the north (BLM, USFWS, & AGFD, 1996). Similar to portions of the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment and discussed above in Section D.6.2.1, the NRCS has not conducted soil surveys within Kofa NWR and therefore no soil survey data exists. As discussed in Section D.5, Wilderness and Recreation, this area is a national wilderness area used for research and recreation purposes.

D.6.2.3 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge to Colorado River

The Kofa NWR to Colorado River segment would traverse the western portion of La Paz County from the western boundary of Kofa NWR to the Colorado River, which stretches from MP E77.6 to MP E102.2 (see Figure B-2). As discussed in Section D.4, Land Use, this segment is predominantly open space land with little to no development. As such, there is no NRCS soil data available for this segment and, therefore, no lands within this segment have been designated as important farmland.

D.6.2.4 Palo Verde Valley (Colorado River to Midpoint Substation)

The Palo Verde Valley segment of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 11 miles of unincorporated eastern Riverside County, just south of the City of Blythe, from the Colorado River at MP E102.2 to the proposed Midpoint Substation located at MP E113.7 (see Figure D.6-2). The Palo Verde Valley contains fertile soil and accounts for approximately 8.5 percent of Riverside County's agricultural production, for which the top producing crops were field and seed crops, including hay, cotton, and grain (RCAC, 2004).

[3] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

The Palo Verde Valley segment would traverse 11.1 miles of agricultural land that consists of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. Approximately another 0.5 miles of this segment would include Other Land and water features. See Figure D.6-2 for a detailed illustration of the important farmland in this segment. Table D.6-2 lists the important farmland traversed by the Palo Verde Valley segment, including its relative location to the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-2. Important Farmland Traversed in the Palo Verde Valley

Tower No.	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
2757 to 2718 (interspersed with Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland)	6.1	Riverside County, California	Prime Farmland
2757 to 2718 (interspersed with Prime and Unique Farmland)	4.0	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Statewide Importance
2748, 2721	0.1	Riverside County, California	Unique Farmland
2718 to 2715	0.9	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Local Importance

The Palo Verde Valley segment would also traverse 2.4 miles of land currently under Williamson Act contracts (see Figure D.6-3). This segment is the only segment within the Proposed Project that would traverse Williamson Act lands. These lands consist of 10 parcels that contain approximately 481 acres of land classified as Prime Agricultural Land.[4] None of these 10 parcels have initiated the nonrenewal process, and therefore each is set to automatically renew on January 1st of every year (RCACR, 2006). See Table D.6-3 for more details on the Williamson Act land traversed by the Palo Verde Valley segment of the Proposed Project.

[4] The definitions of "Prime" and "Non-Prime" agricultural land for Williamson Act lands is different from the definitions of Prime Farmland and non-Prime Farmland (i.e., Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland) for important farmlands. See definitions for important farmlands in Section D.6.1 under 'Natural Resources Conservation Service Important Farmland Map Categories' and 'California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Agricultural Land Classifications;' see definitions for Williamson Act lands in Section D.6.1 under 'Williamson Act Land Designations.'

Table D.6-3. Williamson Act Lands Traversed within the Palo Verde Valley

Tower	Assessor's Parcel Number	Length Traversed (miles)	Parcel Size (acres)	Williamson Act Classification	Williamson Act Termination Date	Important Farmland Designation
2748 (north of canal)	875140003	<0.1	62.9	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process[1]	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2748 (south of canal)	875140004	0.2	14.5	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2746	875131008	0.2	40.5	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2745	875131007	0.2	38.2	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2744	875131006	0.2	41.2	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2743	875131005	0.3	42.4	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2734 to 2733A	872080006	0.2	42.0	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland
2727 to 2726	872040005	0.2	40.1	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2727 to 2726	872050004	<0.1	41.0	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance
2726 to 2723	872040004	0.7	118.0	Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Prime Farmland; Farmland of Statewide Importance

1 The Williamson Act contract nonrenewal process can be initiated by either the local jurisdiction or landowner, and consists of a nine-year nonrenewal period during which time the annual tax assessment gradually increases until the end of the nine-year period when the contract is terminated (DOC, 2006f).

D.6.2.5 Midpoint Substation

The proposed Midpoint Substation would be constructed approximately 10 miles southwest of the City of Blythe, California (see Figures D.6-2 and D.6-4). This area would be located within Farmland of Local Importance, and the closest Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland would be located approximately one mile east. There are no Williamson Act lands near the location of the proposed Midpoint Substation. The closest Williamson Act land would be located approximately 2.5 miles to the east of the Proposed Project.

D.6.2.6 Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area

The Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area segment of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 75 miles of central unincorporated Riverside County from the proposed Midpoint Substation at MP E113.7 to the Cactus City Rest Area at MP E188.2 (see Figure D.6-4).[5] Within this route, the Proposed Project would traverse 2.4 miles of Farmland of Local Importance. This agricultural land is located between Towers 2708 to 2714, and occurs as a continuous swath at the beginning of the segment as the transmission line would head west from the proposed Midpoint Substation. No soil survey data exists for the remaining 72 miles of this segment; therefore the FMMP does not provide important farmland data or maps for this area.

No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area segment of the Proposed Project.

5 The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

Figure D.6-4. Agricultural Lands: Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area
MP E113.7–E188.2

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D.6.2.7 Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation

The Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 40 miles of central unincorporated Riverside County, as well as the Cities of Coachella and Cathedral City (see Figure D.6-5). This segment would traverse 0.7 miles of important farmland located approximately three miles northeast of the City of Palm Desert between Towers 2215 and 2212. Approximately the first nine miles of this segment would consist of land that has not been evaluated through soil surveys. Therefore the FMMP does not provide important farmland data or maps for this nine-mile area. Approximately another 30 miles of this segment is classified as Other Land, and one mile as Urban and Built-up Land. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment of the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-4 presents details about the important farmland that would be traversed within this segment.

Table D.6-4. Important Farmland Traversed from Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
2215 to 2214 (at MP E208.2)[1]	0.1	Riverside County, California	Prime Farmland
2215 to 2214	0.2	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Local Importance
2214 to 2212	0.4	Riverside County, California	Unique Farmland

1 The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

D.6.3 Environmental Setting for the Proposed Project – West of Devers

The following setting information utilizes linear miles to characterize the types and classifications of agricultural lands that would be traversed by the Proposed Project. The impact discussions in Sections D.6.6 and D.6.7 utilize acreages in order to more accurately represent temporary and permanent disturbance from the project components (e.g., tower structures, roads).

The West of Devers portion of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 48 miles from the Devers Substation to the San Bernardino Substation in unincorporated San Bernardino County and the Vista Substation in the City of Grand Terrace. This portion of the Proposed Project would cross more developed areas than the Devers-Harquahala portion; however, it would also cross more agricultural and grazing land.

As shown in Table D.6-5, this portion of the Proposed Project would traverse a total of 28.5 miles of important farmland. The Proposed Project would not cross any Williamson Act lands within this portion of the project.

Table D.6-5. Overview of Important Farmland and Williamson Act Land Traversed by the Proposed Project West of Devers Substation (miles)

Segment	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing Land	Total Agricultural Land	Williamson Act Land (Type)
Devers Substation to East Border of Banning	0	0	0	0.9	5.2	6.1	0
Banning and Beaumont	<0.1	0	0.1	8.4	3.1	11.6	0
Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon	0	0.1	0	2.2	3.3	5.6	0
San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation	0	0	0	0	3.6	3.6	0
San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation	1.1	<0.1	<0.1	0	0.5	1.6	0
TOTAL DISTANCE[1]	1.1	0.1	0.1	11.5	15.7	28.5	0

1. Total Distance is the total miles of land, either designated as Important Farmland by the NRCS or the DOC FMMP, or land under Williamson Act contracts, traversed by the Proposed Project components.

D.6.3.1 Devers Substation to East Border of Banning

The Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment of the Proposed Project would travel approximately 14 miles through unincorporated Riverside County and a portion of the Morongo Indian Reservation from the Devers Substation to the east border of the City of Banning (see Figure D.6-6).

Figure D.6-5. Agricultural Lands: Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation MP E188.2–E228
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Figure D.6-6. Agricultural Lands: Devers Substation to East Border of Banning MP W0.0–W14.3
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A total of 6.1 miles of important farmland would be traversed by the Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment. The segment would cross Farmland of Local Importance that is located slightly west of Tower 235 at Rushmore Avenue, which is also the border of the Morongo Indian Reservation, and terminates at Tower 237. Farmland of Local Importance would also be traversed between Towers 240 and 244, and at Tower 254 just north of the Desert Hills Premium Outlets. Grazing Land occurs in the vicinity of Tower 236, between Towers 237 and 242, and from Tower 244 through the end of the segment. Approximately the first eight miles of land within this segment is classified as Other Land, and another 0.2 miles of Urban and Built-up Land would be traversed. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment of the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-6 lists the important farmland traversed by the Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment, including its relative location to the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-6. Important Farmland Traversed from Devers Substation to East Border of Banning

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
236, 237 to 240, 241 to 242, slightly west of 243 to 258	5.2	Riverside County, California; Morongo Indian Reservation	Grazing Land
235 to 237, 240 to 241, 242 to slightly west of 243	0.9	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Local Importance

D.6.3.2 Banning and Beaumont

The Banning and Beaumont segment of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 15 miles through the Cities of Banning, Beaumont, and Calimesa and unincorporated portions of Riverside County (see Figure D.6-7). This segment would traverse 11.6 miles of important farmland (see Table D.6-7). The Proposed Project would also cross 3.3 miles of Other Land and 0.3 miles of Urban and Built-up Land. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the Banning and Beaumont segment of the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-7 lists the important farmland traversed by the Banning and Beaumont segment, including their relative location to the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-7. Important Farmland Traversed within Banning and Beaumont

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
256 to 260, 261 to 265, 101 to 107	3.1	City of Banning, California; City of Beaumont, California; Riverside County, California; City of Calimesa, California	Grazing Land
260 to 261, 269 to 101, 111 to 114; slightly west of 115 to 131; east of 132 to west of 143; west of 149 to 151	8.4	City of Banning, California; City of Beaumont, California; Riverside County, California; City of Calimesa, California	Farmland of Local Importance
151 to 152	0.1	City of Calimesa, California	Unique Farmland
151 to 152	<0.1	City of Calimesa, California	Prime Farmland

D.6.3.3 Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment would begin at the southwestern boundary of the City of Calimesa, California, and travel northwest for approximately 10.5 miles through the San Timoteo Canyon and the City of Redlands, until it terminates at the San Bernardino Junction in unincorporated San Bernardino County (see Figure D.6-8). This segment would traverse 5.6 miles of important farmland in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, which is characterized by veins of Farmland of Local Importance in the tributary canyons breaking off south of the San Timoteo Creek. The Proposed Project would traverse these areas of Farmland of Local Importance sporadically from approximately MP W30 through MP W35.6 (Live Oak Canyon Road) (see Table D.6-8).[6] The Proposed Project would cross into the City of Redlands at Tower 175 (MP W36.4) and traverse Grazing Land through the City of Redlands and unincorporated San Bernardino County until its termination at the San Bernardino Junction. This segment includes approximately five miles in Riverside County that consists of Other Land. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project.

[6] The use of "W" in the MP number denotes a location west of Devers Substation.

Figure D.6-7. Agricultural Lands: Banning to Beaumont MP W14.3–W29.6
For security reasons this figure is not included in the online or CD versions of the report.

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Figure D.6-8. Agricultural Lands: Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon MP W29.6–W40.1
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Table D.6-8 lists the important farmland traversed by the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment, including its relative location to the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-8. Important Farmland Traversed within Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
East of 152 to west of 172 (Mileposts W30 to W35.6)	1.8	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Local Importance
172 to 173 (Mileposts W35.6 to W35.7)	0.1	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Statewide Importance
172 to 173 (Mileposts W36.4 to W.40.1)	3.3	City of Redlands, California; San Bernardino County, California	Grazing Land
178 to 179, west of 180 to 182	0.4	City of Redlands, California	Farmland of Local Importance

D.6.3.4 San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation

The San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation segment of the Proposed Project would traverse approximately 4.8 miles from the San Bernardino Junction through unincorporated San Bernardino County, as well as the Cities of Loma Linda, Colton, and Grand Terrace to the Vista Substation (see Figure D.6-9). This segment would traverse 3.6 miles of Grazing Land within portions of unincorporated San Bernardino County and the City of Colton (Towers M39–T3 to M43–T4). The remaining 1.3 miles of this segment consist of urban land. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation segment of the Proposed Project.

D.6.3.5 San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment is the shortest segment of the Proposed Project. It stretches 3.4 miles north from the San Bernardino Junction in unincorporated San Bernardino County through the Cities of Loma Linda and Redlands to the San Bernardino Substation in unincorporated San Bernardino County (see Figure D.6-9). This segment would traverse 1.6 miles of important farmland (see Table D.6-9). The remaining land within this segment consists of Urban Built-up Land and Other Land. No Williamson Act lands would be traversed in the San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment of the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-9 lists the important farmland traversed by the San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment, including its relative location to the Proposed Project.

Table D.6-9. Important Farmland Traversed from San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
M3–T1 to M2–T5	0.5	San Bernardino County, California; City of Loma Linda, California	Grazing Land
M2–T5 to M2–T4 (along Beaumont Avenue)	<0.1	City of Loma Linda, California	Unique Farmland
M2–T5 to M2–T4 (along Beaumont Avenue)	<0.1	City of Loma Linda, California	Farmland of Statewide Importance
Loma Linda M2–T2 to M1–T7 south of Entrada del Parque/UP Railroad), MI-T6 to M1–T5, M1–T4 to M1–T3 Redlands M0–T5 to M0–T2 (between West Lugonia Avenue and West San Bernardino Avenue)	1.1	City of Loma Linda, California; City of Redlands, California	Prime Farmland

Figure D.6-9. Agricultural Lands: San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation; San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation MP W40.1–W43.5 and MP V0.0–V4.8

For security reasons this figure is not included in the online or CD versions of the report.

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D.6.4 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

Federal

There are no federal land use/agriculture regulations that apply to the Proposed Project; however, 12 federal management plans from the BLM, USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Department of Defense were evaluated for agriculture policies. Some of these plans included the Lower Gila North Management Framework Plan and Lower Gila South Resource Management Plan, California Desert Conservation Area Plan, Proposed Northern and Eastern Colorado Desert Coordinated Management Plan, Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, and national monument, national park, and wildlife refuge management plans. The Proposed Project is consistent with the agricultural-related policies in these plans as described in the Policy Screening Report in Appendix 2.

State

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is California's primary program for the conservation of private land in agricultural and open space use. The Williamson Act is promulgated in California Government Code Section 51200–51297.4; therefore it is applicable only to specific land parcels within the State of California. The Williamson Act enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space uses in return for reduced property tax assessments. Private land within locally designated agricultural preserve areas is eligible for enrollment under Williamson Act contracts. The Williamson Act program is administered by the DOC, in conjunction with local governments, which administer the individual contract arrangements with landowners. The landowner commits the parcel to a 10-year period wherein no conversion out of agricultural use is permitted. Each year the contract automatically renews unless a notice of non-renewal or cancellation is filed. In return, the land is taxed at a rate based on the actual use of the land for agricultural purposes, as opposed to its unrestricted market value. Participation in the Williamson Act program is dependent on county adoption and implementation of the program, and is voluntary for landowners (DOC, 2006c).

The Farmland Security Zone is additional agricultural land conservation legislation that allows local governments and landowners to rescind a Williamson Act contract and simultaneously place the farmland under a Farmland Security Zone contract for an initial term of at least 20 years. A Farmland Security Zone contract offers landowners greater property tax reduction than the Williamson Act by valuing enrolled real property at 65 percent of its Williamson Act valuation, or its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower (DOC, 2006d).

The Williamson Act states that a board or council by resolution shall adopt rules governing the administration of agricultural preserves. The rules of each agricultural preserve specify the uses allowed. Generally, any commercial agricultural use will be permitted within any agricultural preserve. In addition, local governments may identify compatible uses permitted with a use permit (DOC, 2006f).

California Government Code Section 51238 states that unless otherwise decided by a local board or council, the erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of electric and communication facilities, as well as other facilities are determined to be compatible uses within any agricultural preserve. Also Section 51238 states that board of supervisors may impose conditions on lands or land uses to be placed within preserves to permit and encourage compatible uses in conformity with Section 51238.1.

Further, California Government Code Section 51238.1 allows a board or council to allow as compatible a use that without conditions or mitigations would otherwise be considered incompatible. However, this may occur only if the use meets the following conditions:

- The use will not significantly compromise the long-term productive agricultural capability of the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves.
- The use will not significantly displace or impair current or reasonably foreseeable agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or on other contracted lands in agricultural preserves. Uses that significantly displace agricultural operations on the subject contracted parcel or parcels may be deemed compatible if they relate directly to the production of commercial agricultural products on the subject contracted parcel or parcels or neighboring lands, including activities such as harvesting, processing, or shipping.
- The use will not result in the significant removal of adjacent contracted land from agricultural or open-space use.

Unless otherwise specified by the local board or council, the Proposed Project would be consistent with the Williamson Act because Section 51238 states that the construction, operation, and maintenance of electric and communication facilities are compatible uses on lands under Williamson Act contracts. In the case of the Proposed Project, the local board would be the Riverside County Board of Supervisors as all the Williamson Act lands that the Proposed Project would traverse are in unincorporated Riverside County. The Riverside County Board of Supervisors has presented its Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves within Riverside County Ordinance No. 509.2. Also refer to the consistency analysis of Riverside County Ordinance No. 509.2 with regards to the Williamson Act below under Local applicable regulations, plans, and standards.

Local

Riverside County Ordinance No. 509.2

Riverside County Ordinance No. 509.2 presents its Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves that allows suitable areas to be established as agricultural preserves pursuant to the Williamson Act, and states that agricultural preserves shall be administered pursuant to the Williamson Act and the rules within Ordinance No. 509.2. This ordinance presents the agricultural and compatible uses within a Williamson Act agricultural preserve, and included in these is Section 2(A)3 which by reference includes, “Gas, electric, water, and communication utility facilities, and public service facilities of like nature operated by a public agency or mutual water company” as a compatible use within a Williamson Act agricultural preserve. Therefore the Proposed Project would be considered a compatible use with Williamson Act lands within the Palo Verde Valley segment (RCBS, 1988).

Other Local Policies

In addition, the Policy Screening Report in Appendix 2 identifies and evaluates all local agricultural and grazing policies that are applicable to the Proposed Project. Local plans include county and city general and comprehensive plans, local area or community plans, and habitat conservation plans (HCPs). The Riverside County Integrated Project 2002 General Plan, City of Redlands 1995 General Plan, and the City of Redlands 1995 General Plan East Valley Corridor Plan included policies that were carried forward for further analysis as described below (see Section D.6.5.3, Impacts Identified).

- **Riverside County Integrated Project 2002 General Plan (2003).** Further analysis was required to evaluate the Proposed Project's consistency with policies that address conservation of prime and productive agricultural land. These policies would apply to the following segments of the Proposed Project: Palo Verde Valley, Midpoint Substation, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, Devers Substation to East Border of Banning, Banning and Beaumont, and Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon.
- **City of Redlands 1995 General Plan (1995).** Further analysis was required to evaluate the Proposed Project's consistency with policies that address preservation of citrus groves and other agricultural land. This policy would apply to the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project.
- **City of Redlands 1995 General Plan East Valley Corridor Plan (1995).** Further analysis was required to evaluate the Proposed Project's consistency with policies that address retention of agricultural land. This policy would apply to the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project.

All other local agricultural and grazing policies that are applicable were found to be consistent with the Proposed Project as presented in the Policy Screening Report in Appendix 2.

D.6.5 Significance Criteria and Approach to Impact Assessment

This section explains how impacts are assessed in Section D.6, and Section D.6.5.1 presents the significance criteria on which impact determinations are based. In addition, Section D.6.5.2 lists the Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) relevant to Section D.6, and Section D.6.5.3 lists all impacts identified for the Proposed Project and alternatives.

D.6.5.1 Significance Criteria

Impacts to agriculture would be significant if:

- The Proposed Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland),[7] as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, to non-agricultural use.
- The Proposed Project would involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in interference with agricultural operations.[8]
- The Proposed Project would conflict with a Williamson Act contract.[9]

The conversion of Farmland would be considered significant if greater than 10 acres of Prime Farmland is converted to non-agricultural use, and if greater than 40 acres of non-Prime Farmland (Farmland of

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[7] For the purposes of the impact evaluation, the term "Farmland" is used to collectively describe lands within the States of California and Arizona that are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland by the DOC FMMP or NRCS, respectively.

[8] This significance criterion applies to active agricultural lands along the Proposed Project route that have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP (e.g., Farmland of Local Importance).

[9] This significance criterion only applies to California and is therefore not discussed or considered in the discussion of impacts to Arizona agricultural resources.

Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland) 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. In remote areas where the landscape is characterized by large areas of open space and agriculture, especially in some portions of Arizona, 10 acres would be too rigid of a threshold with which to determine the significance of the conversion of Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland. However, a threshold of 40 acres would more accurately represent the significance of converting agriculture when it would occur over a less contiguous, larger area.

Additional factors that determined these threshold limits include the use of 10- and 40-acre minimum mapping units for the important farmland maps. Ten acres is the minimum mapping unit on the DOC FMMP Important Farmland maps, while 40 acres is the minimum mapping unit used by the NRCS in the Arizona Important Farmland maps. The minimum mapping unit indicates the spatial scale of the maps and is the smallest unit or feature represented on the maps, with smaller than 10-acre features being absorbed into the surrounding classifications. In addition, 10 acres is used as the threshold for Prime Farmland because it is commonly used within guidelines utilized by other local agencies in California.[10] Therefore, these thresholds incorporate the sensitivities of both the DOC's and NRCS' mapping techniques, and address the differences in the agricultural classifications identified along the Proposed Project.

D.6.5.2 Applicant Proposed Measures

APMs were identified by SCE in its CPCN Application to the CPUC. Table D.6-10 presents the APMs that are relevant to this section. Impact analysis assumes that all APMs will be implemented as defined in the table; additional mitigation measures are recommended in this section if it is determined that APMs do not fully mitigate the impacts for which they are presented.

Table D.6-10. Applicant Proposed Measures – Agriculture

APM No.	Description
APM L-3	New access road construction will be kept to a minimum. (BLM B 1.2)
APM L-4	Where feasible, the following additional mitigation measures would be implemented: • Matching of tower spans • Aligning towers adjacent to or parallel to agricultural field boundaries • Using tubular steel pole structures in agricultural fields instead of lattice steel towers to reduce the footprint of the structure • Specific tower placement to avoid span-sensitive features. (SCE)
APM L-5	Along Link 10 in the Palo Verde Valley, H-frame structures, similar to the existing DPV1 structures, would be installed in this segment to reduce the amount of farmland permanently removed from production and minimize impacts to farm operations. Where feasible, additional mitigation measures would include matching tower spans, and aligning towers adjacent or parallel to field boundaries. (SCE)
APM L-6	In the agricultural area of the Palo Verde valley, towers would be located to allow for canal dredging by the Palo Verde Irrigation District. This also could include canal modifications. (SCE)

1 Reference in parentheses denotes the origin of the APM. "(SCE)" is a Proponent's mitigation measure. "(BLM)" is a Proponent's measure derived from a requirement in the BLM 1989 Right-of-Way Grant (ROW). Numbers such as B 4.1 refer to the specific BLM measure in the 1989 ROW Grant.

[10] For example, the County of Santa Barbara uses the 10-acre threshold for evaluation of Prime Farmlands and includes this threshold in the County of Santa Barbara Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (SBCP, 2002).

D.6.5.3 Impacts Identified

Overall Project Impacts

The impacts of the Proposed Project are described in Sections D.6.6 and D.6.7 by the geographic segments listed in Section D.1. The following discussion summarizes the aggregate impacts to Farmland, based on comparing all Proposed Project impacts to the significance criteria. As described in Section D.6.5.1, the term "Farmland" is used to collectively describe lands within the States of California and Arizona that are classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland.

As a whole, the Proposed Project would significantly impact agriculture along the project route. The Proposed Project would create significant and unmitigable (Class I) impacts to approximately 16 acres[11] of Farmland, of which 13.6 acres would be Prime Farmland. The operation or presence of project components would impact Farmland through the permanent removal and conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses, such as from the siting of roadways or tower structures.

Significant, but mitigable (Class II) impacts would include temporary conversion of 60 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use, of which 38.7 acres would be Prime Farmland. This temporary conversion would result from construction and operational activities that interfere with agricultural operations. Operation of the Proposed Project could also interfere with agricultural activities along the route. Mitigation Measures L-1a (Prepare Construction Notification Plan), AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners), and AG-4a (Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations) have been proposed to minimize potentially significant Class II impacts.

Permanent impacts to Williamson Act lands resulting from operation of the Proposed Project would be less than significant (Class III). The siting of tower structures, spur roads, and an optical repeater facility would permanently disturb 0.8 acres of Williamson Act lands. As this total disturbance does not exceed the threshold established in Section D.6.5.1, impacts were found to be less than significant.

Summary of Impacts by Alternative

Table D.6-11 lists the impacts identified for the Proposed Project and alternatives, 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.

[11] While the setting characterizes the agricultural areas traversed by the Proposed Project in linear miles, Sections D.6.6 and D.6.7 utilize acreages to calculate the areas of impact from the project components. Acreages represent temporary and permanent disturbance from tower structures, spur roads, pulling and splicing stations, fiber optic repeater sites, and switchyard modifications.

Table D.6-11. Impacts Identified – Agriculture

Impact No.	Description	Impact Significance
Proposed Project		
AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class II
AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations	Class II
AG-3	Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class I
AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations	Class II
AG-5	Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	Class II
AG-6	Operation would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	Class III
SCE Harquahala-West Alternative		
AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class II
AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations	Class II
AG-3	Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class I
AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations	Class II
SCE Palo Verde Alternative		
AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class II
AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations	Class II
AG-3	Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class III
AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations	Class III
Harquahala Junction Switchyard Alternative		No Impact
Desert Southwest Transmission Project Alternative		
AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class III
AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations	Class III
AG-3	Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class III
AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations	Class III
AG-5	Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	No Impact
AG-6	Operation would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	No Impact
Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative		No Impact
Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative		No Impact
Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative		No Impact
Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative		
AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class III
AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations	Class III
AG-3	Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use	Class III
AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations	Class III
AG-5	Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	Class III
AG-6	Operation would conflict with a Williamson Act contract	Class III

Policy Analysis

As presented in Sections D.6.2 and D.6.3 above, the Proposed Project traverses land under various federal, State, and local jurisdictions. Plans for these jurisdictions were reviewed to determine if there were any agriculture policies that would apply to the construction and operation of the Proposed Project. The Policy Screening Report in Appendix 2 evaluated all applicable policies associated with the Proposed Project and identified agriculture policies that required further evaluation in this EIR/EIS.

Many policies were identified that address agriculture resources operations; however, only five policies were identified for further analysis (see Table D.6-12). These policies consist of two Riverside County policies, and three City of Redlands policies. See Table D.6-12 for a discussion of the policies that were carried forward for analysis.

Table D.6-12. Consistency with Applicable Agriculture Plans and Policies

Agency Regulating Land Use	Regulation or Policy	Project Consistent?	Basis for Consistency
Riverside County	Riverside County Integrated Project 2002 General Plan (2003)		
Applicable Segments: Palo Verde Valley, Midpoint Substation, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation, Devers Substation to East Border of Banning, Banning and Beaumont, and Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon	LU 16.4 Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production.	Yes	The Proposed Project would not preclude the conservation of productive agricultural lands, nor would it preclude the continued use of prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production. The Proposed Project would be located within an existing ROW where agriculture and existing transmission line exist as compatible uses. APMs L-4, L-5, and L-6 would be implemented where appropriate to minimize permanent interference with agricultural operations.
	OS 7.3 Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands and preservation of prime agricultural lands	Yes	The Proposed Project would not preclude the conservation of productive and prime agricultural lands. The Proposed Project would be located within an existing ROW where agriculture and existing transmission line exist as compatible uses. APMs L-4, L-5, and L-6 would be implemented where appropriate to minimize permanent interference with agricultural operations.
City of Redlands	City of Redlands 1995 General Plan (1995)		
Applicable Segments: Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon	3.29a Encourage preservation of citrus groves and other agricultural areas that are designated as having cultural or scenic significance. Encourage retention of existing privately owned citrus groves of all sizes, especially in historic neighborhoods.	Yes	The Proposed Project would not preclude the preservation of citrus groves and other agricultural areas. The Proposed Project would be located within an existing ROW where agriculture and existing transmission line exist as compatible uses. APM L-4 would be implemented to minimize permanent interference with agricultural operations.
	3.29c Define and implement measures to preserve citrus groves, scenic views, vistas, and streetscapes for the community.	Yes	The Proposed Project would not preclude the preservation of citrus groves and other agricultural areas. APM L-4 would be implemented to minimize permanent interference with agricultural operations.
	City of Redlands 1995 General Plan, East Valley Corridor Plan (1995)		
	7.41a Retain the maximum feasible amount of agricultural open space for its contributions to the local economy, lifestyle, air quality, habitat value and sense of Redlands' heritage	Yes	The Proposed Project would be located within an existing utility ROW. In addition, APM L-4 would be implemented to minimize permanent interference with agricultural operations.

As described in Table D.6-12, policies LU 16.4 and OS 7.3 of the Riverside County General Plan address conservation of agricultural lands, especially preservation of prime agricultural lands. APMs L-4, L-5, and L-6 address use of tower structures that disturb less area, and siting of structures, particularly towers, so as to minimize disturbance of agricultural land. With the implementation of the aforementioned APMs, the Proposed Project would be consistent with policies LU 16.4 and OS 7.3. The City of Redlands policies (3.29a, 3.29c, and 7.41a) pertain to preservation of citrus groves and the retention of agricultural open space. Similar to the Riverside County policies, the implementation of

APM L-4 addresses the use of tower structures with smaller bases, and the siting of structures, particularly towers, so as to minimize disturbance of agricultural land. With the implementation of APM L-4, the Proposed Project would be consistent with policies 3.29a, 3.29c, and 7.41a.

Overall, construction and operation of the Proposed Project would not conflict with agriculture policies. See Appendix 2 for a complete discussion of applicable policies.

D.6.6 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project – Devers-Harquahala

This section presents discussion of impacts and mitigation measures for the 500 kV transmission line portion of the DPV2 project. The discussion is divided into six geographic areas, three in Arizona and four in California. Within each area, both construction impacts and operational impacts are addressed.

Sections D.6.2 and D.6.3 use linear miles to characterize the agricultural areas traversed by the Proposed Project. However, in Sections D.6.6 and D.6.7, acreages are used to calculate the areas of impact from the project components. Acreages represent temporary and permanent disturbance from tower structures, spur roads, pulling and splicing stations, fiber optic repeater sites, and modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard.

As discussed in Sections D.6.1 and D.6.4, Williamson Act contracts are regulated pursuant to California Government Code Section 51200-51297.4, and are applicable only to specific agricultural or open space parcels within the State of California. Therefore, the three segments of the Proposed Project that traverse land in Arizona, including the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment, the Kofa NWR segment, and the Kofa NWR to Colorado River segment, do not include any land under Williamson Act contracts, and the third significance criterion presented in Section D.6.5.1 does not apply to these segments.

D.6.6.1 Harquahala to Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

Construction Impacts

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

The Proposed Project would be constructed across approximately three miles of Farmland classified as Prime Farmland in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region of the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment as described in Section D.6.2.1. Construction activities within this segment would include the construction of a new five-mile main access road, assembly and erection of 14 single-circuit tubular steel poles, installation of structure foundations, stringing of conductor and overhead groundwire, modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, and construction of a new telecommunications facility on Harquahala Mountain and a series capacitor bank at MP E52.9.[12] These construction activities would temporarily disturb Farmland within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment.

Use of heavy equipment, such as road graders, dozers, excavators, and various trucks, would be necessary to clear, grade, and construct the main access road, which would be located north of and adjacent to the part of the existing Harquahala-Hassayampa 500 kV transmission line between the Harquahala Switchyard

[12] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

and the line's intersection with the existing DPV1 transmission line at MP E5.0. Construction activities and the presence of road work construction equipment could temporarily convert areas adjacent to the road, as well as the actual footprint of the access road to non-agricultural use as construction areas.

The construction of tubular steel poles, wire stringing activities, and modifications to Harquahala Switchyard would temporarily convert a total of 16.7 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use, broken down as follows:

- Installation of tubular steel poles would consist of: installation of foundations, assembly of the structure sections, erection of the pole, and cleanup of the site. Pole section subassemblies would be built at a construction yard, but assembled and erected at each tower site with the aid of a crane. The foundation for each tubular steel pole would need to be augured to a maximum depth of 32 feet and cast-in-place with one concrete pile.
- Activities associated with the installation of these 14 tubular steel poles would temporarily disturb 12.6 acres of Prime Farmland, specifically in the vicinity of each tower pad. In addition, the stringing of wire would require the use of pulling and splicing stations approximately every three miles, which would temporarily disturb 1.1 acres of Prime Farmland along the route.
- Modifications to Harquahala Switchyard would include installing a dead-end structure, circuit breakers, disconnect switches, a 500 kV shunt line reactor bank, and associated equipment. Installation of the shunt reactor would require the temporary use of approximately one acre of Prime Farmland immediately adjacent to the north side of the switchyard property for laydown and construction, while approximately two acres of Prime Farmland adjacent to the eastern side of the property would be temporarily utilized for the other modifications. It should be noted that the land surrounding the Harquahala Switchyard is classified as Prime Farmland; however it is possible that small sections of land immediately outside the switchyard property are not currently in active agricultural production and would therefore not be disturbed by their temporary use for construction.

The construction of a new telecommunications facility on Harquahala Mountain and a series capacitor bank at MP E52.9 would not occur on lands classified as Farmland, and therefore would not temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use.[13]

Implementation of APM L-3 would help to minimize the construction of access roads. However, construction activities within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment would cause the temporary disturbance of a total of 16.7 acres of Prime Farmland. This impact would be potentially significant (Class II), but with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) would be mitigated to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use

AG-1a **Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.** Sixty (60) days prior to the start of project construction, Southern California Edison (SCE) shall secure a signed agreement with property owners of Farmland (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland) and Williamson Act lands 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 Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Williamson Act lands

[13] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

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 Farmland or Williamson Act land will be temporarily disturbed in order 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 Proposed Project. SCE shall provide proof of the continued use of Farmland and/or Williamson Act lands through the submittal of a signed agreement between an individual property owner and SCE. The signed agreements shall be submitted to the CPUC and BLM for review and approval prior to the start of construction.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)

The Proposed Project would be constructed across approximately three miles of designated farmland classified as Prime Farmland in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region of the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment as described in Section D.6.2.1. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the NRCS. Construction activities within this segment that could interfere with agricultural operations would include the construction of a 500 kV transmission line from Harquahala Switchyard to Kofa NWR, a new five-mile main access road, modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, and construction of a new telecommunications facility on Harquahala Mountain and a series capacitor bank at MPE52.9. These construction activities would interfere with the ongoing agricultural operations, especially in the Harquahala Valley/ Harquahala Plain region.

The activities associated with construction of the new access road, the installation of tower structures, the stringing of wire, and the modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard would be similar to those discussed above under Impact AG-1. Construction activities and the presence of construction equipment could 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 could result in the temporary reduction of agricultural productivity. In addition, the construction of modifications to Harquahala Switchyard, including installing a dead-end structure, circuit breakers, disconnect switches, a 500 kV shunt line reactor bank, and associated equipment, could also temporarily interfere with agricultural operations. However, it should be noted that small sections of land immediately outside the switchyard property are not currently in active agricultural production and therefore the Proposed Project would not interfere with any agricultural operations.

The construction of a new telecommunications facility on Harquahala Mountain and a series capacitor bank at MP E52.9 would not occur on lands classified as Farmland.[14] Additionally, it is unlikely that agricultural operations exist at either proposed site due to the locations on the top of Harquahala Mountain and just outside the entrance to Kofa NWR, respectively.

[14] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

APM L-3 and APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project, and could minimize access road construction and interferences by locating tower structures near existing towers or other disturbances, such as field boundaries. However, construction activities within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment would interfere with agricultural operations along the segment, especially in the Harquahala Valley/ Harquahala Plain area. These impacts would be potentially significant (Class II), but with the implementation of Mitigation Measures L-1a (Prepare Construction Notification Plan to ensure effective notification and minimize construction disturbance) and AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) the temporary interference of agricultural operations could be reduced to less than significant within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment.

Mitigation Measures for Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan.

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class I)

The Proposed Project would be located across approximately three miles of Farmland classified as Prime Farmland within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment. Operation of the Proposed Project within this segment would include the presence of a new five-mile access road, single-circuit tubular steel poles and new wires, modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, a new telecommunications facility, and a series capacitor bank. However, only the access road, 14 tubular steel poles and wires, and modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard would exist within Farmland. The operation of the Proposed Project and the presence of these project structures would permanently convert Farmland, specifically Prime Farmland, within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain area of this segment.

Operation of the Proposed Project within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment would permanently convert a total of 13.6 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use, broken down as follows:

- Approximately three miles of the new access road would traverse Prime Farmland, and as a result it would permanently remove 11.6 acres of Prime Farmland and convert it to non-agricultural use as a roadway.
- The presence of 14 new tubular steel poles would convert less than 0.1 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural use, while two acres of Prime Farmland immediately adjacent to the north side of the Harquahala Switchyard would be acquired in order to install a 500 kV shunt line reactor bank and associated switches. While the land surrounding the Harquahala Switchyard is classified as Prime Farmland, it is possible that small sections of land immediately outside the switchyard property are not currently in active agricultural production and would therefore not be disturbed by their use for installation of the shunt reactor and associated components.

This impact would be significant and unmitigable (Class I) based upon the fact that it would exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland as discussed in Section D.6.5.1. There are no feasible mitigation measures that would mitigate the permanent conversion of 13.61 acres of Farmland.

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

The Proposed Project would be located across approximately three miles of designated agricultural operations classified as Prime Farmland in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region of the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment. However, there may be other areas within this segment where active agricultural operations exist. As partially discussed under Impact AG-3 above, the Proposed Project would create a five-mile access road, 500 kV transmission line from Harquahala Switchyard to Kofa NWR, modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, a telecommunications facility on Harquahala Mountain, and a series capacitor at MP E52.9.[15] The operation of the Proposed Project and the presence of these project structures would interfere with agricultural operations along the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment, particularly in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region.

The presence of the new access road across agricultural operations could divide farm properties, which could 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 the new access road, the existence of new tower structures and modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard could also interfere with agricultural operations. These interferences could result in the permanent preclusion of agricultural productivity in the area.

Operation of the Proposed Project within the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment would interfere with some agricultural operations. This impact would be potentially significant (Class II); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-4a (Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations) this impact would be reduced to less than significant. In APM L-3 and APM L-4, SCE commits, where feasible, to minimizing new access road construction, matching of tower spans, aligning towers adjacent to or parallel to agricultural field boundaries, and specific tower placement to avoid span-sensitive features in order to minimize interference with agricultural operations. However, Mitigation Measure AG-4a (Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations) presents additional detail, and would supersede APMs L-3 and L-4.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-4: Operation would interfere with agricultural operations

AG-4a **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 agricultural operations. Specifically, SCE shall comply with the following measures when siting transmission towers and splicing/pulling stations within areas where active 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 match tower spans with existing DPV1 towers within agricultural land.

[15] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

SCE shall document and provide proof of compliance with the above listed items 90 days prior to the start of Proposed Project construction. This documentation shall be submitted to the CPUC and the BLM for review and approval prior to the start of construction, and reviewed with affected landowners during coordination presented in Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners).

D.6.6.2 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge

No agricultural or grazing lands exist within the Kofa NWR because it is a designated wildlife refuge (BLM, USFWS, & AGFD, 1996). However, livestock grazing does occur within two allotments in the New Water Mountains Wilderness Area, which is located to the north of Kofa NWR (BLM, USFWS, & AGFD, 1996). Construction of the Proposed Project would not impact these grazing operations because the construction activities would be located at least 1.5 miles from the New Water Mountains Wilderness Area. Therefore, the Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project would create no construction or operational impacts that would temporarily or permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur within this segment of the Proposed Project: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), and Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations).

D.6.6.3 Kofa National Wildlife Refuge to Colorado River

As discussed in Section D.6.2.3, no NRCS soil surveys have been conducted within the Kofa NWR to Colorado River segment, and the Proposed Project would not traverse land classified as important farmland. The primary land uses along the Kofa NWR to Colorado River segment are open space and recreation with some military uses to the south. Therefore, the Kofa NWR to Colorado River segment of the Proposed Project would create no construction or operational impacts that would temporarily or permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur within this segment of the Proposed Project: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), and Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations).

D.6.6.4 Palo Verde Valley (Colorado River to Midpoint Substation)

Construction Impacts

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

Construction activities within the Palo Verde Valley segment would cause the temporary conversion of a total of 41.2 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use, broken down as follows:

- The installation of tower structures would include the assembly and erection of 39 H-frame structures and two lattice steel towers, which would require full assembly at each tower site and erection using a crane. The foundation installation for H-frame structures would require auguring to a maximum depth of 45 feet, while a maximum depth of 35 feet would be required for the lattice steel towers. Using concrete hauled to each tower site by a standard concrete truck, the H-frame struc-

tures would be cast-in-place with eight concrete piles and the lattice steel towers with four concrete piles. This process of installing structures would create 19.8 acres of temporary disturbance to Prime Farmland, 16.2 acres to Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.9 acres to Unique Farmland until completion of construction and the area was restored to its pre-construction condition.

- The use of splicing and pulling stations every three miles along the route to string the wire would create another 2.2 acres of temporary disturbance to Prime Farmland and 1.1 acres of disturbance to Farmland of Statewide Importance.
- The Proposed Project would also require the construction of an optical repeater facility at MP E105.4, which would utilize approximately one acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance at the site for a temporary construction area.[16]

This impact would be potentially significant (Class II); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) it would be mitigated to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)

The Proposed Project would be constructed across 10.2 linear miles of Farmland. As presented in Section D.6.2.4, construction activities within this segment would include the construction of a 500 kV transmission line from the Colorado River to the proposed Midpoint Substation, and construction of an optical repeater facility at MP E105.4. These construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations in the Palo Verde Valley segment.

Clearing and grading could be required to build spur roads associated with new tower structures. A spur road may not need to be built to each tower structure, depending on the final location of the structure there may be access to the tower structure from the existing access road. The presence and use of heavy equipment, including road graders, dozers, excavators, and trucks, needed to construct the new spur roads could 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 could result in the temporary reduction of agricultural productivity in the area. Similar to the construction of spur roads, the construction of the 500 kV transmission line, including tower installation and wire stringing, and the construction of the optical repeater facility would also interfere with agricultural operations. These interferences could also result in a temporary decrease in agricultural productivity.

APM L-4 and APM L-5 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project and would minimize interference to agricultural operations through the matching of tower spans, aligning towers adjacent or parallel to field boundaries, and using smaller-area H-frame structures. However, construction activities within the Palo Verde Valley segment would cause temporary interference with agricultural operations. These impacts would be potentially significant (Class II); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measures L-1a (Prepare Construction Notification Plan and AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) impacts to agriculture would be reduced to less than significant.

[16] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

Mitigation Measures for Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan.

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

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

Within the Palo Verde Valley segment, the Proposed Project would be constructed across 2.4 linear miles of land under Williamson Act contracts classified as Prime Agricultural Land. As discussed in Section 6.2.4, the Williamson Act lands within this segment consist of 10 parcels and a total of 480.71 acres of land. Twelve tower structures, including 11 H-frame structures and one lattice steel tower, and up to 12 spur roads would be constructed on these identified Williamson Act lands. In addition, an optical repeater facility would also be constructed on Prime Agricultural Land.

The aforementioned structures would be constructed using similar processes to those discussed in Impacts AG-3 and AG-4 above. However, given that the complete distance of Williamson Act lands traversed would be less than three miles, and the longest contiguous set of parcels traversed would be 1.5 miles, the pulling and splicing stations needed to string wire could be located outside of Williamson Act lands. These construction activities would temporarily disturb 11.8 acres of Prime Agricultural Land. This impact would be potentially significant (Class II); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners), which would require the restoration of disturbed land, would be mitigated to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-5: Construction activities would conflict with a Williamson Act contract

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The Proposed Project would be located across 10.2 miles of Farmland, including 6.1 miles of Prime Farmland, 4.0 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland, within the Palo Verde Valley segment. Operation of the Proposed Project would result in the presence of 41 structures, including 39 H-frame structures and two lattice steel towers, associated spur roads, and an optical repeater facility on Farmland.

The implementation of APM L-5 within the Palo Verde Valley would reduce the amount of Farmland permanently removed from production due to the utilization of H-frame structures. The presence of new structures would permanently remove 2.2 acres of Farmland, including 1.0 acre of Prime Farmland, 1.1 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland, from agricultural use, thereby converting it to non-agricultural use. Up to 1.7 acres would be converted to use as spur roads accessing the tower sites, while 0.3 acres and 0.2 acres would be utilized as an optical repeater facility and tower sites, respectively. Therefore the presence of these structures would permanently preclude the use of a total of 2.2 acres of Farmland for agricultural use within the Palo Verde Valley segment, but this impact would be less than significant (Class III) based upon the fact that it would not

exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1.[17] No mitigation is required.

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

The Proposed Project would traverse approximately 11 miles, and would be located across approximately 10 miles of Farmland. As presented in Section D.6.2.4, operation of the Proposed Project would result in the presence of a 500 kV transmission line, including tower structures and wire, spur roads, and an optical repeater facility. The presence of these structures would interfere with agricultural operations in the Palo Verde Valley area.

The presence of spur roads across agricultural operations could divide farm properties, which could 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. New roadways could also disrupt drainage and irrigation systems, affect the efficacy of windbreaks, fragment farms, and allow for the introduction of invasive weeds within and around disturbed areas. These interferences could also permanently decrease the agricultural productivity of agricultural operations in the Palo Verde Valley segment of the Proposed Project. Similar to the presence of new spur roads, the 500 kV transmission line could also interfere with agricultural operations, and could also permanently decrease agricultural productivity.

In addition to the presence of new structures within the Palo Verde Valley segment, the Proposed Project would add new a ROW in the Palo Verde Valley as discussed in Section B.3.3.1. The acquisition of new land to include in this ROW could impose additional restrictions on the land that would interfere with existing agricultural operations, such as limiting the types of crops sown, keeping certain areas clear of vegetation, or restriction on the use of equipment that could harm the structures. Therefore the acquisition of new ROW could interfere with agricultural operations, and could also decrease the productivity of these agricultural operations. Also canal structures in the Palo Verde Valley area could require the ROW to be separated from the DPV1 ROW or widened to accommodate the structures as discussed in Section B.3.3.1. These modifications to the existing ROW could also have similar deleterious effects on the agricultural productivity of the area.

Implementation of APM L-5 and APM L-6 would minimize interference to agricultural operations through the matching of tower spans, aligning towers adjacent or parallel to field boundaries, using smaller-area H-frame structures, and allowing for necessary canal dredging by the Palo Verde Irrigation District. Operation of the Proposed Project within the Palo Verde Valley segment would interfere with agricultural operations; however, this impact would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

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

The Proposed Project would be located across 2.4 linear miles of Williamson Act land classified as Prime Agricultural Land within the Palo Verde Valley segment. As discussed in Section 6.2.4, the Williamson Act lands within this segment consist of 10 parcels and a total of 480.7 acres of land. Operation of the Proposed Project would result in the presence of 12 tower structures and a maximum of 12 spur roads on these identified Williamson Act lands. In addition, an optical repeater facility would also be constructed on a Prime Williamson Act parcel.

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[17] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall Proposed Project impacts resulting in permanent preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant and unmitigable (Class I) impacts to approximately 16 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-3 is associated only for this segment of the project, and not for the entire project route.

The operation of the Proposed Project would permanently remove 0.8 acres of Prime Agricultural Land due to the presence of 12 structures (11 H-frame structures and one lattice steel tower) and 12 associated spur roads, and an optical repeater facility. Implementation of APM L-5 would minimize the conflicts with Williamson Act lands by utilizing smaller H-frame structures to reduce the amount of Williamson Act land removed. This impact would be less than significant (Class III) because the amount of permanent disturbance would not exceed the threshold set in Section D.6.5.1. No mitigation is required.

D.6.6.5 Midpoint Substation

The proposed site of the Midpoint Substation and the temporary laydown area would not be constructed across Farmland or land under a Williamson Act contract. The closest Farmland to the proposed Midpoint Substation would be located approximately one mile east. The proposed substation site is located on BLM land and is within the California Desert Conservation Area, in which agriculture is prohibited and livestock grazing is permitted in limited areas. Therefore it is unlikely that any agricultural operations exist at the site of the proposed Midpoint Substation. In addition, the presence of Midpoint Substation would not interfere with any potential grazing operations that are permitted to occur in the surrounding area. No construction or operational activities associated with the Midpoint Substation would occur on Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland. None of the following impacts would occur within this segment of the Proposed Project: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.6.6 Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area

Construction Impacts

The Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area segment of the Proposed Project would not be constructed across Farmland or lands under a Williamson Act contract. This segment includes about 2.5 miles of Farmland of Local Importance, but no DOC FMMP important farmland data exists for the remainder of the land within this segment because NRCS has not conducted soil surveys in this area. Although Riverside County has assigned the Farmland of Local Importance classification to land within this segment, the primary land uses within this segment are recreation and open space, as well as some public facilities. Therefore construction and operational activities associated with this segment of the Proposed Project would not conflict with Farmland or Williamson Act contracts. None of the following impacts would occur: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.6.7 Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation

Construction Impacts

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

The Proposed Project would be constructed over 0.1 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland northeast of Palm Desert. Construction within this portion of the Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment would temporarily disturb 1.8 acres of Unique Farmland due to the presence of construction equipment and activities associated with assembly and erection of two lattice steel towers and foundation installations, similar to that presented and discussed under Impact AG-3 for the Palo Verde Valley segment. However, due to the short distance of Farmland traversed with this segment, the pulling and splicing stations needed to string wire could be located outside of the existing Farmland. Construction of this segment would temporarily convert 1.8 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use. This impact would be less than significant (Class III) because it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of the conversion of Farmland in Section D.6.5.1 and the conversion would be temporary in nature.[18] No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment of the Proposed Project would be constructed across 0.1 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP. The construction activities that would occur within this segment include the construction of spur roads, 500 kV transmission line, and modifications to Devers Substation. These activities would interfere with agricultural operations within this segment in the same manner described under Impact AG-2 for the Palo Verde Valley segment. In addition, these interferences could temporarily reduce agricultural productivity in the area. The interferences to agricultural operations caused by construction activities of this segment would most likely be less than the impacts for the Palo Verde Valley segment because there is less designated important farmland, and the Devers Substation is located within land classified as Urban and Built-Up Land and most likely does not include any agricultural operations.

Implementation of APM L-4 would locate towers next to existing towers or near other disturbed areas so as to minimize the interference to agricultural operations. These impacts would be considered less than significant (Class III) because they would be temporary in nature. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment would not be constructed on or near land under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore construction of the Proposed Project within this segment would not create impacts that would conflict with Williamson Act contracts.

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[18] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall Proposed Project impacts resulting in temporary preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant, but mitigable (Class II) impacts to approximately 60 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-1 is associated only for this segment of the project, and not for the entire project route.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The Proposed Project would traverse 0.1 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland within this segment. The operation of the Proposed Project within the Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment would result in the permanent conversion of 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland to non-agricultural use due to the presence of two lattice steel towers and two spur roads accessing the towers. Implementation of APM L-4 would allow for the utilization of tubular steel pole structures in agricultural fields to reduce the amount of land converted to non-agricultural use. This impact would be considered less than significant (Class III) because it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1.[19] No mitigation is required.

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

The Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment of the Proposed Project would be located across 0.1 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including those classified as Farmland of Local Importance. The Proposed Project would result in the presence of another 500 kV transmission line, including tower structures and wires, new spur roads, and modifications to the Devers Substation. The presence of these structures would interfere with agricultural operations within the Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment.

The interferences caused by operation of this segment of the Proposed Project would be similar to those discussed under Impact AG-4 for the Palo Verde Valley segment. The interferences to agricultural operations could also result in the decrease of agricultural productivity in the area. Implementation of APM L-4 would allow for the location of tower structures in near existing towers or disturbances in order to minimize the amount of the interference to agricultural operations. However, due to the small amount of designated Farmland that would be traversed and the presence of urban land in the vicinity of the Devers Substation, the impacts from interference with agricultural operations would be considered less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-6: Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segment would not be located on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore operation of the Proposed Project within this segment would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no operational impacts to Williamson Act lands.

[19] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall Proposed Project impacts resulting in permanent preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant and unmitigable (Class I) impacts to approximately 16 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-3 is associated only for this segment of the project, and not for the entire project route.

D.6.7 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Project – West of Devers

D.6.7.1 Devers Substation to East Border of Banning

The Proposed Project would not be constructed across any Farmland or land under Williamson Act contracts within the Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment. Approximately the first eight miles would consist of Other Land, while the remaining 5.2 miles are classified as Grazing Land with small amounts of Farmland of Local Importance and Urban and Built-up Land. Therefore, construction and operation of the Devers Substation to East Border of Banning segment of the Proposed Project would create no construction impacts that would impact Farmland or Williamson Act contract. None of the following impacts would occur within this segment of the Proposed Project: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.7.2 Banning and Beaumont

Construction Impacts

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

The Proposed Project would consecutively traverse less than 0.1 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland within the City of Calimesa on its southwestern boundary with unincorporated Riverside County. Construction on these lands would include the removal of Tower T73, which is located just north of San Timoteo Canyon Road, from Unique Farmland. This activity would temporarily disturb 0.1 acres of land due to the erection of guard structures, removal of the conductor, and disassembly and hauling away of materials. This segment would also need to be reconductored and strung with wire; however, due to the short distance of Farmland traversed (0.1 miles), the pulling/splicing stations needed to complete these activities could be located outside the existing Farmland. No existing or new tower structures would be located within this 0.1-mile stretch of Farmland. Construction activities within the Banning and Beaumont segment would temporarily convert 0.1 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural uses; however, this impact would be less than significant (Class III) because it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of the conversion of Farmland in Section D.6.5.1, and the conversion would be temporary in nature.[20] No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The Banning and Beaumont segment of the Proposed Project would be constructed across 0.1 miles of Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural opera-

[20] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall Proposed Project impacts resulting in temporary preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant, but mitigable (Class II) impacts to approximately 60 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-1 is associated only for this segment of the project, and not for the entire project route.

tions exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land. The construction activities within this segment would include the removal of two existing 230 kV single-circuit transmission lines, construction of a new double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, and upgrade of the double-circuit 230 kV transmission line. These activities would interfere with agricultural operations within this segment in the same manner described under Impact AG-2 for the Palo Verde Valley segment with some differences. These differences include the removal of some tower structures, which consists of the erection of guard structures, removal of the conductor, and disassembly and hauling away of materials, along the route. The removal of the tower could interfere with agricultural operations in the same manner described under Impact AG-2 for the Palo Verde Valley segment, including the presence and use of heavy equipment, which could damage crops or soil, impede access to certain fields or plots of land, obstruct farm vehicles, or potentially disrupt drainage and irrigation systems. In addition, these interferences could temporarily reduce agricultural productivity in the area.

The interferences to agricultural operations caused by construction activities of this segment would most likely be less than the impacts for the Palo Verde Valley segment because there is less designated important farmland, and reconductoring and stringing of wire could be located outside of agricultural operations. In addition implementation of APM L-4 would locate tower structures in areas with existing towers or disturbance in order to minimize the interference to these areas. Therefore construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations; however, these impacts would be less than significant (Class III) because they would be temporary in nature. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The Banning and Beaumont segment would not be constructed on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. The closest Williamson Act land to this segment consists of several parcels classified as Non-Prime or Non-Prime/Non-Renewal, which would be located approximately two miles south of MP W20 in unincorporated Riverside County,[21] and an area of Prime Williamson Act land less than one mile north of MP W25. Therefore construction activities associated with the Banning and Beaumont segment of the Proposed Project would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no construction impacts to Williamson Act land.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation could permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (No Impact)

As discussed in Section D.6.3.2, the Banning and Beaumont segment would traverse 0.1 miles of Farmland, including Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland, within this approximately 12-mile segment. Operation of the Proposed Project would result in one transmission line as opposed to the current condition of two transmission lines within the ROW. No new tower structures or spur roads would be part of the improvements for this segment. Although the reduction in transmission lines is an improvement from existing conditions, operation of the Proposed Project would have no impact on agricultural resources because the ROW width and use would stay the same. Therefore operation of the Proposed Project within the Banning and Beaumont segment would create no impacts that would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use.

[21] The use of "W" in the MP number denotes a location west of Devers Substation.

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

The Banning and Beaumont segment of the Proposed Project would be located across a 0.1-mile stretch of Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including those classified as Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land. The Proposed Project would result in the presence of a new double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, which would interfere with any agricultural operations within the Banning and Beaumont segment.

The interferences caused by operation of this segment of the Proposed Project would include creation of irregularly shaped fields in which farm equipment would have difficultly maneuvering. Implementation of APM L-4 would allow for the location of tower structures in near existing towers or disturbances in order to minimize the amount of the interference to agricultural operations. However, due to the small amount of designated Farmland that would be traversed and the existence of one less transmission line and associated tower structures within the Banning and Beaumont segment, the impacts from interference with agricultural operations would be considered less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-6: Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The Banning to Beaumont segment would not be located on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore operation of the Proposed Project within this segment would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no impacts to Williamson Act lands.

D.6.7.3 Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon

Construction Impacts

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

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project would traverse across 0.1 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance in the vicinity of Live Oak Canyon Road; however, no construction activities would occur on this area of Farmland. This area would be spanned by Towers 172 and 173, both of which would be newly constructed after the removal of existing Towers T44, T45 and T46 that are not located on Farmland of Statewide Importance. The removal and construction of these structures would occur outside of the aforementioned Farmland of Statewide Importance. In addition, this segment would be reconductored and strung with wire; however, due to the short distance of the Farmland that would be traversed, any Farmland that would be converted to non-agricultural use as a result of these activities would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project would be constructed across 0.1 miles of Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist of less than 10 acres, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land. The construction activities within this segment would include the removal of two existing 230 kV single-circuit transmission lines, construction of a new double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, and upgrade of the double-circuit 230 kV transmission line. These activities would interfere with agricultural operations within this segment in the same manner described under Impact AG-2 for the Palo Verde Valley segment with some differences.

These differences include the removal of some tower structures, which consists of the erection of guard structures, removal of the conductor, and disassembly and hauling away of materials, along the route. The interferences with agricultural operations would include the presence and use of heavy equipment, which could damage crops or soil, impede access to certain fields or plots of land, obstruct farm vehicles, or potentially disrupt drainage and irrigation systems. In addition, these interferences could temporarily reduce agricultural productivity in the area. Implementation of APM L-4 would locate tower structures in areas with existing towers or disturbance in order to minimize the interference to these areas. The interferences to agricultural operations caused by construction activities of this segment would be less than significant (Class III) because there is a small amount of designated important farmland and the interferences would be temporary in nature. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment would not be constructed on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore construction activities associated with this segment of the Proposed Project would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no construction impacts to Williamson Act lands.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation could permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (No Impact)

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project would traverse across 0.1 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance in the vicinity of Live Oak Canyon Road. However, no structures would be located in this Farmland as this area would be spanned by Towers 172 and 173. Therefore operation of the Proposed Project within the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment would not convert Farmland to non-agricultural use, and there would be no impacts to Farmland.

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

The Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment of the Proposed Project would be located across a 0.1-mile stretch of Farmland. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP. The Proposed Project would result in the presence of a new double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, which would interfere with any agricultural operations, such as by impeding access to certain fields or plots, and creating irregularly shaped fields in which it would be difficult to maneuver farm equipment, within the Banning and Beaumont segment.

However, due to the small amount of designated Farmland that would be traversed and the operation of one transmission line versus two as currently exists within the Calimesa and San Timoteo Canyon segment, the impacts from interference with agricultural operations would be considered less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

D.6.7.4 San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation

The Proposed Project would not be constructed across any Farmland or lands under a Williamson Act contract within the San Bernardino Junction to Vista Substation segment. Although some land within this segment has been classified as Grazing Land by the DOC FMMP, the primary land uses within this segment are recreation and open space, as well as some residential uses. Neither construction nor oper-

ation of the Proposed Project would impact Farmland or lands under a Williamson Act contract. None of the following impacts would occur within this segment of the Proposed Project: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.7.5 San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation

Construction Impacts

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

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment of the Proposed Project would traverse across approximately 1.2 miles of Farmland, including 1.1 miles of Prime Farmland, less than 0.1 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and less than 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland. No tower structures would be removed or constructed within this segment; however, the existing towers within this segment would need to be reconductored and strung with wire. This process would require the use of pulling/splicing stations that may need to be placed on Farmland; however, due to the short distance of Farmland traversed within this segment, any Farmland that would be converted to non-agricultural use by the placement and use of the pulling/splicing stations would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment would be constructed across Farmland. There may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including Grazing Land. The primary land uses within this segment are residential uses, and the impacts to these uses are discussed in more detail in Section D.4, Land Use. The construction activities that would occur along the San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment include upgrade of the double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, which includes replacing insulators, installing travelers, transferring existing conductors, and restringing the wire, in addition to modifications to Vista Substation. These construction activities would interfere with the agricultural operations in a similar manner that restringing wire would as described under Impact AG-2 for the Palo Verde Valley segment. However, the short length of this segment and the well-defined areas of agricultural operations could allow for construction activities to take place outside of agricultural operations. The potential interferences to agricultural operations caused by the construction activities associated with this segment would be considered less than significant (Class III) because it would be temporary in nature. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment would not be constructed on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore construction activities associated with this segment of the Proposed Project would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no construction impacts to Williamson Act lands.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation could permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment of the Proposed Project would be located across approximately 1.2 miles of Farmland, including 1.1 miles of Prime Farmland, less than 0.1 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and less than 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland. No new tower structures would constructed within this segment; however, there are approximately twenty towers on the two existing double-circuit 230 kV lattice steel tower lines that would still be present within Farmland in this segment. Operation of the Proposed Project would not convert additional Farmland to non-agricultural use; however, continued presence of the existing towers would occupy some Farmland. Due to the small amount of Farmland that these transmission lines would be located across, any Farmland that would be occupied by these non-agricultural uses with the operation of the Proposed Project would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-4: Operation could interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

As stated above, the San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment would be located across 1.1 miles of Farmland. No new tower structures would be located within this segment; however, there are approximately 20 towers on the two existing double-circuit 230 kV lattice steel tower transmission lines that would still be present within Farmland in this segment. While operation of the Proposed Project would not impact additional agricultural operations within the San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment, the continued presence of the existing transmission lines could occupy area where agricultural operations exist and would continue to interfere with these operations. However, this impact would be less than significant (Class III) due to the small amount of designated Farmland that would be traversed by these transmission lines. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-6: Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The San Bernardino Junction to San Bernardino Substation segment would not be located on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. Therefore presence of the Proposed Project within this segment would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no operational impacts to Williamson Act lands.

D.6.8 Alternatives for Devers-Harquahala

The alternatives for the Devers-Harquahala segment of the Proposed Project consist of three alternatives in Maricopa County, Arizona, and five alternatives in Riverside County, California, including three in the vicinity of Alligator Rock, a route from the City of Blythe to Devers Substation, and a route from Devers Substation to Valley Substation. Only three alternatives, the Harquahala-West Alternative, the Palo Verde Alternative and the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, would traverse important farmland.[22]

Table D.6-13 lists the important farmland and Williamson Act lands traversed by the alternatives for Devers-Harquahala. The total distance of each important farmland classification and Williamson Act

[22] The term 'important farmland' is used to denote the agricultural classifications assigned to soil data by either the DOC for land in California or the NRCS for land in Arizona. See Section D.6.1 for a list of important farmland categories. The term 'Farmland' is used to specifically refer to lands classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland.

land has not been included in Table D.6-13, because each alternative would replace a segment of the Proposed Project. Therefore the presence of important farmland and Williamson Act land is not be evaluated separately for each alternatives. Instead, each alternative is considered as a component of the Proposed Project in which it would be located.

Table D.6-13. Overview of Important Farmland and Williamson Act Land Traversed by Alternatives for Devers-Harquahala (miles)

Alternative	Prime Farmland	Farmland of Statewide Importance	Unique Farmland	Farmland of Local Importance	Grazing Land	Williamson Act Land (Type)
SCE Harquahala-West Alternative	7.9	0	0.7	0	0	N/A
SCE Palo Verde Alternative	5.6	0	0.4	0	0	N/A
Harquahala Junction Switchyard Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
Desert Southwest Transmission Project Alternative	1.3	0	0.4	5.4	0	0
Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative	0.8	0.4	0.1	10.2	3.7	1.8 (Non-Prime)

N/A: Not Applicable

As discussed in Sections D.6.1 and D.6.4, Williamson Act contracts are regulated pursuant to California Government Code Section 51200-51297.4, and are applicable only to specific agricultural or open space parcels within the State of California. Therefore, the three Arizona alternatives do not include any land under Williamson Act contracts, and the third significance criterion presented in Section D.6.5.1 above does not apply to these alternatives.

D.6.8.1 SCE Harquahala-West Alternative

Environmental Setting

The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would exit the Harquahala Switchyard to the west and travel 21 miles across the western portion of the Harquahala Valley before intersecting with the Proposed Project route at MP E35 in La Paz County (see Figure D.6-1).[23] The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would traverse 8.6 linear miles of important farmland within the Harquahala Valley consisting of 7.9 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.7 miles of Unique Farmland scattered between MP 1 and MP 4.

Similar to the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project discussed in Section D.6.2.1, no other agricultural lands were identified through the NRCS important farmland data for the final 4.5 miles of this alternative within Maricopa County and the first eight miles within La Paz County because NRCS has not performed a soil survey in these areas. Table D.6-14 lists the important farmland traversed by the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative.

[23] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

Table D.6-14. Important Farmland Traversed within the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative

Milepost	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
MP 0 to MP 8.5	7.9	Maricopa County, Arizona	Prime Farmland
MP 1; MP 2.5 to MP 4	0.7	Maricopa County, Arizona	Unique Farmland

Construction Impacts

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

The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would be constructed across 8.6 miles of Farmland, including 7.9 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.7 miles of Unique Farmland within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain. Construction activities within this alternative that would occur on Farmland include the construction of a new access road, assembly and erection of 33 tubular steel poles, installation of structure foundations, stringing of conductor and overhead groundwire, and modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard. These construction activities would temporarily disturb Farmland within the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative.

The new access road would be constructed between the Harquahala Switchyard and the El Paso Natural Gas pipeline road, and the activities and presence of road work construction equipment could temporarily convert areas adjacent to the road, as well as the actual footprint of the access road to non-agricultural use as construction areas. Thirty-three poles would be needed based upon the assumption that the typical span length would be four towers per mile as discussed in Section B.3.1.

Construction of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would temporarily convert a total of 35.7 acres of farming operations to non-agricultural use, including 33.9 acres of Prime Farmland and 1.8 acres of Unique Farmland.

- Construction associated with the installation of 33 tubular steel poles would temporarily disturb approximately 30 acres of farming operations, including 27.9 acres of Prime Farmland and 1.8 acres of Unique Farmland.
- An additional 3.0 acres would be temporarily disturbed through the use of approximately three pulling stations and three splicing stations along the route of this alternative.
- Modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, including the installation of a shunt reactor and other equipment, would temporarily disturb three acres of Prime Farmland.

Implementation of APM L-3 would help to minimize the construction of the access road. However, construction activities within the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would cause the temporary disturbance of 35.7 acres of Farmland. This impact would be potentially significant (Class II), but with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) would be mitigated to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)

The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would be constructed across 8.6 linear miles of Farmland in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region as described above within the environmental setting for this alternative. The construction activities that could interfere with agricultural operations include the construction of a new access road, construction of a 500 kV transmission line from Harquahala Switchyard to approximately MP E35 of the Proposed Project, and modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard.[24] These construction activities would interfere with the ongoing agricultural operations within the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative, especially those within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region.

The interferences to agricultural operations include damaging crops or soil, impeding access to certain fields or plots of land, obstructing farm vehicles, or potentially disrupting drainage and irrigation systems (see Impact AG-2, Section D.6.6.1). APM L-3 and APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the project, and could minimize access road construction and interferences by locating tower structures near existing towers or other disturbances, such as field boundaries. However, construction activities along the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would interfere with agricultural operations, particularly within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region. These impacts would be potentially significant (Class II); however, with the implementation of Mitigation Measures L-1a (Prepare Construction Notification Plan to ensure effective notification and minimize construction disturbance) and AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) the temporary interference of agricultural operations would be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation Measures for Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class I)

The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would be located across 8.6 linear miles of Farmland, including 7.9 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.7 miles of Unique Farmland within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region of Maricopa County, Arizona. Operation of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would include the presence of a new access road located between the Harquahala Switchyard and the El Paso Natural Gas pipeline road, 33 new tubular steel poles, a shunt reactor and other modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, and acquisition of new ROW within Farmland. The operation of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative and the presence of these project structures would permanently convert Farmland, specifically Prime Farmland, within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region.

Operation of the Harquahala-West Alternative would permanently convert a total of 25.5 acres of Farmland, which consist almost entirely of Prime Farmland, to non-agricultural use.

- The new access road would most likely traverse Prime and Unique Farmland, and as a result it would permanently remove 23.4 acres of Prime Farmland and convert it to non-agricultural use as a roadway.

[24] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

- The presence of 33 new tubular steel poles would convert an additional 0.1 acres of Prime or Unique Farmland to non-agricultural use
- Two acres of Prime Farmland immediately adjacent to the north side of the Harquahala Switchyard would be acquired in order to install a 500 kV shunt line reactor bank and associated switches. Similar to the Proposed Project, it should be noted that the land surrounding the Harquahala Switchyard is classified as Prime Farmland; however, it is possible that small sections of land immediately outside the switchyard property are not currently in active agricultural production and would therefore not be disturbed by their use as the shunt reactor and associated components.

This impact would be significant and unmitigable (Class I) based upon the fact that it would exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1. There are no feasible mitigation measures that would mitigate the permanent conversion of farmland.

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

The SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would be located across Farmland, particularly in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the NRCS. The operation of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would result in the presence of a new access road, 500 kV transmission line from Harquahala Switchyard to approximately MP E35 of the Proposed Project,[25] modifications to the Harquahala Switchyard, and a new ROW within the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region. The operation of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative and the presence of these new project structures would interfere with agricultural operations, particularly in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain.

The interferences to agricultural operations associated with this alternative, include obstacles to farming that would impede access to certain fields or plots, and create irregularly shaped fields in which it would be difficult to maneuver farm equipment (see Impact AG-4, Section D.6.6.1). 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, In addition, the operation of the SCE Harquahala-West Alternative would require the acquisition of new 200-foot wide ROW on private and State lands. The acquisition of a new ROW in the Harquahala Valley/Harquahala Plain region could create similar interferences to agricultural operations as those associated with Impact AG-4 in Section D.6.6.4. The interferences could include imposition of additional restrictions, such as limiting the types of crops sown, keeping certain areas clear of vegetation, or restriction on the use of equipment that could harm the structures.

Implementation of APM L-3 and APM L-4, would commit SCE, where feasible, to minimizing new access road construction, matching of tower spans, aligning towers adjacent to or parallel to agricultural field boundaries, and specific tower placement to avoid span-sensitive features in order to minimize interference with agricultural operations. As noted above, operation of the Harquahala-West Alternative would interfere with some agricultural operations. This impact would be potentially significant (Class II). However, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-4a (Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations) this impact would be reduced to less than significant. Mitigation Measure AG-4a (Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations) presents additional detail, and would supersede APMs L-3 and L-4 within this alternative.

[25] The use of "E" in the MP number denotes a location east of Devers Substation.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-4: Operation would interfere with agricultural operations

AG-4a Locate transmission towers and pulling/splicing stations to avoid agricultural operations.

D.6.8.2 SCE Palo Verde Alternative

Environmental Setting

The SCE Palo Verde Alternative would originate at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station (PVNGS) and intersect the Proposed Project at the Harquahala Junction (see Figure D.6-1). This alternative would traverse six linear miles of important farmland. The PVNGS is located within a swath of Unique Farmland, and this alternative would cross 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland as it exits PVNGS and then would traverse 5.6 miles of Prime Farmland.

Table D.6-15 lists the important farmland traversed by the SCE Palo Verde Alternative.

Table D.6-15. Important Farmland Traversed within the SCE Palo Verde Alternative

Tower	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
D-166	5.6	Maricopa County, Arizona	Unique Farmland
D-144 to D-160; D-161 to D-166	0.4	Maricopa County, Arizona	Prime Farmland

Construction Impacts

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

The SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be constructed across six miles of Farmland, including 5.6 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland in the vicinity of PVNGS. Construction activities within this alternative that would occur on Farmland include the construction of up to 23 new spur roads, assembly and erection of 23 new steel lattice towers, installation of structure foundations, and stringing of conductor and overhead groundwire. These construction activities would temporarily disturb Farmland within the SCE Palo Verde Alternative.

The construction activities associated with the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be similar to those described in Section D.6.6.1. New spur roads would be constructed between the main access road and each new tower structure, and the activities and presence of road work construction equipment could temporarily convert areas adjacent to the road, as well as the actual footprint of the access road to non-agricultural use as construction areas. Construction of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would temporarily convert a total of 22.8 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use, including 21.9 acres of Prime Farmland and 0.9 acres of Unique Farmland, as follows:

- Construction associated with the installation of 23 steel lattice towers would temporarily disturb approximately 20.7 acres of Farmland, including approximately 20 acres of Prime Farmland.
- An additional 2.1 acres would be temporarily disturbed through the use of approximately two pulling and splicing stations along the route of this alternative.

This impact would be potentially significant (Class II), but with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) would be mitigated to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure for Impact AG-1: Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)

The SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be constructed across six linear miles of Farmland in the vicinity of PVNGS as described above. Construction activities that could interfere with agricultural operations include the construction of spur roads and 500 kV transmission line. These construction activities could interfere with the ongoing agricultural operations in the vicinity of the PVNGS.

The interference with agricultural operations caused by construction of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be similar to that for the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project and is discussed under Impact AG-2 in Section D.6.6.1. Construction of the spur roads could produce the same impacts as construction of the access road, including temporary interference with agricultural operations and the reduction of agricultural productivity. In addition, the construction of the 500 kV transmission line, including erection of tower structures, foundation installation, and stringing of wire, could also interfere with the ongoing agricultural operations, and could temporarily reduce agricultural productivity in the vicinity of the PVNGS within the SCE Palo Verde Alternative.

Construction activities associated with the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would cause the temporary interference with agricultural operations, and could reduce agricultural productivity in the vicinity of the PVNGS. APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project, and could minimize interferences to agricultural operations by locating tower structures near existing towers or other disturbances, such as field boundaries. Construction activities along the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would interfere with agricultural operations, particularly in the vicinity of PVNGS. These impacts would be potentially significant (Class II), but with the implementation of Mitigation Measures L-1a (Prepare Construction Notification Plan) and AG-1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners) the temporary interference of agricultural operations could be reduced to less than significant.

Mitigation Measures for Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations

L-1a Prepare Construction Notification Plan.

AG-1a Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be located across six miles of Farmland, including 5.6 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland in the vicinity of PVNGS. Operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would include the presence of up to 23 new spur roads and 23 new lattice steel towers within Farmland. The operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative and the presence of these project structures would permanently convert Farmland, specifically Prime Farmland in the vicinity of PVNGS.

Operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would permanently convert a total of 1.2 acres of Farmland, which consist almost entirely of Prime Farmland, to non-agricultural use, as follows:

- The new spur roads would most likely traverse Prime and Unique Farmland, and as a result it would permanently remove 1.0 acre of Farmland and convert it to non-agricultural use as roadways.
- The presence of 23 new lattice steel towers would convert an additional 0.2 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

This impact would be less than significant (Class III) based upon the fact that it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1.[26] No mitigation is required.

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

The SCE Palo Verde Alternative would be located across Farmland in the vicinity of the PVNGS. The operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would result in the presence of up to 23 new spur roads and 23 new lattice steel towers. The operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative and the presence of these new project structures would interfere with agricultural operations, especially in the vicinity of the PVNGS.

The impacts associated with operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative, including the presence of spur roads and a 500 kV transmission line, would be similar to those discussed under Impact AG-2 for the operation of the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project (Section D.6.6.1). The presence of new spur roads would also interfere with agricultural operations similar to the access road in the Harquahala to Kofa NWR segment of the Proposed Project. In addition, the presence of the new 500 kV transmission line could also interfere with agricultural operations, and could result in a permanent decrease in agricultural productivity.

APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project, which would minimize the interferences to agricultural operations by concentrating permanent structures in certain areas. Operation of the SCE Palo Verde Alternative would interfere with some agricultural operations; however, this impact would be less than significant (Class III) because it would occur in an existing utility ROW. No mitigation is required.

D.6.8.3 Harquahala Junction Switchyard Alternative

Environmental Setting

The Harquahala Junction Switchyard Alternative would consist of constructing a new switchyard at the divergence of the Harquahala-Hassayampa and DPV1 transmission lines approximately five miles east of the Harquahala Generating Station (see Figure D.6-1). There are no important farmlands in the vicinity of this proposed switchyard; however, Prime Farmland exists approximately two miles to the west.

[26] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall project impacts resulting in permanent preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant and unmitigable (Class I) impacts to approximately 16 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-3 is associated only for this alternative, and not for the entire project route.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Harquahala Junction Switchyard Alternative would not be constructed on Farmland. The area at the Harquahala Junction consists of land that is not classified as Farmland or Farmland of Local Importance by the NRCS. The primary land uses at the Harquahala Junction would consist of industrial, open space, and recreation, and the impacts to these uses would be discussed in Sections D.4, Land Use, and D.5, Wilderness and Recreation. Therefore, neither construction nor operation of this alternative would convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur from this alternative: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.8.4 Desert Southwest Transmission Project Alternative

Environmental Setting

The Desert Southwest Transmission Project (DSWTP) Alternative would consist of the construction of three new substations/switching stations, and an 118-mile 500 kV transmission line between Blythe, California and Devers Substation (see Figure D.6-10). The DSWTP Alternative would generally follow the same route as the Proposed Project, with the exception of two areas: at its origination to the Midpoint Substation area and in the vicinity of Alligator Rock. In addition, this alternative would include the construction of three new substations/switching stations that would not be required by the Proposed Project.

This alternative would include construction in the Palo Verde Valley, Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, and Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segments of the Proposed Project. As described in Sections 6.2.5 through 6.2.7, these segments include important farmland and Williamson Act lands. The DSWTP Alternative would traverse approximately 7.0 linear miles of important farmland, including 1.3 miles of Prime Farmland, 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland, and 5.4 miles of Farmland of Local Importance within the Palo Verde Valley and Cactus City Rest Area to Devers Substation segments of the Proposed Project. There are Prime Farmlands and Farmland of Local Importance, as well as Williamson Act lands located in the Palo Verde Valley. In addition, there is a small section of Unique Farmland located in unincorporated Riverside County, northeast of Palm Desert. A majority of the land traversed by this alternative has no important farmland data or consists of Other Land. As discussed in Section D.6.1, the lack of important farmland is equivalent to the absence of agricultural operations.

Below are the components of the DSWTP Alternative that would differ from the Proposed Project, and the occurrence of important farmland and Williamson Act lands in the vicinity.

- **Keim Substation/Switching Station.** The Keim Substation/Switching Station would be located near the Blythe Airport and the BEP power plant, east of the center of the City of Blythe. This area primarily consists of Farmland of Local Importance; however, the DSWTP Alternative would pass through almost 1.3 miles of Prime Farmland in the vicinity of MP 1 and 2 located southwest of the proposed substation/switching station locations. There are no Williamson Act lands in the immediate vicinity; however, the closest parcel under a Williamson Act contract is approximately 1.5 miles to the south.

- **Midpoint Substation/Switching Station.** The Midpoint Substation/Switching Station would be located adjacent to the existing DPV1 corridor in the vicinity of the area where the Proposed Project turns west outside of Blythe between MP 8 and 9. This area is not mapped for important farmland, and there are no Williamson Act lands in the vicinity.
- **Substation west of Dillon Road.** A new substation would be constructed near the City of Indio, California, adjacent to the existing DPV1 corridor. The area in the vicinity of this proposed substation is not mapped for important farmland, and no Williamson Act lands are located in the area.
- **Double-Circuit/Two Parallel 500 kV Transmission Lines from Keim to Midpoint Substations/ Switching Stations.** The DSWTP transmission line would be constructed within an existing utility corridor from Keim Substation/Switching Station to the Midpoint Substation/Switching Station. The area in the vicinity of the proposed Keim Substation would consist of Farmland of Local Importance. From the Keim Substation, the transmission line would travel southwest for approximately 1.8 miles where it would traverse Farmland of Local Importance and Prime Farmland. It would then head directly west for approximately seven miles, traversing approximately four miles of Farmland of Local Importance, until it intersected the existing DPV1 ROW. The DSWTP Alternative would not traverse any Williamson Act lands; however, there are parcels under Williamson Act contracts that are approximately 1.5 miles away.
- **Transmission Line Divergence at Alligator Rock.** The DSWTP Alternative would diverge from the DPV1 corridor in the vicinity of Alligator Rock and Desert Center, California, and parallel I-10 to the south for approximately 9.5 miles. The area in the Alligator Rock/Desert Center vicinity has not been mapped for important farmland and there are no Williamson Act lands in the vicinity.

Table D.6-16 lists the important farmland traversed by the DSWTP Alternative.

Table D.6-16. Important Farmland Traversed within the Desert Southwest Transmission Project Alternative

Milepost[1]	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
MP 0 to MP 1; MP 2.5 to MP 6.5	5.4	City of Blythe, California; Riverside County, California	Farmland of Local Importance
MP 1 to MP 2.5	1.3	Riverside County, California	Prime Farmland
MP 98 to MP 99	0.4	Riverside County, California	Unique Farmland

1 Towers have not yet been identified for the DSWTP Alternative.

Construction Impacts

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

The DSWTP Alternative would be constructed across 1.7 linear miles of Farmland (i.e., Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland). The following construction activities would contribute to the temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use: assembly and construction of six lattice steel towers and installation of appropriate structure foundations based upon the assumption that span length would be four towers per mile. The processes needed to complete these construction activities would include building pole section assemblies at a construction yard, and assembling and erecting the towers at each tower site using a crane; and auguring the foundation for each tower to a maximum depth of 35 feet and casting it in place with four concrete piles using heavy equipment (see Impact AG-3, Section D.6.6.4 for more detail).

Figure D.6-10. Agricultural Lands and Williamson Act Lands: Desert Southwest Transmission Project Alternative

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Construction activities within the DSWTP Alternative would cause the temporary conversion of a total of 5.4 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use:

- The installation of six lattice steel towers would temporarily disturb 4.5 acres of Prime Farmland and 0.9 acres of Unique Farmland to non-agricultural use.
- Due to the short distance of traversed Farmland (1.7 miles), most likely the pulling and splicing stations needed to string wire could be located outside of the existing Farmland; however, if the stations would need to be located within any Farmland, any temporary conversion that results would be small.

This impact would be considered less than significant (Class III) because it would be temporary in nature and it would not exceed the threshold set to determine significance of Farmland conversion.[27] No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction would interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The DSWTP Alternative would be constructed across 1.7 linear miles of Farmland. Construction activities within this alternative would include the construction of three substations/switching stations, either a double-circuit 500 kV transmission line or two parallel 500 kV transmission lines from the proposed Keim to Midpoint Substations/Switching Stations, and possibly associated spur roads. These construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations, specifically within the Palo Verde Valley.

The interference to agricultural operations associated with construction of the DSWTP Alternative could include damaging crops or soil, impeding access to certain fields or plots of land, obstructing farm vehicles, or potentially disrupting drainage and irrigation systems (see Section D.6.6.4 for more detail). Construction of the spur roads and one or two parallel 500 kV transmission lines could create temporary interferences to surrounding agricultural operations, including the reduction of agricultural productivity. In addition, the construction of three new substations/switching stations could have similar impacts to those produced with the construction of roads and transmission lines.

Implementation of APM L-4 and APM L-5 would minimize the interference caused to agricultural operations by locating tower structures near existing towers or other disturbances, such as field boundaries. Construction activities associated with the DSWTP Alternative could cause interference to adjacent agricultural operations, especially in the vicinity of the Palo Verde Valley. These impacts would be considered less than significant (Class III) because they would occur within an existing utility ROW and are temporary in nature. No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-5: Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The DSWTP Alternative would not be constructed on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. The closest land under a Williamson Act contract is approximately 1.5 miles away from the beginning portion of this alternative. Therefore construction activities associated with this alternative would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no impacts to Williamson Act lands.

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[27] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall project impacts resulting in temporary preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant, but mitigable (Class II) impacts to approximately 60 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-1 is associated only for this alternative, and not for the entire project route.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The DSWTP Alternative would be located across 1.7 miles of Farmland, including 1.3 miles of Prime Farmland and 0.4 miles of Unique Farmland within the Palo Verde Valley and north of Desert Center. Operation of this alternative would result in the presence of six new lattice steel tower structures and associated spur roads on Farmland.

The presence of these roads and structures would permanently remove approximately 0.3 acres of Farmland, including 0.3 acres of Prime Farmland and less than 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland, from agricultural use, thereby converting it to non-agricultural use. Up to 0.3 acres would be converted to use as spur roads accessing each tower site, while less than 0.1 acres would be utilized as tower sites. Therefore the presence of these structures would permanently preclude the use of approximately 0.3 acres of Farmland for agricultural use. Implementation of APM L-4 and APM L-5 would minimize the amount of Farmland permanently converted to non-agricultural use through the utilization of tubular steel poles or H-frame structures. This impact would be less than significant (Class III) based upon the fact that the total acreage of Farmland impacted would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1. No mitigation is required.

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

The DSWTP Alternative would be located across Farmland, including Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland within the Palo Verde Valley. However, there may be other areas within this segment in which active agricultural operations exist, but have not been classified as Farmland by the DOC FMMP, including Farmland of Local Importance and the areas not mapped for important farmlands. Operation of the DSWTP Alternative would result in the presence of three new substations/switching stations, either a double-circuit 500 kV transmission line or two parallel 500 kV transmission lines, and possibly associated spur roads. The operation of the DSWTP Alternative and the presence of these new structures and roadways could interfere with agricultural operations, especially in the Palo Verde Valley. The types of interferences with agricultural operations associated with the presence of the DSWTP Alternative would be similar to those discussed in Section D.6.6.4.

Implementation of APM L-5 and APM L-6 would minimize interference to agricultural operations in the Palo Verde Valley through the matching of tower spans, aligning towers adjacent or parallel to field boundaries, using smaller-area H-frame structures, and allowing for necessary canal dredging by the Palo Verde Irrigation District. Implementation of APM L-4 would also minimize interference to agricultural operations in areas outside the Palo Verde Valley using similar measures. Operation of the DSWTP Alternative would interfere with agricultural operations; however, this impact would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-6: Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract (No Impact)

The DSWTP Alternative would not be located on or near land under Williamson Act contracts. The closest land under a Williamson Act contract is approximately 1.5 miles away from the beginning portion of this alternative. Therefore presence of the DSWTP Alternative would not conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and there would be no impacts to Williamson Act lands.

D.6.8.5 Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative

Environmental Setting

The Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative diverges from the Proposed Project route and travels north of Desert Center, California, in order to avoid the Alligator Rock Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) (see Figure D.6-4). This alternative would be located within the Proposed Project Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, and as described in Section D.6.2.6, the area in this segment has not been mapped for important farmland because there are no NRCS soil survey data. Therefore the Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative would not traverse land classified as important farmland. In addition, there are no Williamson Act lands in the vicinity of this alternative.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative would not be constructed across Farmland. No important farmland data exists for the full length of this 11.8-mile alternative because the NRCS has not conducted any soil surveys within this area. The FMMP does not provide important farmland data or maps for this area due to the lack of NRCS soil survey data. Therefore the Alligator Rock–North of Desert Center Alternative would not be constructed or operated across land classified as Farmland, and it would create no impacts that would convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur from this alternative: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.8.6 Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative

Environmental Setting

The Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative diverges from the Proposed Project route by paralleling south of I-10 in order to minimize the land traversed in the Alligator Rock ACEC (see Figure D.6-4). This alternative would be located within the Proposed Project Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, and as described in Section D.6.2.6, the area in this segment has not been mapped for important farmland by the DOC FMMP because there is no NRCS soil survey data. Therefore the Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative would not traverse land classified as important farmland. In addition, there are no Williamson Act lands in the vicinity of this alternative.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative would not be constructed across Farmland. No important farmland data or maps exist for the full length of this 4.6-mile alternative. Therefore the Alligator Rock–Blythe Energy Transmission Alternative would not be constructed across land classified as Farmland, and it would create no impacts that would convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur from this alternative: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a

(Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.8.7 Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative

The Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative diverges from the Proposed Project route by paralleling south of I-10 in order to avoid the Alligator Rock ACEC (see Figure D.6-4). This alternative would be located within the Proposed Project Midpoint Substation to Cactus City Rest Area, and as described in Section D.6.2.6, the area in this segment has not been mapped for important farmland by the DOC FMMP because there is no NRCS soil survey data. Therefore the Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative would not traverse any important farmland. In addition, there are no Williamson Act lands in the vicinity of this alternative.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative would not be constructed across Farmland. No important farmland data or maps exist for the full length of this 9.77-mile alternative. Therefore the Alligator Rock–South of I-10 Frontage Alternative would not be constructed or operated across land classified as Farmland, and it would create no impacts that would convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. None of the following impacts would occur from this alternative: Impact AG-1 (Construction activities could temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-2 (Construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-3 (Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use), Impact AG-4 (Operation would interfere with agricultural operations), Impact AG-5a (Construction activities could conflict with a Williamson Act contract), and Impact AG-6a (Operation could conflict with a Williamson Act contract).

D.6.9 Alternatives for West of Devers

D.6.9.1 Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative

Environmental Setting

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would consist of a new 41.3-mile 500 kV transmission line in an existing transmission ROW, originating at the Devers Substation and terminating at the Valley Substation, while traveling through the Cities of Palm Springs, Banning, and Beaumont and unincorporated Riverside County (see Figure D.6-11). The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would traverse a total of 15.2 linear miles of important farmland, as defined in Table D.6-17. The major areas classified as important farmland within this alternative are the San Gorgonio Pass area south of the City of Banning, and the San Jacinto Valley area between the San Jacinto Mountains and the Lakeview Mountains.

Approximately the first 11 miles of this alternative (including the portion through the San Bernardino National Forest and National Monument) would not include any important farmland. However, within the next 12 miles through the San Gorgonio Pass area, the route would traverse approximately 3.7 miles of Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Importance. The next seven miles of this alternative route (through approximately MP DV30) does not have important farmland data. The Devers Valley No. 2 Alternative would then enter the San Jacinto Valley stretching from approximately MP DV30 through MP DV32.5, where it would traverse Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. The alternative alignment would then travel approximately 6.5 miles through scat-

Table D.6-17. Important Farmland Traversed within the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative

Milepost	Length Traversed (miles)	Jurisdiction	Agricultural Classification
MP DV11 to DV16; MP DV19 to DV20	3.7	Riverside County, California	Grazing Land
Scattered between MP DV13 to DV16; MP DV18 to DV19; MP DV20 to DV23; MP DV39 to DV40.5; MP DV40.9 to DV41.2	10.2	Riverside County, California; City of Banning, California	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV30.2 to DV30.9; MP DV32 to DV32.2; MP DV40.5 to DV40.6	0.8	Riverside County, California	Prime Farmland
MP DV31.8 to DV32	0.1	Riverside County, California	Unique Farmland
MP DV32; MP DV32.2 to DV32.3	0.4	Riverside County, California	Farmland of Statewide Importance

tered areas of Farmland of Local Importance, but important farmland does not exist for a majority of the land in this area where there is approximately 24 miles of Other Land. The final 2.3 miles of the alternative route would traverse Farmland of Local Importance and a small amount of Prime Farmland. See Table D.6-17 summarizes information on the important farmland in the vicinity of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative.

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would also traverse 1.8 miles of Williamson Act lands that are classified as Non-Prime Agricultural Land (see Figure D.6-12). These lands are located south of the City of Banning between MP DV21 and MP DV23. Eleven parcels with a total of 219.4 acres would be traversed. None of these eleven parcels are currently in the nonrenewal process, and therefore each is set to automatically renew on January 1st of every year (RCACR, 2006). This alternative route would also pass adjacent to Williamson Act lands classified as Prime Agricultural Lands within the San Jacinto Valley northwest of the City of San Jacinto. See Table D.6-18 for more details on the Williamson Act parcels that would be traversed by the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative.

Table D.6-18. Williamson Act Lands Traversed within the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative

Tower/ Milepost	Assessor's Parcel Number	Length Traversed (miles)	Parcel Size (acres)	Williamson Act Classification	Williamson Act Termination Date	Important Farmland Designation
Tower DV-80	544290008	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process[1]	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.2 to DV21.3	544290029	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.3 to DV21.4	544290006	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.4 to DV21.5	544290028	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.6	544290004	0.1	20.2	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.7	544290027	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.8 to DV21.9	544290002	0.1	20.1	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
MP DV21.9 to DV22	544290026	0.1	19.6	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
Tower DV-83	544250017	0.2	18.0	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance; Grazing Land
Tower DV-84	544250016	0.2	19.8	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance
Tower DV-85	544250002	0.3	21.3	Non-Prime	Not in nonrenewal process	Farmland of Local Importance

1 The Williamson Act contract nonrenewal process can be initiated by either the local jurisdiction or landowner, and consists of a nine-year non-renewal period during which time the annual tax assessment gradually increases until the end of the nine-year period when the contract is terminated (DOC, 2006f).

Construction Impacts

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

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be constructed across 1.3 miles of Farmland, including 0.8 miles of Prime Farmland, 0.4 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland as discussed above. The following construction activities would contribute to the temporary conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use within Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative: assembly and erection of four lattice steel towers, and installation of appropriate structure foundations.

The assembly and erection of the four lattice steel towers within Farmland would require full assembly at each tower site and erection using a crane. The foundation installation for lattice steel towers would require auguring to a maximum depth of 35 feet. Using concrete hauled to each tower site by a standard concrete truck, the lattice steel towers would be cast-in-place with four concrete piles. This process of installing structures would create 1.8 acres of temporary disturbance to Prime Farmland, 0.9 acres to Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.9 acres to Unique Farmland until completion of construction and the area was restored to its pre-construction condition. Due to the short distance of Farmland traversed (1.3 miles), the use of splicing and pulling stations every three miles along the route to string the wire most likely could be located outside the existing Farmland.

Figure D.6-11. Agricultural Lands: Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative MP DV0.0–DV41.3
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Figure D.6-12. Williamson Act Lands: Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative MP DV0.0–DV41.3
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Therefore construction activities within the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would cause the temporary disturbance of a total of 3.6 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use. This impact would be considered less than significant (Class III) because it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1, and would be temporary in nature.[28] No mitigation is required.

Impact AG-2: Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class III)

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be constructed across Farmland. Construction activities that could interfere with agricultural operations would include the construction of a 500 kV transmission line and associated spur roads. These construction activities could interfere with agricultural operations along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative.

Clearing and grading could be required to build new spur roads in order to provide access to each new tower site from the main access road. A spur road may not need to be built to each tower structure; depending on the final location of the structure there may be access to the structure from the existing access road. The presence and use of heavy equipment, including road graders, dozers, excavators, and trucks, needed to construct the new spur roads could 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. In addition, the installation of tower structures, foundations, and stringing of wire would interfere with adjacent agricultural operations similar to road construction. Due to the short distance of Farmland traversed (1.3 miles), the use of splicing and pulling stations every three miles along the route to string the wire would be located outside the existing Farmland. However, if these stations needed to be located on Farmland or other potential agricultural operations, the interference it would produce would be small due to the short distances of these areas traversed. These interferences could also result in a temporary decrease in agricultural productivity.

APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project, and could minimize interferences to agricultural operations by locating tower structures near existing towers or other disturbances, such as field boundaries. Construction activities along the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would interfere with agricultural operations, particularly in the San Gorgonio Pass. However, these impacts would be less than significant (Class III) because they would be temporary in nature and would occur in an existing transmission line ROW. No mitigation is required.

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

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be constructed across 1.8 miles of land under Williamson Act contracts classified as Non-Prime Agricultural Land. As discussed above in the Environmental Setting, the Williamson Act lands within this segment consist of 11 parcels. Six lattice steel tower structures and up to six spur roads would be constructed on these identified Williamson Act lands.

The aforementioned structures would be constructed using similar processes to those discussed in Impacts AG-1 and AG-2 above. The pulling and splicing stations needed to string wire would be placed on or near Williamson Act lands, and construction activities would temporarily disturb 5.4 acres of Non-Prime Williamson Act lands. Given that the amount of acreage disturbance would not exceed the significance

[28] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall project impacts resulting in temporary preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant, but mitigable (Class II) impacts to approximately 60 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-1 is associated only for this alternative, and not for the entire project route.

thresholds set in Section D.6.5.1, and the temporary nature of this disturbance, this impact would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

Operational Impacts

Impact AG-3: Operation would permanently convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class III)

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be located across 1.3 miles of Farmland, including 0.8 miles of Prime Farmland, 0.4 miles of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and 0.1 miles of Unique Farmland. Operation of this alternative would result in the presence of four new lattice steel tower structures and associated spur roads on Farmland.

The presence of these roads and structures would permanently remove approximately 0.3 acres of Farmland, including 0.1 acres of Prime Farmland, less than 0.1 acres of Farmland of Statewide Importance, and less than 0.1 acres of Unique Farmland, from agricultural use, thereby converting it to non-agricultural use. Up to 0.2 acres would be converted to use as spur roads accessing each tower site, while less than 0.1 acres would be utilized as tower sites. Therefore the presence of these structures would permanently preclude the use of 0.3 acres of Farmland for agricultural use. Implementation of APM L-4 would minimize the footprint of the tower structures through the utilization of tubular steel poles. This impact would be less than significant (Class III) based upon the fact that it would not exceed the threshold set to determine the significance of permanent conversion of Farmland, as discussed in Section D.6.5.1.[29] No mitigation is required.

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

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be located across Farmland. As presented under Impacts AG-3 above, operation of the Proposed Project would result in the presence of a new 500 kV transmission line and associated spur roads. The operation of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative and the presence of these new structures and roadways could interfere with agricultural operations along the route of this alternative. The presence of new roads across agricultural operations could divide farm properties, which could 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. New roadways 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. The presence and operation of other components of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative, including the transmission line, would interfere with agricultural operations similar to new roadways.

APM L-4 would be implemented as part of the Proposed Project, which would minimize the interferences to agricultural operations by concentrating permanent structures in certain areas. Under APM L-4, tower spans would be matched to existing transmission structures; towers would be located adjacent to or parallel to agricultural field boundaries, and would avoid span-sensitive features; and tubular steel poles would be used to reduce the footprint of transmission structures. By incorporating APM L-4 into the Proposed Project, impacts would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

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[29] Section D.6.5.3 describes the overall project impacts resulting in permanent preclusion of Farmland. As a whole, the Proposed Project would create significant and unmitigable (Class I) impacts to approximately 16 acres of Farmland. The Class III determination for Impact AG-3 is associated only for this alternative, and not for the entire project route.

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

The Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would be located across 1.8 miles of Williamson Act land classified as Non-Prime Agricultural Land south of the City of Banning. As discussed above in the Environmental Setting, the Williamson Act lands within this segment consist of 11 parcels. Operation of the Devers-Valley No. 2 Alternative would result in the presence of six new lattice steel tower structures and a maximum of six spur roads, which would permanently remove 0.3 acres of non-prime Williamson Act land. Given that the amount of acreage disturbance would not exceed the significance thresholds set in Section D.6.5.1, this impact would be less than significant (Class III). No mitigation is required.

D.6.10 Environmental Impacts of the No Project Alternative

The No Project Alternative is defined in Section C.6. The No Project Alternative includes the assumption that existing transmission lines and power plants would continue to operate. The effects that these facilities cause on the existing environment would not change, so no new impacts would occur from continuing operation of the existing transmission lines and power plants. Also, under the No Project Alternative, the proposed DPV2 project would not be constructed, so the impacts associated with construction and operation of the project would not occur. Avoided impacts would include a temporary or permanent conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural uses, such as roadways or tower structures. Without construction or operation of the Proposed Project, there would be no interference of agricultural operations; neither would there be a temporary reduction or permanent preclusion of agricultural productivity. In particular, no impacts would occur to agricultural resources in the Harquahala Valley/ Harquahala Plain region of Maricopa County, Arizona, or to the Palo Verde Valley region of California.

The first component of the No Project Alternative is the continuation of ongoing demand-side actions, including energy conservation and distributed generation. These actions would result in a reduction of energy consumption though a shift of energy use to off-peak periods. Distributed generation facilities would also be installed for a greater number of small businesses and retail electricity customers. Any impacts that would occur to agricultural resources from these actions would be attributed to the siting of distributed generation facilities on Farmland or in areas that would interfere with agricultural operations.

The second component of the No Project Alternative is the continuation of supply-side actions, resulting in potentially increased generation within California or increased transmission into California to serve anticipated growth in electricity consumption. Depending on the location of new generation and transmission infrastructure, impacts from new power plants and new transmission lines to agriculture would be similar to the Proposed Project. If new facilities are sited in rural and agricultural areas, these facilities would potentially contribute to temporary impacts to agricultural operations and a permanent conversion of Farmland.

D.6.11 Mitigation Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Table

Table D.6-19 presents the mitigation monitoring table for Agriculture.

Table D.6-19. Mitigation Monitoring Program – Agriculture

IMPACT AG-1	Construction activities would temporarily convert Farmland to non-agricultural use (Class II)
MITIGATION MEASURE	AG-1a: Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners Sixty (60) days prior to the start of project construction, Southern California Edison (SCE) shall secure a signed agreement with property owners of Farmland (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland) and Williamson Act lands 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 Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Williamson Act lands 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 Farmland or Williamson Act land will be temporarily disturbed in order 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 Proposed Project. SCE shall provide proof of the continued use of Farmland and/or Williamson Act lands through the submittal of a signed agreement between an individual property owner and SCE. The signed agreements shall be submitted to the CPUC and BLM for review and approval prior to the start of construction.
Location	Locations where 10 acres or more of Farmland and/or Williamson Act land are temporarily disturbed.
Monitoring / Reporting Action	CPUC/BLM monitors verify that signed agreements between SCE and affected landowners have been submitted, and ensure that construction schedules occur during time periods agreed upon in the agreement and that agreed upon restoration occurs.
Effectiveness Criteria	Affected landowners are in agreement with construction activities
Responsible Agency	CPUC, BLM Phoenix, Yuma, and Palm Springs Field offices
Timing	Sixty (60) days prior to the start of project construction
IMPACT AG-2	Construction activities would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)
MITIGATION MEASURE	AG-1a: Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners See above.
Location	See above.
Monitoring / Reporting Action	See above.
Effectiveness Criteria	See above.
Responsible Agency	See above.
Timing	See above.

Table D.6-19. Mitigation Monitoring Program – Agriculture

MITIGATION MEASURE	L-1a: Prepare Construction Notification Plan. Forty-five days prior to construction, SCE shall prepare and submit a Construction Notification Plan to the CPUC and the BLM for approval. The Plan shall identify the procedures to ensure that SCE will inform property and business owners of the location and duration of construction, identify approvals that are needed prior to posting or publication of construction notices, and include template copies of public notices and advertisements (i.e., formatted text). To ensure effective notification of construction activities, the plan shall address at a minimum the following components: • Public notice mailer. Fifteen days prior to construction, a public notice mailer shall be prepared. The notice shall identify construction activities that would restrict, block, or require a detour to access existing residential properties, retail and commercial businesses, wilderness and Recreation facilities, and public facilities (e.g., schools and memorial parks). The notice shall state the type of construction activities that will be conducted, and the location and duration of construction. SCE shall mail the notice to all residents or property owners within 300 feet of the right-of-way and to specific public agencies with facilities that could be impacted by construction. If construction delays of more than seven days occur, an additional notice shall be prepared and distributed. • Newspaper advertisements. Fifteen days prior to construction, newspaper advertisements shall be placed in local newspapers and bulletins. The advertisement shall state when and where construction will occur and provide information on the public liaison person and hotline identified below. • Public venue notices. Thirty days prior to construction, notice of construction shall be posted at public venues such as trail crossings, rest stops, desert centers, resource management offices (e.g., BLM field offices, San Bernardino National Forest Ranger Station), and other public venues to inform residents and visitors to the purpose and schedule of construction activities. For public trail closures, SCE shall post information on the trail detour at applicable resource management offices and post the notice within two miles north and south of the detour. For Recreation facilities, the notice shall be posted along the access routes to known Recreational destinations that would be restricted, blocked, or detoured and shall provide information on alternative Recreation areas that may be used during the closure of these facilities. Public liaison person and toll-free information hotline. SCE shall identify and provide a public liaison person before and during construction to respond to concerns of neighboring property owners about noise, dust, and other construction disturbance. Procedures for reaching the public liaison officer via telephone or in person shall be included in notices distributed to the public. SCE shall also establish a toll-free telephone number for receiving questions or complaints during construction and shall develop procedures for responding to callers. Procedures for handling and responding to calls shall be addressed in the Construction Notification Plan.
Location	Construction activity in all segments.
Monitoring / Reporting Action	CPUC/BLM monitor verifies that SCE submits Construction Notification Plan, which identifies complete notification and public inquiry process.
Effectiveness Criteria	Residents and landowners are informed of construction activities; procedures established and documented for taking and responding to construction comments and concerns.
Responsible Agency	CPUC; BLM Phoenix, Yuma, and Palm Springs Field Offices.
Timing	Forty-five days prior to construction for Construction Notification Plan.

Table D.6-19. Mitigation Monitoring Program – Agriculture

IMPACT AG-4	Operation would interfere with agricultural operations (Class II)
MITIGATION MEASURE	AG-4a: 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 agricultural operations. Specifically, SCE shall comply with the following measures when siting transmission towers and splicing/pulling stations within areas where active 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 match tower spans with existing DPV1 towers within agricultural land. SCE shall document and provide proof of compliance with the above listed items 90 days prior to the start of Proposed Project construction. This documentation shall be submitted to the CPUC and the BLM for review and approval prior to the start of construction, and reviewed with affected landowners during coordination presented in Mitigation Measure AG 1a (Establish agreement and coordinate construction activities with agricultural landowners).
Location	Locations where 10 acres or more of Farmland is permanently removed.
Monitoring / Reporting Action	CPUC/BLM monitors review submitted compliance documents
Effectiveness Criteria	SCE has located towers and pulling/splicing stations in areas with least interference to agriculture; landowners have reviewed locations
Responsible Agency	CPUC, BLM Phoenix, Yuma, and Palm Springs Field offices
Timing	Ninety (90) days prior to the start of project construction

D.6.12 References

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