

Section 3.7

3.7 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

This section describes existing conditions and the potential hazards and hazardous materials impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Project and alternatives.

3.7.1 Existing Conditions

The Proposed Project is located in northwestern Riverside County and southwestern San Bernardino County. Elements of the Proposed Project are located in the incorporated Cities of Beaumont, Banning, and Yucaipa as well as unincorporated Riverside County and San Bernardino County.

3.7.1.1 Methane Areas

The County of Riverside has designated Preliminary Methane Investigation Areas based on previous land uses. These areas, which were previously used for stockyards, chicken ranching, etc., may have an onsite methane problem. The potential methane hazard must be assessed before any structures are constructed; structures for human occupation are of primary concern (Jones, 2005). Part of the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line route alternative falls within the Methane Area between mileposts 3.17 and 5.91. Figure 3.7-1 shows the designated Methane Area with respect to the project area.

3.7.1.2 Wildfires

Wildfires are a significant hazard in much of California. The Pass Area section of Riverside County's General Plan shows that a notable portion of the Proposed Project lies within the high fire probability zone, including sections of both the proposed and alternative subtransmission line routes and both the Preferred and Alternate Sites (Riverside County, 2003). High fire risk on the southerly 115 kV subtransmission line route is located between mileposts 0 and 3.17, between mileposts 8.68 and 9.2, and between mileposts 9.71 and 10.32. Along the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line route, the high fire risk is noted between mileposts 0 and 5.62 and between mileposts 9.91 and 11.93. The rest of the project area within Riverside County has a low probability rating. Figure 3.7-2 denotes both the low probability zone and the high probability zone, which has additional building requirements due to identified fire hazards.

Zanja Substation and Banning Substation are located within urban areas, where wildfires are not considered an issue. However, the Mill Creek Communications Site is in an area considered at high risk for wildfires (John McMains, City of Yucaipa). The proposed fiber optic line would pass through areas of high fire risk in both San Bernardino County and Riverside County (Riverside County 2003).

3.7.1.3 Hazardous Substances

An Environmental Data Resources Inc. radius report was prepared for the Preferred Site (Site 33). It identified three sites with potentially hazardous substances within a one mile radius. All of these sites are located at lower elevations. They are at least 0.25 miles away. Two of the sites represent cleanups of petroleum-impacted soils and the third noted underground storage tanks. Because of distance and elevation, there are no known hazardous substances on Site 33 (EDR, 2006)

An Environmental Assessment, Phase I was conducted for Site 38 identifying a nursery operation with the potential for contamination from agricultural chemicals. Subsequent soil testing found low concentrations of agricultural chemicals.

3.7.1.4 Banning Airport

The Banning Airport is located near the eastern end of both the northerly and southerly 115 kV subtransmission line routes out of Banning Substation. It is owned by the City of Banning and operated by the Riverside County Land Management Agency. The airport provides fuel and aircraft storage for small twin engine planes and helicopters.

3.7.1.5 Banning High School

Banning High School is located on Westward Avenue and San Gorgonio Avenue in the City of Banning. It is approximately 2,400 feet away from Banning Substation and the southerly 115 kV subtransmission line route.

3.7.2 Significance Criteria

Impacts to hazards and hazardous materials are considered potentially significant if the project:

- Creates a significant hazard to the public or environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous waste
- Creates a significant hazard to the public or environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment
- Emits hazardous emissions or handles hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or wastes within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school
- Is located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment
- For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of the of a public airport or public use airport, results in

a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area

- For a project within vicinity of a private air strip, results in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area
- Impairs implementation of or physically interferes with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan
- Exposes people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands

3.7.3 Proposed Project Impacts

3.7.3.1 Construction

3.7.3.1.1 Wildfires. High fire risk on the proposed southerly 115 kV subtransmission line is located between mileposts 0 and 3.17, between mileposts 8.68 and 9.2, and between mileposts 9.71 and 10.32. The rest of the project area within Riverside County has a low probability rating. Figure 3.7-2 denotes the high probability zone, which has additional building requirements due to identified fire hazards. The Mill Creek Communications Site is also in an area considered at high risk for wildfires. Portions of the fiber optic line would pass through areas of moderate to high fire risk. Construction has the potential to create sparks from mechanical equipment operation, welding, gasoline and diesel engines, electrical equipment, and cigarette smoking. Construction related fire hazards could cause fires. Risks related to fire caused by construction would be reduced to less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measure HAZ-1.

3.7.3.1.2 Hazardous Substances. Hazardous materials to be used during the construction of the Proposed Project include fuels, oil, and lubricants. There are no feasible alternatives to these materials for operation of construction vehicles and equipment and best management practices would be implemented during construction to reduce the potential for or exposure to accidental spills or fires involving the use of hazardous materials.

Due to the low volume and low toxicity of the hazardous materials to be used during the construction of the Proposed Project, the potential for environmental impacts from hazardous material incidents is less than significant. The most likely incidents involving these hazardous materials are associated with minor spills or drips. Impacts from such incidents would be avoided by thoroughly cleaning up minor spills as soon as they occur. A site-specific Construction Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (see Section 4.8, Hydrology and Water Quality for more detail) would be followed to ensure quick response to minor spills and minimal impacts to the environment.

As required by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, construction personnel handling hazardous materials would be trained to understand the hazards

associated with these materials and would be instructed in the proper methods for storing, handling, and using these hazardous materials. The on-site construction foreman would ensure that all health and safety guidelines and regulations involving hazardous materials handling are followed during the construction phase of the Proposed Project.

The nearest school, Banning High School, is located approximately 0.5 miles away from Banning Substation and the southerly 115 kV subtransmission line route. Any construction staging areas would be located over 0.25 miles from the school. Therefore, the project would not expose the school to hazardous substances.

Site 33 is not located on a list of hazardous materials sites. In the event that contaminated soil is encountered during excavation activities at the substation site or along the subtransmission line route, the soil would be segregated, sampled, and tested to determine appropriate disposal/treatment options. If the soil is classified as hazardous (using federal or state standards, whichever is more stringent), the soil would be properly profiled, manifested and transported to a Class I Landfill or other appropriate soil treatment or recycling facility.

3.7.3.1.3 Wood Subtransmission Pole Removal. The wood poles that would be removed as part of the subtransmission line work would be either returned to the manufacturer, disposed of in a Class I hazardous waste landfill, or disposed of in the lined portion of a RWQCB-approved municipal landfill. The wood poles would be completely removed, including the portion below the ground surface, and the holes would be backfilled with imported fill in combination with any available fill material available from the installation of the steel poles. After the subtransmission lines are transferred to the new steel poles, any remaining distribution line conductor that can not be used by SCE would be delivered to a certified recycling facility.

3.7.3.1.4 Emergency Response. SCE would obtain an encroachment permit or similar authorization from the applicable agency with jurisdiction at locations where the construction activities would occur within or above the public road right-of-way. The encroachment permit would be obtained prior to conducting work within or above a right-of-way. The specific requirements of the applicable transportation agency may require traffic safety measures at encroachment locations, including detouring all traffic off the roadway at the construction location or implementation of a controlled continuous traffic break while stringing operations are performed. Encroachment permits would also restrict road closures to off-peak periods to avoid excessive traffic congestion, where necessary. The specific agency requirements would be included as stipulations in the required encroachment permits. Compliance with the encroachment permit conditions (such as those measures described above) would ensure that potential impacts associated with short-term lane closures are less than significant.

Emergency response time is defined as the speed at which fire, police, and ambulance service effectively reacts to an emergency or emergency call. Currently the Proposed Project does

not interfere with any streets, or airports; therefore, it would not interfere with an adopted emergency response plan. However, during construction, there may be times when one lane of traffic in a particular portion of the project would have to be closed. This may interfere with emergency response times for emergency service providers. If one lane of traffic would have to be closed, then SCE would inform the transportation department of the local jurisdiction for their input and approval. This ensures that there would be a less than significant impact on emergency response services.

In summary, project construction impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

3.7.3.2 Operational Impacts

3.7.3.2.1 Wildfires. High fire risk on the proposed 115 kV subtransmission line is located between mileposts 0 and 3.17, between mileposts 8.68 and 9.2, and between mileposts 9.71 and 10.32. The rest of the project area within Riverside County has a low probability rating. Figure 3.7-2 denotes the high probability zone. The Mill Creek Communications Site is also in an area considered at high risk for wildfires. The impact of potential fire hazards would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measure HAZ-1.

3.7.3.2.2 Hazardous Substances. Operation of the Proposed Project would not require the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials.

The proposed transformer banks contain mineral oil that could leak or spill if the transformers were damaged from a seismic event, fire or other unforeseen incident. To minimize potential impacts, the design of the substation would provide containment and/or diversionary structures or equipment to prevent discharge of an oil spill as described in the Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) requirements (40 CFR Part 112.1 through Part 112.7). An SPCC Plan would be prepared by SCE before any oil-containing equipment is brought to the substation site.

3.7.3.2.3 Emergency Response. Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not block roads or impede emergency access in the area. Maintenance would be conducted in accordance with traffic requirements of the local jurisdiction. Therefore, the operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or evacuation plan. The impact on emergency response services would be less than significant.

3.7.3.2.4 Banning Airport. The Proposed Project, in proximity to the public Banning Airport, would require the replacement of existing wood poles with steel poles that are approximately five feet taller than the existing poles. SCE would comply with the Riverside County Airport Land Use Plan. This is discussed further in section 3.9, Land Use and

Planning. The Proposed Project would not result in a safety hazard to people working or residing in the area, and the impacts would be less than significant.

3.7.3.2.5 Banning High School. The California State Board of Education requires that schools be sited more than 100 feet from the edge of the right-of-way of 100-110 kV lines; 150 feet from 220-230 kV lines; and 250 feet from 345 kV lines. Because the school is located approximately 2,300 feet away from the southerly 115 kV subtransmission lines, there is a less than significant impact to Banning High School.

In summary, impacts to hazards and hazardous materials due to operation of the Proposed Project would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

3.7.3.3 Applicant Proposed Mitigation Measures

HAZ-1. SCE would develop a fire management plan for the construction and operation phases for both the substation and the sections of the subtransmission line routes classified with a high risk for wildfires.

3.7.4 Alternatives

3.7.4.1 Northerly 115 kV Subtransmission Line Route Alternative

Construction and operation of the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line route would have similar impacts to the southerly 115 kV subtransmission line route. Unlike the southerly route, the northerly 115 kV subtransmission line is not located near a school. However, a portion of the northerly line route would fall in a designated Methane Area. In addition, a portion of the northerly line route is located within a high fire probability zone, requiring the implementation of mitigation measure HAZ-1.

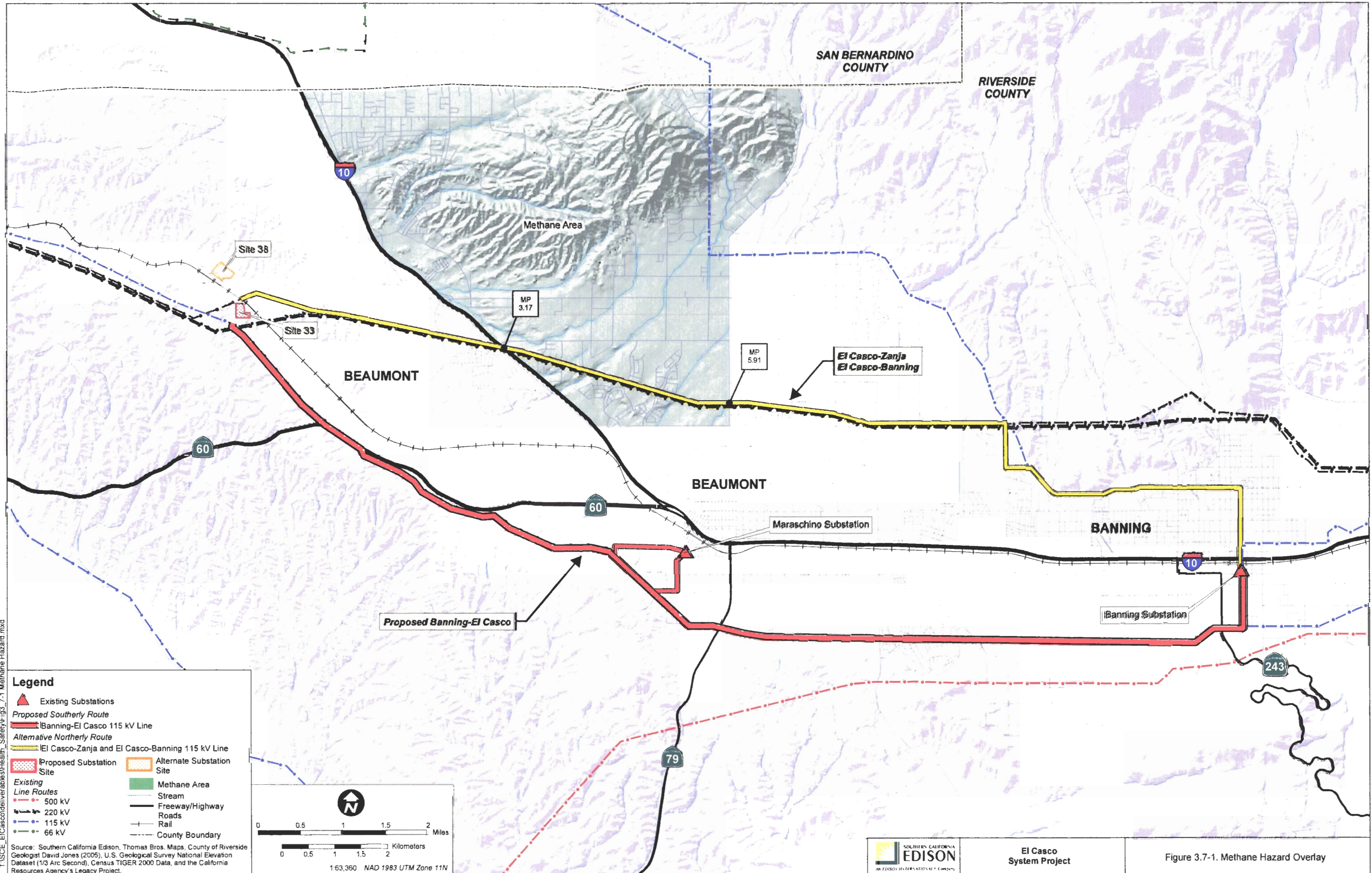
The Methane Area is located between mileposts A1 MP 3.17 and A1 MP 5.91. See Figure 3.7-1. The potential methane hazard must be assessed before any structures are constructed; structures for human occupation are of primary concern (Jones, 2005). This is an issue for both construction and the ongoing maintenance of the facility. SCE would contact Riverside County, Planning Department for a determination on requirements for construction within the Methane Area, if this route is used. In summary, impacts to hazards and hazardous materials due to the construction and operation of the subtransmission line route alternative would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

3.7.4.2 Site 38 (Alternate Site)

An Environmental Assessment, Phase I was conducted for Site 38 identifying a nursery operation with the potential for contamination from agricultural chemicals. Subsequent soil testing found low concentrations of agricultural chemicals. Prior to construction, SCE would perform a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) to assess the area of planned

ground disturbance and handling/storage for potential contamination prior to initiation of construction. Site 38 is located within a high fire probability zone, requiring the implementation of mitigation measure HAZ-1. In summary, impacts to hazards and hazardous materials due to the construction and operation of the substation at the Site 38 site alternative would be less than significant with the implementation of mitigation measures.

Figure 3.7-1, Methane Hazard Overlay



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Legend

- ▲ Existing Substations
- Proposed Southerly Route
- Banning-El Casco 115 kV Line
- Alternative Northerly Route
- El Casco-Zanja and El Casco-Banning 115 kV Line
- Proposed Substation Site
- Alternate Substation Site
- Methane Area
- Stream
- Freeway/Highway
- Roads
- Rail
- - - County Boundary
- Existing Line Routes
- 500 kV
- 220 kV
- 115 kV
- 66 kV

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Kilometers

1:63,360 NAD 1983 UTM Zone 11N

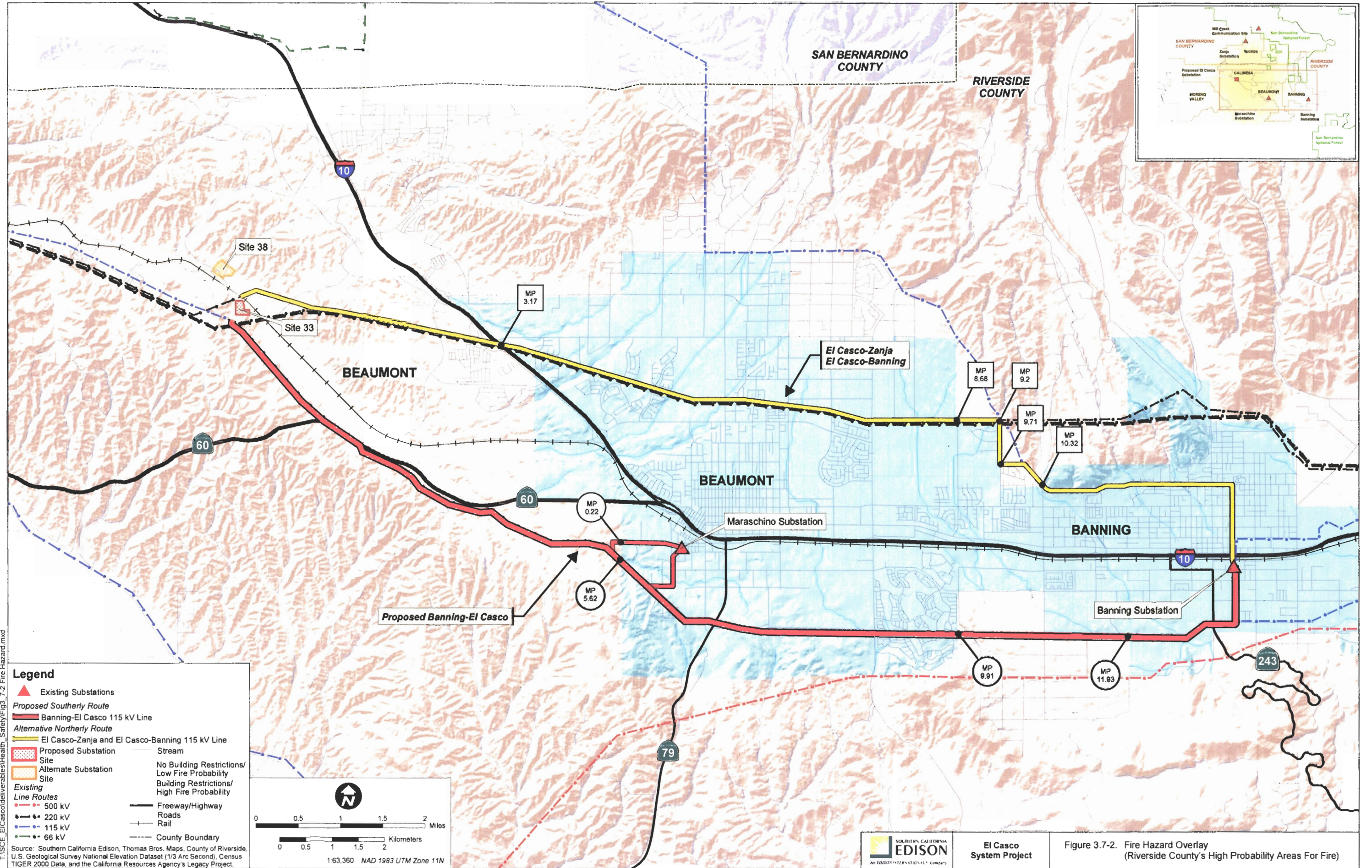
Source: Southern California Edison, Thomas Bros. Maps, County of Riverside Geologist David Jones (2005), U.S. Geological Survey National Elevation Dataset (1/3 Arc Second), Census TIGER 2000 Data, and the California Resources Agency's Legacy Project.



El Casco System Project

Figure 3.7-1. Methane Hazard Overlay

Figure 3.7-2, Fire Hazard Overlay (Riverside County's High Probability Areas for Fire)



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