4.4 Biological Resources

This section describes the environmental and regulatory setting and discusses impacts associated with the construction and operation of the Santa Barbara County Reliability Project (proposed project) with respect to biological resources. The work associated with the Getty, Goleta, Ortega, Ventura, and Santa Barbara Substations would occur within existing structures and would have no impact on biological resources; therefore, these components of the proposed project are not discussed further in this section. Impacts related to water resources are discussed in Section 4.9, "Hydrology and Water Quality," and impacts related to soils are discussed in Section 4.6, "Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources."

4.4.1 Environmental Setting

Regional Context

The proposed project would be located north and east of U.S. Highway 101, between 1 and 6 miles from the California coastline. Elevations vary throughout the project area, which covers portions of the coastal plain and the nearby foothills and mountains of the western Transverse Ranges. Elevations range from 31 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) near the Carpinteria Substation at the western end of the proposed project, to 1,500 feet AMSL along Segment 4, to more than 1,800 feet AMSL along portions of Segment 3B near Rincon Peak.

The majority of the proposed project would be located on private lands, while three tower sites and associated access and spur roads in Segment 4 would be located within the Santa Barbara Front, a geographical unit of lands under the jurisdiction of the Los Padres National Forest and owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Land use in the immediate vicinity of Segments 3A, 3B, and 4 of the project area is dominated by agriculture (cattle grazing and orchards) and "open-space" areas covered by native vegetation communities, with low-density residential development and commercial areas (nurseries and row crops). Land use in the immediate vicinity of Segments 1 and 2 of the proposed project is dominated by agricultural areas used for cattle grazing and open space areas covered by native vegetation communities.

The proposed project would cross the headwaters of multiple small streams and creeks that flow into the ocean. Portions of the proposed project would be located in the lower gradient reaches of the Santa Clara River and Ventura River watersheds. While groundwater and surface water sources in the project area have been extensively developed for domestic and agricultural uses, the riparian corridors they support contrast sharply with an otherwise dry landscape.

The east-west orientation of the mountains in the vicinity of the proposed project combined with the region's distinct Mediterranean/marine climate, results in a unique botanic zone and mix of species. Predominately north- or south-facing slopes are dominated by alternating bands of sedimentary rock formations, with oak woodlands at lower elevations. Conifers exist in small patches along ridgetops and on north-facing slopes. Noxious weed infestations, including black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*), Cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*), and other non-native species occur throughout the project area, especially along road and trail corridors.

4.4.1.1 Data Sources and Survey Methods

Literature Search and Review

Information on biological resources within the project area[1] was gathered preliminarily through desktop analysis and was supplemented with field surveys conducted by Southern California Edison (SCE, or the applicant) and its biological consultants. Results of field surveys, as reported in several technical reports provided by the applicant, were reviewed, including a biological technical report (Appendix D); several focused survey reports (e.g., sensitive plants, raptor nests, burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), habitat assessments for specific special status species); and a wetland and other waters delineation report (Table 4.4-1). Desktop analyses were conducted by reviewing available scientific literature and accessing publically available agency databases and resources. The following list identifies each data resource that was reviewed during desktop analyses:

- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CNDDB 2013) records search of the following U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles: Carpinteria, Matilija, Pitas Point, Saticoy, Ventura, and White Ledge Peak, as well as the 11 surrounding quadrangles: Camarillo, Hildreth Peak, Lion Canyon, Little Pine Mountain, Ojai, Old Man Mountain, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Santa Paula Peak, Santa Barbara, and Wheeler Springs;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (USFWS 2013a) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (NMFS 2013) list of endangered, threatened, and proposed species for the Carpinteria, Matilija, Pitas Point, Saticoy, Ventura, and White Ledge Peak, as well as the 11 surrounding quadrangles: Camarillo, Hildreth Peak, Lion Canyon, Little Pine Mountain, Ojai, Old Man Mountain, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Santa Paula Peak, Santa Barbara, and Wheeler Springs;
- USFWS Critical Habitat Portal (USFWS 2013b) and NMFS (NMFS 2013);
- State & Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Animals of California list (CDFW 2013a);
- Fully Protected Animals list (CDFW n.d.);
- State & Federally Listed Threatened, Endangered and Rare Plants of California list (CDFW 2013b);
- Special Animals List (CDFG 2011);
- Special Plants List (CDFW 2013c);
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) (CNPS 2013) online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California for Carpinteria, Matilija, Pitas Point, Saticoy, Ventura, and White Ledge Peak, as well as the 11 surrounding quadrangles: Camarillo, Hildreth Peak, Lion Canyon, Little Pine Mountain, Ojai, Old Man Mountain, Oxnard, Santa Paula, Santa Paula Peak, Santa Barbara, and Wheeler Springs;

[1] For the Biological Resources section, the Project Area is defined as all proposed project sites where ground disturbance could occur, including crane pads, laydowns areas, pull-tensioning sites, tower foundation removal sites, associated yards, new spur roads, and sections of existing roads to be widened or improved.

1

Table 4.4-1 Biological Field Surveys Conducted for the Proposed Project

Survey Focus	Date	Method	Survey Extent	1	Getty Tap	2	3A	3B	4
Vegetation types and special status species habitat (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	May–June 1999	Reconnaissance surveys at tower sites to describe and map the vegetation and evaluate the potential for the habitats to support special status plant and wildlife species	50-foot radius around towers	X		X	X		X
Vegetation and habitat (changes since 1999 survey) (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	October 2005	Follow-up visit to document any changes to general habitat	50-foot radius around towers				X		
Vegetation and habitat (changes since 1999 survey) (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	September 2007	Follow-up visit to document any changes to general habitat and to survey previously un-visited sites	50-foot radius around towers	X					X
Vegetation and special status species habitat (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	December 2008, January–June 2009	Reconnaissance surveys at 3 tower sites on USFS land, and along some access roads, to describe and map the vegetation and to evaluate the potential for the habitats to support special status plant and wildlife species	50-foot radius around tower sites, and along access roads						X
Vegetation types and special status species habitat suitability (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	February–March 2012	Reconnaissance surveys to describe and map the vegetation and to evaluate the potential for the habitats to support special status plant and wildlife species; surveys were also specifically focused on nesting raptors and burrowing owls	Survey area (project area and 500-foot buffer)	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4.4-1 Biological Field Surveys Conducted for the Proposed Project

Survey Focus	Date	Method	Survey Extent	1	Getty Tap	2	3A	3B	4
Special status plant species (Appendix D, SCE 2012, BioResources 2013a)	May 2012, April 2013	In 2012: Targeted special status plant species with a known presence or a "High" or "Moderate" potential to be present. In 2013: focused on known locations, suitable habitat, and sites where genus of special-status species not in bloom were located but not identified in 2012.	100-foot buffer of alignment in areas where suitable habitat for special status species is present based on reconnaissance surveys.		X			X	X
Protected trees (BioResources 2013b)	December 2012, January, March-April 2013	Individual protected trees assessed to determine potential impacts. If determined to potentially be impacted, tree measured for size, health, location, etc.	2012: Reconnaissance surveys. 2013: Access roads (10-foot buffer) and construction areas where protected trees were previous identified.	X	X			X	X
Special status wildlife species (other than specific species identified in this table) (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	May–June 1999, February–March 2012	Incidental observations during vegetation and wildlife habitat surveys; no focused surveys for most special status wildlife species were conducted	50-foot radius around towers (1999); survey area (2012)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nesting raptors (Appendix D, SCE 2012, BioResources 2013c)	May 2012, April-May 2013	Driving access roads, walking at tower sites to identify active raptor nests	2012: Project area and in 1-mile buffer. 2013: Project area and 500-foot buffer, also any nests found in 2012.		X			X	X

Table 4.4-1 Biological Field Surveys Conducted for the Proposed Project

Survey Focus	Date	Method	Survey Extent	1	Getty Tap	2	3A	3B	4
February 2012 – January 2014 Burrowing owl surveys (BioResources 2014)	Habitat Assessment: February-March 2012 Breeding season: April-June 2012; March-June 2013 Non-breeding season: October 2012-January 2013; September 2013-January 2014	Habitat assessment and surveys adhered to the protocol outlined in CDFW (2012)	Habitat assessment occurred in project area and 500-foot buffer. Surveys occurred in suitable habitat and 500-foot buffer.	X	X			X	X
Steelhead (Southern California DPS) Assessment in Sutton Canyon Creek (BioResources 2013d)	May 2012, and April and June 2013	Surveyed section of Sutton Canyon Creek to assess the conditions and potential for steelhead. Included dip-net surveys for aquatic organisms.	1-mile reach of Sutton Canyon Creek. Also surveyed part of Cañada Larga near Segment 1.	X					X
Drainages and waterways (Appendix D, SCE 2012)	December 2011	Initial field surveys to determine location of drainages and waterways	Project footprint (disturbance areas)	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 4.4-1 Biological Field Surveys Conducted for the Proposed Project

Survey Focus	Date	Method	Survey Extent	1	Getty Tap	2	3A	3B	4
Waters of the US and state waters, including wetlands, streams, and riparian areas (BioResources 2013e)	May 2013	Field delineations in areas previously identified as potentially jurisdictional (via desktop and field surveys); used standard delineation methodology described by USACE and CDFW	500-foot buffer of project alignment, plus access roads (25-foot buffer)	X				X	X
Wetlands and Other Waters Delineation Report (BioResources 2015)									

Key:
CDFW California Department of Fish and Wildlife
DPS Distinct Population Segment
USACE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFS U.S. Forest Service

- National Wetlands Inventory (USFWS 2013c);
- National Hydrography Dataset (USGS 2013);
- National Resources Conservation Service Hydric Soils (NRCS 2013);
- California Herps (2013);
- Birds of North America Online (2013);
- eBird.org (2013);
- California Bird Species of Special Concern (Shuford and Gardali 2008); and
- Mammals of North America (Reid 2006).

Surveys Conducted

Biological reconnaissance and focused surveys were conducted to identify and map the vegetation present in the project area and to evaluate the potential existence of plant communities and special status plant and wildlife species. Additionally, a delineation of waters of the U.S. and state waters was conducted. A summary of surveys is provided in Table 4.4-1. Additional information regarding survey methodology and results is provided in the applicant's biological technical report (Appendix D).

4.4.1.2 Local Vegetation Types and Plant Communities

Vegetation type is a broad vegetative unit that is defined by stand structure and physiognomic features that are characteristic of the general vegetation. Project surveys identified the following five vegetation types in the project area: Chaparral, Grassland, Coastal Sage Scrub, Woodland, and Non-Native. Vegetation types were further subdivided into plant communities that are characterized and named by the dominant species according to Sawyer et al. (2009).

Chaparral is a vegetation type that can be sparse or dense, with shrubs standing 1 to 4 meters high and little to no understory or leaf litter. In southern California, chaparral is usually found on moderate to steep south-facing slopes with dry, rocky, shallow soils. Chaparral within the project area consists of four different plant communities: Greenbark Ceanothus Chaparral, Mixed Ceanothus Chaparral, Toyon Chaparral, and Lemonadeberry Chaparral.

Grassland is a vegetation type dominated by low herbaceous and grassy plants that form a continuous ground cover, or as understory patches below emergent shrubs, shrublands, and woodlands. Two different grassland communities are found within the project area: California Annual Grassland and Ruderal/Disturbed Grassland.

In southern California, *Coastal Sage Scrub* vegetation types are generally found in dry areas such as south-facing, steep slopes on clay-rich soils that are slow to release stored water. Coastal Sage Scrub forms a continuous to open canopy and generally occurs at lower elevations. This vegetation type consists of facultative drought-deciduous species that vary in size relative to the water supply present, but are commonly low, soft-woody shrubs approximately 1 meter in height. Coastal Sage Scrub within the project area consists of five different plant communities: California Sagebrush Scrub, Chaparral Mallow Scrub, Coyote Brush Scrub, Purple Sage Scrub, and Mulefat Scrub.

Woodlands include a broad range of plant communities. Woodlands are vegetation types dominated by tall, large shrubs and woody trees, forming an open to closed canopy that grows over a scattered

variety of low-growing shrubs and a grassy ground layer. Woodlands within the project area consist of five different plant communities: Coast Live Oak Woodland, Scrub Oak Woodland, Arroyo Willow Woodland, Southern California Black Walnut Woodland, and Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland.

Non-Native vegetation types include farmland such as orchards or crops, areas grazed by livestock, communities dominated by non-native species, and developed areas with ornamental and landscaped vegetation. Non-Native plant communities within the project area include Agricultural, Ruderal/Disturbed, Cape Ivy Infestation, and Developed.

4.4.1.3 Wildlife

Numerous wildlife species or their diagnostic signs were observed within the project area, including fish, reptile, amphibian, bird, and mammal species (listed in Appendix D).

4.4.1.4 Wildlife Movement and Urban/Wildland Interface

A wildlife corridor is defined as a linear landscape feature that allows animal movement between two patches of habitat or between habitat and geographically discrete resources such as water. Connections between extensive areas of open space are integral to maintaining regional biological diversity and population viability. Areas that serve as wildlife movement corridors are considered biologically sensitive because they can facilitate the persistence of special status species. In the absence of corridors, habitats become fragmented, isolated islands surrounded by development.

Aquatic and associated riparian corridors in the project area provide shade, cover, water, food, and discrete corridors for numerous bird, fish, reptile, amphibian, and mammal species. For example, the southern California steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) is a special status species known to migrate and spawn in areas of the river systems located in the vicinity of the proposed project, which connect to their ocean habitat (see Section 4.4.2.2). Another wildlife corridor in the proposed project vicinity is the valleys of mountainous landscapes that serve as migration routes for many larger mammals, including mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyotes (*Canis Latrans*), and mountain lions (*Puma concolor*).

The proposed project would be located in the Pacific Flyway for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, and songbirds. The Pacific Flyway is a major north-south migratory corridor that generally follows a path through the coastal region of North America and into South America. This region provides suitable foraging and nesting habitat for many resident and migratory bird species. The Pacific Flyway links breeding grounds in northern latitudes to more southerly wintering areas. As part of the Pacific Flyway, the coastal beaches, Carpinteria Salt Marsh, estuaries, and Coast Range Mountains provide high-quality resting and foraging areas for numerous bird species during spring and fall migration and the winter for some species, such as the sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*).

4.4.1.5 Jurisdictional Waters

The applicant submitted a Wetland and Other Waters Delineation Report for the proposed project area (BioResources 2013e) to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in June 2013, based on 60% completed engineering design. The applicant is seeking a jurisdictional determination from the USACE for 15 drainage features (Figure 4.4-1). The applicant assumes that all drainages identified

in the delineation report are both Waters of the U.S. and Waters of the State. A final delineation report will be submitted to USACE once engineering design has been finalized. Areas where the proposed project would cross waters identified as jurisdictional in the delineation report are shown in Figure 4.4-1.

4.4.2 Special Status Plants and Wildlife

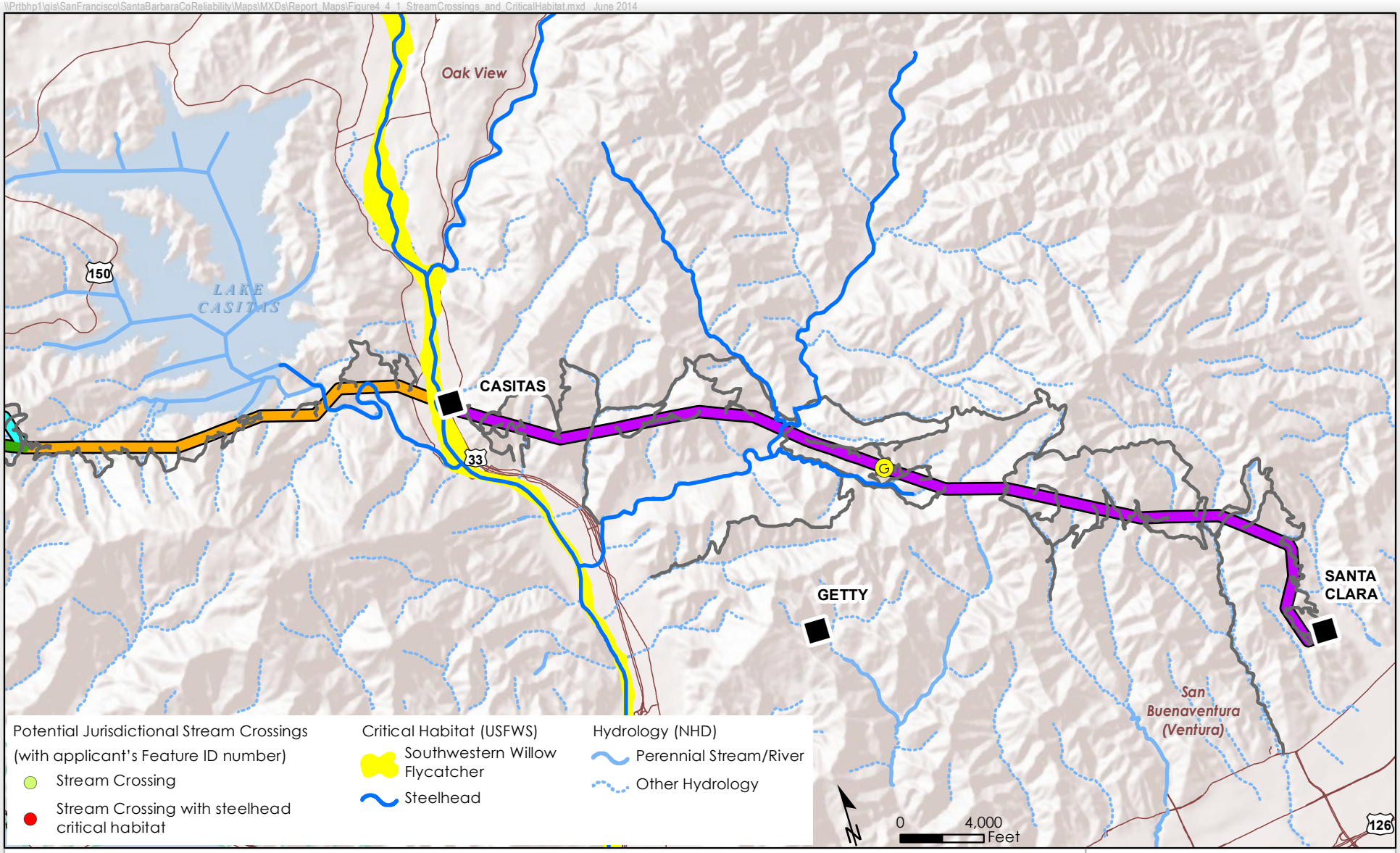
Special status species include plants and animals that are either formally listed under federal or state endangered species law, or not formally listed but meet the definitions of "Endangered" or "Rare" under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15380, such as species considered rare by resource agencies, professional organizations (e.g., CNPS), the scientific community, and local ordinances.

In this document "special status species" refers to any of the following:

- Species listed as Endangered or Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) (Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Section 17.11 or 17.12);
- Species listed as Endangered or Threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Sections 670.2 or 670.5, Title 14, California Code of Regulations);
- Species designated as Candidate or Proposed for listing under the ESA;
- USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern;
- CNPS Rare Plant Ranks (RPR) 1B and 2;
- Species designated as Species of Special Concern, Watch List, or Fully Protected or listed under the California Native Plant Protection Act by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW);
- Species designated as Sensitive Species or Management Indicator Species by the USFS; or
- Species protected under local ordinances including the County of Santa Barbara and County of Ventura.

The potential for special status species to occur within the project area was assessed as present, high, moderate, and low based on the following criteria using the data sources and survey results provided in Section 4.4.1.1:

- **Present:** The species was observed in the survey area during project field surveys.
- **High:** CNDDB or other records within 1 mile of the proposed project and suitable habitat is present. Species could be present or otherwise impacted by the proposed project.
- **Moderate:** CNDDB or other records between 1 and 5 miles of the project area and suitable habitat is present. Species could be present or otherwise impacted by the proposed project.
- **Low:** CNDDB or other records within 5 miles of the project area but limited suitable habitat is present; or there are no CNDDB or other records within 5 miles of the project area but suitable habitat is present; or any CNDDB or other records are more than 25 years old. Species could be present or otherwise impacted by the proposed project.



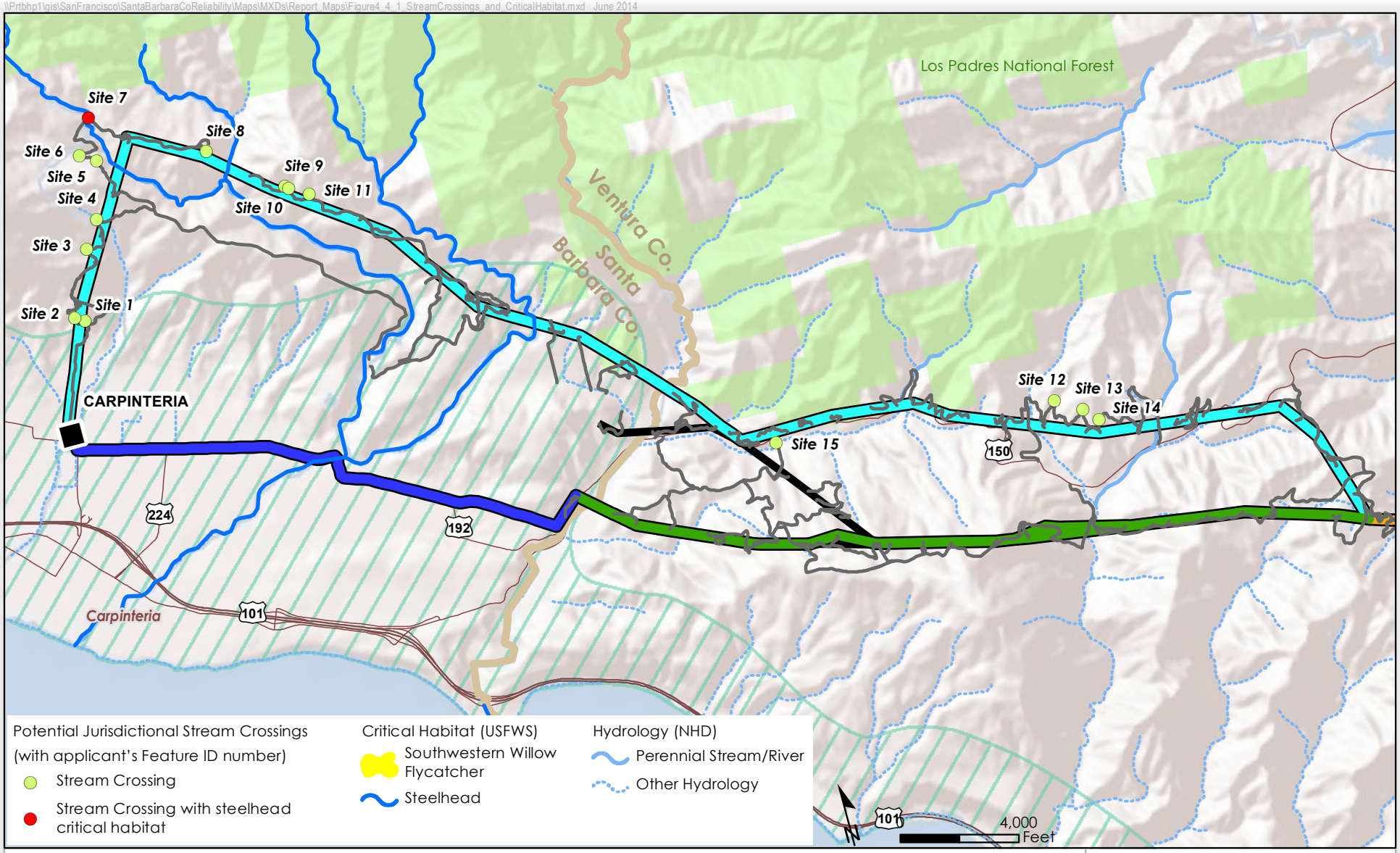
Existing Electrical Subtransmission Lines
- Segment 1
- Segment 2
- Segment 3A
- Segment 3B
- Segment 4
- Segment 5

- Existing Substation Locations
- Getty Tap
- Los Padres National Forest (USFS)
- Access Roads

- Major Roads
- County Boundary
- Bio Preserve Areas Coastal Commission Zone

Figure 4.4-1a
Potential Jurisdictional Water Crossings and Designated Critical Habitat

Santa Barbara County
Reliability Project
Santa Barbara and
Ventura Counties California



Existing Electrical Subtransmission Lines
- Segment 1
- Segment 2
- Segment 3A
- Segment 3B
- Segment 4
- Segment 5

- Existing Substation Locations
- Getty Tap
- Los Padres National Forest (USFS)
- Access Roads
- Major Roads
- County Boundary
- Bio Preserve Areas Coastal Commission Zone

Figure 4.4-1b
Potential Jurisdictional Water Crossings and Designated Critical Habitat

Santa Barbara County Reliability Project
Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties California

A number of plant and wildlife species identified in the literature review were determined to have no potential to occur within the project area because the project area does not contain suitable habitat, is located outside of the species' known geographic range, or is located outside of the species' known elevation range. Species with no potential to occur were not included in this Environmental Impact Report. A list and analysis of all species identified in literature review and searches ~~is~~ are provided in Appendix D.

4.4.2.1 Special Status Natural Communities

The CDFW considers a natural community to have special status if it has a limited distribution throughout the state or within a county or region; special status natural communities are often vulnerable to environmental effects of projects (CDFG 2009). These plant communities may or may not contain special status species or their habitat. The title and description of the special status natural communities listed below are derived from *A Manual of California Vegetation* (Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf and Evens 2009) and the Holland classification system (Holland 1986).

As identified by surveys described in Section 4.4.1.1, the following plant communities are considered special status natural communities: Southern California Black Walnut Woodland, Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, and Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland (Figure 4.4-2).

Southern California Black Walnut Woodland is dominated by California black walnut (*Juglans californica californica*) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). This community is typically associated with riparian corridors and hill slopes. Threats include impacts from development, grazing, fire, and invasion by non-native weedy species (Anderson 2002; Appendix D). The woodland is at high risk of elimination due to very restricted range, very few populations, steep declines, or other factors.

Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest is dominated by coast live oak and is typically found on slopes, stream banks, and terraces in soil derived from sandstone or clay. Threats include impacts from development and sudden oak death syndrome. ~~The CDFW recognizes multiple different communities within the Coast Live Oak Woodland alliance; however, because the applicant's field surveys did not distinguish between the different communities, all Coast Live Oak Woodland in the project area is considered special status in this document~~.

Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland is dominated by California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and alder (*Alnus* sp.) and is typically found in gullies and around intermittent streams, springs, streambanks, and terraces adjacent to floodplains. This woodland is one of the state's rarer vegetation communities because California sycamore does not compete well with other, more obligate wetland trees such as alders and willows and is often grazed or flooded due to human activities.

Riparian Communities are plant communities located in or adjacent to a stream and are dependent upon, and occur because of, the stream itself (CDFG ESD 1994). They are considered special status natural communities by CDFW (2009) due to their limited distribution in California. Additionally, these communities often contain special status plants.

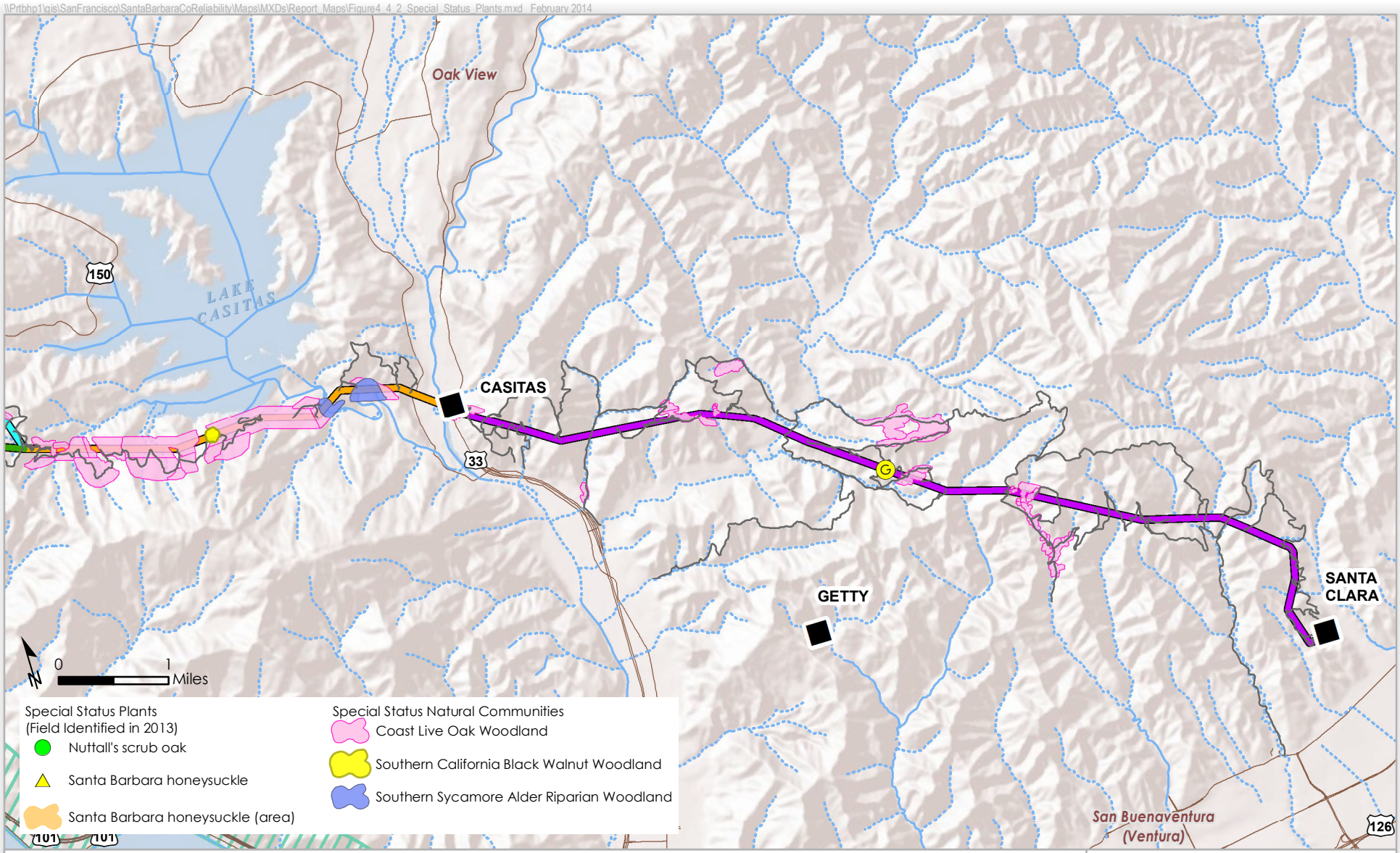


Figure 4.4-2a
Special Status Plants and Natural Communities Present in the Vicinity of the Proposed Project
Santa Barbara County Reliability Project
Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties California

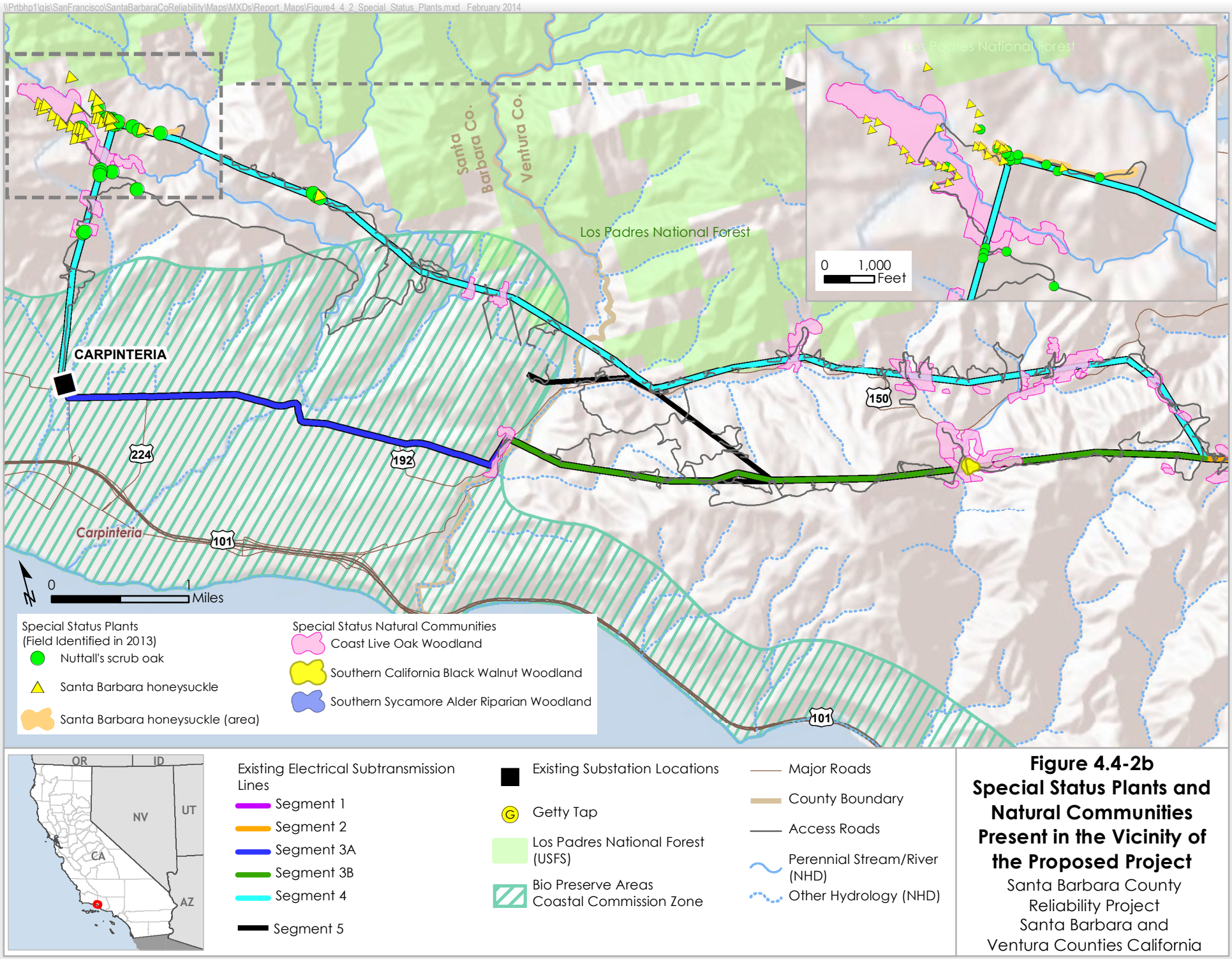


Figure 4.4-2b
Special Status Plants and Natural Communities Present in the Vicinity of the Proposed Project
Santa Barbara County Reliability Project
Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties California

Coastal Commission Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas

Most of the Carpinteria Valley is included within the Coastal Zone, established by the California Coastal Act, due to its "important habitat, recreational, and agricultural resources" (Santa Barbara County 2009a). All of Segment 3A and portions of Segment 4 are located within the Coastal Zone of the Carpinteria Valley ("Bio Preserve Areas" in Figure 4.4-1). The project area spans Franklin Creek, Carpinteria Creek, a tributary to Rincon Creek, and other tributaries located within the Coastal Zone. The Coastal Act limits impacts on designated environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) within the Coastal Zone. Native plants and streams are designated ESHAs in the project area.

4.4.2.2 Critical Habitat

The NMFS and USFWS designate critical habitat for species that are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. The alignment of the proposed project and some associated project features intersect designated critical habitat for two species: southern California steelhead DPS and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*). The geographic extents of the critical habitats for these species are shown on Figure 4.4-1.

Southern California Steelhead

Within the project area, critical habitat for the southern California steelhead DPS is designated in the USGS Ventura River Hydrologic Unit (4402) at the Ventura River, Cañada Larga, Cañada Seca, and Coyote Creek, and in the USGS South Coast Hydrologic Unit (3315) at Carpinteria Creek, Gobernador Creek, and Sutton Creek (NMFS 2005). Steelhead are not likely to breed in the project area due to lack of habitat, low flow, and/or barriers downstream, but critical habitat may be utilized for migration and rearing during wet periods (Stoecker et al. 2002; Cachuma Conservation Resource District et al. 2005; BioResources 2013d). This species, *O. mykiss*, has two forms: steelhead are migratory and exhibit an anadromous life history; and rainbow trout do not migrate to the ocean and complete ocean-to-freshwater cycles due to impassable barriers or other causes (Stoecker et al. 2002) and are not federally listed. Thus, individuals of this species present at streams in the project area vicinity may be rainbow trout instead of steelhead.

No towers (new or existing) or other proposed work areas are located within designated critical habitat for this species. However, road improvements are proposed at one location where a project access road crosses designated critical habitat. At Sutton Canyon Creek on Segment 4, in-stream ground disturbance would occur where the dirt access road crosses the bed of the creek and widening of the road curve is proposed. Sutton Creek is ephemeral and dry most of the year. This reach would potentially be used by this species only when water is flowing or in areas where permanent pools are present. Additionally, road improvements are proposed at other stream crossings that flow into designated critical habitat.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher

Within the project area, critical habitat for southwestern willow flycatcher is designated at the Ventura River riparian zone, located immediately west of the Casitas Substation. No towers (new or existing) or other proposed areas of ground disturbance would be located within designated critical habitat for this species. Disturbance resulting from overhead work to install telecommunications wire or marker balls using helicopters could occur.

4.4.2.3 Special Status Plant Species

Special status plant species with the potential to occur in the project area are listed in Table 1 of Appendix E, along with their habitat requirements and an indication of their known presence or assessment of their potential to occur within the project area. Based on geographic and elevation ranges and the presence of suitable habitat within the project area, eight special status plant species of CNPS RPRs 1 and 2 species have a "Moderate" or "High" potential to occur in the project area.

No federal or state listed threatened or endangered plant species are documented in the project area or have a "Moderate" or "High" potential to occur in the project area. The only federally listed plant species with potential to occur in the project area is Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) (Endangered), which has "Low" potential to be present. Two special status species, the Santa Barbara honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata var*. *subspicata*) and Nuttall's scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa*) were observed during field surveys in the project area (BioResources 2013a, Figure 4.4-2). Santa Barbara honeysuckle was observed in chaparral, cismontane woodland, and coastal sage scrub habitats in the project area. Nuttall's scrub oak was observed in chaparral, closed-coned coniferous forests, and coastal sage scrub.

Additional discussion of the special status plant species potentially occurring in the project area, including their natural history and habitat requirements, is provided in the Appendix D.

4.4.2.4 Special Status Wildlife Species

Special status wildlife species with the potential to occur in the project area are listed in Table 2 of Appendix E, along with their habitat suitability and an indication of their known presence or assessment of their potential to occur within the project area.

~~No~~ Five federal or state listed threatened or endangered wildlife species are documented in the project area or have a "Moderate" or "High" potential to occur: least Bell's vireo (*Vireo belli pusillus*; Present), southwestern willow flycatcher (Moderate), California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*; Moderate), southern California steelhead DPS (Moderate), and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*; Present) ~~in the project area~~. ~~However, n~~Numerous other special status wildlife species have "Moderate" or "High" potential to occur, while others were observed during field surveys. Additional discussion of the special status wildlife species potentially occurring in the project area, including their natural history and habitat requirements, is provided in Appendix D. Discussions of USFWS designated critical habitats of special status wildlife species is discussed in Section 4.4.2.2.

4.4.3 Regulatory Setting

This subsection summarizes federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and standards that govern biological resources in the project area.

4.4.3.1 Federal

Federal Endangered Species Act

The USFWS has jurisdiction over terrestrial and freshwater species and the NMFS has jurisdiction over marine and anadromous species listed as threatened or endangered under Section 9 of the ESA. The USFWS and NMFS also have lists of species that are designated as species of concern but

not yet formally listed. The ESA protects listed species from harm, or "take," which is broadly defined as to "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." This definition includes impacts that may harm a species indirectly.

For any project that could affect a listed species and that involves a federal agency, the federal agency must consult with the USFWS or NMFS in accordance with Section 7 of the ESA. The USFWS or NMFS issues a Biological Opinion and, if the project does not jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species, issues an incidental take permit (ITP). When no federal nexus is present, proponents of a project that may involve potential impacts on a listed species may consult with the USFWS or NMFS and apply for an ITP under Section 10 of the ESA. Section 10 requires an applicant to submit a Habitat Conservation Plan that specifies project impacts and mitigation measures (MMs).

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was established in 1918 and amended in 1989. Its fundamental goal is to establish an international framework for the protection and conservation of migratory birds. Under this act, taking, killing, or possessing migratory birds is unlawful. This act instructed the USFWS to develop regulations regarding the harvest or taking of such birds. Unless permitted by regulations, the act provides that it is unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, or kill; attempt to take, capture, or kill; possess, offer to or sell, barter, purchase, deliver, or cause to be shipped, exported, imported, transported, carried, or received any migratory bird, part, nest, egg, or product, manufactured or not.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (and as amended several times) protects both the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) by prohibiting, except under certain specified conditions, the taking, possession, and commerce of such birds. Pursuant to the ESA, permits were formerly available to "take" bald eagles as part of otherwise lawful activities. When the bald eagle was removed from the ESA (i.e., "delisted") in June 2007, however, the provision for issuing permits for activities that could "disturb" or otherwise incidentally take eagles was eliminated. This left significant constraints on a broad range of otherwise legal activities. To address this problem, rule changes made in September 2009 (74 Federal Register 175) finalized permit regulations to authorize limited take of these species associated with otherwise lawful activities. The regulations comprise a USFWS program that allows the issuance of two new types of permits, one addressing take in the form of disturbance or actual physical take of eagles (50 CFR 22.26), and a second permit that would provide for removal of nests (50 CFR 22.27). Most permits issued under the new regulations are expected to be those that would authorize disturbance, as opposed to physical take (e.g., take resulting in mortality). Permits for physical take will be issued in very limited cases only, where every precaution has been implemented to avoid physical take and where other restrictions and requirements will apply. In an effort to implement the new regulations, the USFWS has recently published technical guidance, which includes recommendations for applicants to prepare and submit an avian protection plan for USFWS review.

Clean Water Act (Sections 401 and 404)

The Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 regulates restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. The USACE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulate the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States

under Section 404 of the CWA. Project proponents may be required to obtain a permit from the USACE for all discharges of fill material into waters of the United States before proceeding with a proposed action. For the purposes of this document, all wetlands (defined broadly, i.e., including streams) are considered to have the potential to be determined as jurisdictional by the USACE.

Section 401 of the CWA requires that any applicant for a USACE CWA Section 404 permit also obtain a Water Quality Certification from the state. California Water Code Section 13260 requires "any person discharging waste, or proposing to discharge waste, within any region that could affect the waters of the state to file a report of discharge (an application for waste discharge requirements)." Under the Porter-Cologne Act definition, the term *waters of the state* is defined as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state." If the proposed project will require the disturbance of a wetland, and USACE determines that the wetland is not subject to regulation under Section 404 of the CWA, then Section 401 water quality certification is not required. However, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) may require a permit and/or waste discharge requirements if fill material is placed into waters of the state. If all wetlands cannot be avoided as part of the proposed project, the applicant would be required to file an application for a permit and/or waste discharge requirements with the RWQCB.

National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1600)

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires National Forests to maintain viable populations of "native and desired non-native vertebrate species ... well distributed in the planning area."

U.S. Department of Agriculture Environmental Compliance Fish and Wildlife Policy (Departmental Regulation 9500-4)

The Secretary of Agriculture's Policy on Fish and Wildlife directs the USFS to "manage habitats for all native and desired nonnative plants, fish and wildlife species to maintain viable populations of each species; identify and recover threatened and endangered plant and animal species" and to avoid actions "which may cause species to become threatened or endangered."

U.S. Forest Service Manual

The Forest Service Manual (FSM) contains legal authorities, objectives, policies, responsibilities, instructions, and guidance for the planning and execution of programs and activities within and related to National Forests. FSM Chapter 2670 directs the USFS to "develop/implement management practices to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service actions" and to "avoid or minimize impacts on species whose viability has been identified as a concern." If impacts cannot be avoided, the USFS "can allow or disallow the impact, but the decision must not result in loss of species viability or create a significant trend towards federal listing." FSM Chapter 2672.4 specifies that a Biological Evaluation be prepared to determine if a project may affect any USFS or USFWS listed species. In addition to protections to federally listed species, FSM Chapter 2672.11 delegates to each Regional Forester the authority to designate "Sensitive" species, which are defined as:

> "Those plant and animal species identified by a Regional Forester for which population viability is a concern, as evidenced by: a. Significant current or predicted downward trends in population numbers or density, or b. Significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species' existing distribution."

Land Management Plan: Southern California National Forests

The Land and Resource Management Plans established by the USFS for the southern California national forests describe the strategic direction at the broad program level for managing the land and its resources over the next 10 to 15 years.

As stated in the Los Padres National Forest Strategy, the objective of USFS threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species management is to "manage habitat to move listed species toward recovery and de-listing" and to "prevent listing of proposed and sensitive species." For management of species of concern, the primary objective is to "maintain and improve habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants, including those with the following designations: game species, harvest species, management indicator species and watch list species."

The Los Padres National Forest Strategy includes specific measures to meet the six goals of the USFS National Strategic Plan. These goals are: Goal 1- Reduce the risk from catastrophic wildland fire, Goal 2 - Reduce the impacts from invasive species, Goal 3 - Provide outdoor recreation opportunities, Goal 4 - Help meet energy resource needs, Goal 5 - Improve watershed conditions, and Goal 6 – Perform mission-related work in addition to that which supports the agency's goals.

4.4.3.2 State

California Endangered Species Act

The CESA, administered by the CDFW, prohibits taking of species listed as threatened and endangered under Section 2080 of the California Fish and Game Code (CFGC). The CFGC defines "take" as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill" and differs from the federal ESA in that it does not include habitat destruction in its definition of take. A project applicant is responsible for consulting with the CDFW early in project planning stages to avoid impacts on rare, endangered, and threatened species and to develop appropriate mitigation planning, if applicable.

Alternatively, where a proposed project is likely to impact species that are listed under both federal and state protection, the provisions of Section 2080.1 allow the CDFW to review the federal document in support of the federal ITP (i.e., the Biological Assessment document) for consistency with the CESA. If the federal Biological Assessment addresses the substantial requirements of the CESA, the CDFW may determine that it is consistent with the CESA and state requirements. This mechanism of an integrated approach to CESA/ESA compliance precludes the need for a separate state ITP.

Species of Special Concern (CFGC §§ 670.2 and 670.5)

Species considered future protected species by the CDFW are designated California Species of Special Concern (SSC). SSC species currently have no legal status, but are considered indicator species useful for monitoring regional habitat changes.

Native Plant Protection Act (CFGC §§ 1900-1913, 2062 and 2067)

The Native Plant Protection Act identifies the types of plant species eligible for state listing. Eligible species include those identified on CNPS RPRs 1A, 1B, and 2, and meet the definitions of Sections 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection Act) or Sections 2062 and 2067 (CESA) of the CFG Code.

Wildlife Protection (CFGC §§ 3503, 3503.5, 3511, 3513, 4700, 5050, and 5515)

Section 3503 specifies the following general provision for birds: "it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation made pursuant thereto." Section 3503.5 states that it is "unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds in the order Falconiformes or Strigiformes (birds of prey) or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird except as otherwise provided by this code or any regulation adopted pursuant thereto." Disturbance that results in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings, or otherwise leads to nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered "take" by CDFW. Section 3513 provides for the adoption of the MBTA provisions. As with the MBTA, this state code offers no statutory or regulatory mechanism for obtaining an ITP for the loss of non-game migratory birds.

Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515 govern the protection of bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, and fish species identified as "fully protected." Fully protected animals may not be harmed, taken, or possessed. The classification of "fully protected" was the state's initial effort to identify and provide additional protection to those animals that were rare or faced possible extinction. Most of the species on these lists have subsequently been listed under the ESA or CESA.

Stream Protection (CFGC §§ 1600-1616)

The CDFW regulates activities that would interfere with the natural flow of or substantially alter the channel, bed, or bank of a lake, river, or stream (see Section 4.9, "Hydrology and Water Quality"). These activities are regulated under CFGC Sections 1600 to 1616 and require a lake or streambed alteration agreement. Requirements to protect the integrity of biological resources and water quality are often conditions of streambed alteration agreements. Conditions that CDFW may require include avoidance or minimization of vegetation removal, use of standard erosion control measures, limitations on the use of heavy equipment, limitations on work periods to avoid impacts on fisheries and wildlife resources, and requirements to restore degraded sites or compensate for permanent habitat losses. If the proposed project will not affect a drainage system, a streambed alteration agreement will not be required.

California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines § 15380

CEQA Guidelines Section 15380(b) provides that a species not listed on the federal or state list of protected species may be considered rare or endangered if the species can be shown to meet certain specified criteria.

California Coastal Act of 1976 (California Public Resources Code § 30000 et seq.)

The California Coastal Act establishes public access requirements and development restrictions within the Coastal Zone, an area that extends off the California coast to the state's outer limit of jurisdiction, and inland generally 1,000 yards from the mean high tide or to the first major ridgeline paralleling the sea, whichever is less (with certain exceptions). In Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, the Coastal Zone generally follows the 1,000-yard limit, with several exceptions.

Sections 30231, 30233, and 30236 of this act limit impacts on streams, wetlands, and their biological resources by providing for minimization of wastewater discharges and runoff, minimization of alteration of natural streams, and maintaining the actual vegetation buffer areas, among other things. Upland habitats in the Coastal Zone are protected under Section 30240,

which limits impacts on designated ESHAs. The California Coastal Act specifically calls for protection of ESHAs.

California Public Resources Code §§ 4292 and 4293

Section 4292 directs the owner, controller, operator, or maintainer of electrical transmission lines in mountainous land, forest-covered land, brush-covered land, or grass-covered land to maintain around and adjacent to any tower or pole that supports a switch, fuse, transformer, lightning arrester, line junction, or dead end or corner pole; a firebreak which consists of a clearing of not less than 10 feet in each direction from the outer circumference of such tower or pole; and Section 4293 requires the same to maintain a clearance of 4 feet from any line which is operating at 2,400 or more volts, but less than 72,000 volts.

California Public Utilities Commission, General Order 95, Rule 35

Rule 35 mandates that certain vegetation management activities be performed in order to establish necessary and reasonable clearances, and establishes minimum clearances between line conductors and vegetation that under normal conditions shall be maintained. These requirements apply to all overhead electrical supply and communication facilities covered by this General Order, including facilities on lands owned and maintained by California State and local agencies.

4.4.3.3 Regional and Local

Santa Barbara County Coastal Land Use Plan

The purposes of the Santa Barbara County Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP) include protection of coastal resources and providing greater access and recreational opportunities for the public's enjoyment while allowing for orderly and well-planned urban development and the siting of coastal-dependent and coastal-related industry. The Santa Barbara County CLUP incorporates, to the maximum possible extent, local plans and policies that are consistent with the California Coastal Act. All electric transmission lines proposed for the Coastal Zone are "developments" under the California Coastal Act; thus, the County of Santa Barbara has permit review over them.

The Santa Barbara County CLUP identifies Native Plants as one of 13 ESHAs. Policies 9-35 and 9-36 encourage native oak preservation and require developments to preserve areas of significant amounts of native vegetation, respectively. The Santa Barbara County CLUP also identifies streams as an ESHA and Policies 9-37 to 9-43 preserve riparian vegetation and habitat for dependent species, as well as water quality.

County of Santa Barbara Coastal Zoning Ordinance (Santa Barbara County Code, Chapter 35, §140 et seq.)

This ordinance requires a coastal development permit for the removal of any tree within the Coastal Zone that is 6 inches or more in diameter measured 4 feet above the ground and 6 feet or more in height that meet the following criteria:

- Trees located in a county street right-of-way
- Trees located within 50 feet of any major or minor stream except when such trees are removed for agricultural purposes
- Oak trees

- Trees used as a habitat by monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*).

County of Santa Barbara Deciduous Oak Tree Protection and Regeneration Ordinance (Santa Barbara County Code, Chapter 35, §§ 35-910 et seq.)

The County of Santa Barbara Deciduous Oak Tree Protection and Regeneration Ordinance protects deciduous oak trees, specifically valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) and blue oaks (*Quercus douglasii*), 4 inches or greater in diameter at breast height outside of the Coastal Zone and urban boundaries. The ordinance generally provides that a public utility may remove protected oak trees within a utility easement and these removals will not be counted toward thresholds set out in Section 35908 or Section 35-909. A permit may be necessary for the tree removals and mitigation measures may accompany the permit. Valley oaks and blue oak would not likely occur within the project area. However, if any deciduous oaks are impacted, this ordinance will apply.

Ventura County Tree Protection Regulations (Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance §§ 8107-25)

Under Ventura County regulations, protected trees include all oaks and sycamores 9.5 inches in circumference or larger (measured 4.5 feet above ground), trees of any species with a historical designation, trees of any species 90 inches in circumference or larger, and most native trees in the Scenic Resources Protection Zone with a circumference greater than 9.5 inches. If pruning (beyond specified limits), removal, trenching, excavation, encroachment into the protected zone (5 feet outside the canopy's edge and a minimum of 15 feet from the trunk), alteration, or felling is part of a project that is not exempt per the regulations, the project would obtain the applicable permit and must adhere to the mitigation measures contained therein.

4.4.4 Impact Analysis

4.4.4.1 Methodology and Significance Criteria

Impact analysis for biological resources was conducted by (1) gathering and vetting information from numerous sources (see description of sources in Section 4.4.1 in addition to the data provided by the applicant) and (2) evaluating temporal and spatial effects on habitats and organisms potentially present within the project area and within a regional watershed context. Recent survey data provided by the applicant were assessed for accuracy and for appropriate implementation of resource agency survey protocols. Calculations for temporary and permanent disturbance to habitats were based on the applicant's projections of land disturbance from proposed project features. Potential impacts and appropriate minimization and mitigation measures (MMs) were discussed in depth with resource agencies, specifically the USACE, USFWS, NMFS, and CDFW, and regional authorities such as Santa Barbara County.

This impact analysis identifies and describes potential impacts on biological resources within the project area, including impacts caused by construction at tower work sites, laydown areas, pulling/tensioning sites, associated yards, and access roads. The analyses evaluate foreseeable impacts on the baseline conditions of the biological resources according to the following significance criteria. The criteria were defined based on the checklist items presented in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. The proposed project would cause a significant impact on biological resources if it would:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

Significance criterion (f) ("Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?") does not apply for this project. The project does not conflict with any Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan; therefore, this significance criterion is not applicable.

4.4.4.2 Applicant Proposed Measures

The applicant has included the following applicant proposed measures (APMs) related to biological resources for the proposed project:

- **APM BIO-1:** Pre-construction biological surveys for special status plants and wildlife would be conducted 0 to 30 days before the start of construction by a qualified biologist in all laydown/work areas. If a special status species is encountered, biologists will record the location, take a photograph, and delineate a buffer area, as appropriate, where activities should be restricted for the protection of the resource. If impacts on the special status plant(s) or wildlife cannot be avoided, SCE will consult with the appropriate resource agency or agencies.
- **APM BIO-2:** To the extent feasible, SCE would minimize impacts and permanent loss to native vegetation types, vegetation that may support special status species, and known populations of special status plants at construction sites by avoiding construction activities in areas flagged to be avoided. If it is not possible to avoid impacts on native vegetation, a project revegetation plan may be prepared in consultation with the appropriate agencies for areas of native habitat temporarily impacted during construction.
- **APM BIO-3:** Biological monitors would monitor construction activities in wildlife habitat areas that may contain special status species, critical habitat for those species, or unique resources to ensure that such species, habitat, or resources are avoided.

- **APM BIO-4:** SCE would conduct project-wide nesting bird surveys. SCE would, if feasible, remove trees, vegetation, subtransmission structures, and poles outside of the nesting season. If a tree, subtransmission structure, or pole containing a raptor nest must be removed during nesting season, SCE biologists would consult with the appropriate resource agencies. If work is scheduled to take place in close proximity to an active nest, appropriate nesting buffers or other measures would be established based on consultation with the appropriate resource agencies, or an adaptive management plan would be prepared to address nesting birds, subject to the approval of the CDFW. This project-specific Nesting Bird Management Plan would allow for implementation of species-specific buffer modification guidelines provided by a qualified utility avian biologist; nest buffers would be determined by species' sensitivity to disturbance, the nature of the construction activity, and the environmental conditions surrounding the nest.
- **APM BIO-5:** During the pre-construction surveys, a qualified biologist would identify any potential San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) middens within 50 feet of project activities. At the discretion of a qualified biologist, an exclusion buffer would be established around any woodrat middens that can be avoided, and these exclusion zones would be flagged or fenced to protect the nest during the breeding season (October through June). If a woodrat midden cannot be avoided by the proposed project's activities, an appropriate resource agency would be consulted regarding a potential buffer reduction.
- **APM BIO-6:** A pre-construction, focused burrowing owl protocol survey shall be conducted no more than 30 days prior to commencement of ground-disturbing activities within suitable habitat to determine if any occupied burrows are present. If occupied burrows are found, adequate buffers shall be established around burrows based on a project-specific nesting bird management plan or consultation with the appropriate agencies. If occupied burrows cannot be avoided, an appropriate relocation strategy would be developed in conjunction with the CDFW and may include collapsing burrows outside of nesting season and using exclusionary devices to reduce impacts on the burrowing owl. Biological monitors would monitor all construction activities that have the potential to impact active burrows.
- **APM BIO-7:** The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Construction General Permit would require SCE to develop and implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), which specifies best management practices (BMPs) to avoid or minimize impacts to water quality and riparian habitat during construction. See Appendix B for example BMPs provided by SCE.

Additionally, APM GEN-1 (development of a Worker Environmental Awareness Plan) and APM AQ-1 (minimization of fugitive dust) would apply to impacts related to biological resources. See Table 2-10 for the full APM.

4.4.4.3 Impacts Analysis

Impact BIO-1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS?
LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

Special Status Plants. Direct impacts on special status plants and their habitat would result from vegetation trimming, removal, or crushing; fugitive dust deposits, which reduces plant

photosynthesis; excavation of soils, which can suffocate and/or damage plants' roots~~; and the application of herbicides for fire protection and weed control~~. These activities could result in mortality or injury to individual plants, or the loss or degradation of populations or habitat. Direct impacts resulting from construction of structures related to the 66-kV subtransmission line and telecommunications routes, new access roads, areas of improvement on existing access roads, and any other associated areas with long-term ground disturbance would be permanent in nature. Direct impacts resulting from work in the areas surrounding new structures, tower removals, laydown yards, pull and tensioning sites, and any other ground disturbances that would be restored to original or native vegetation condition after construction has been completed would be temporary in nature. However, re-growth of some shrub or tree species may be long-term in duration. Grasses and herbs would be expected to re-establish within the next one to three growing seasons after construction, but many shrubs and trees could take decades (20–30 years) to grow to original stature and stand condition.

Indirect impacts on special status plants would result primarily through limited habitat fragmentation, introduction or spread of noxious and invasive weed species, and altered fire regimens. Disturbance to and loss of habitat could degrade adjacent special status plants and plant communities through fragmentation and edge effects, resulting in a reduced seed load and/or altered soil chemistry or composition. Much of the proposed project would be sited in previously disturbed areas and, therefore, would not significantly fragment contiguous habitat for special status plant species but could still fragment habitat on a localized scale (e.g., at towers or new roads). Construction activities also have the potential to degrade surrounding habitats by introducing or spreading populations of noxious or invasive weed species that could out-compete native special status plants. As a result, the establishment of such species has the potential to result in the loss of special status plants and in general limit the functionality of plant communities by significantly altering native species composition and, consequently, fire regimes.

Special Status Wildlife. Construction activities could result in direct impacts on special status species through mortality or injury to individual animals resulting from collisions with vehicles and equipment, hazardous material spills, or fires caused by construction crews. Noise and visual disturbances during construction could result in direct impacts on birds and other wildlife through nesting avoidance or nest abandonment within work areas or in adjacent areas. Although loss of individual animals is permanent, small losses of individuals would not likely be significant in terms of a species' broader population health, unless the species is very rare.

Indirect impacts on special status species would primarily result from the loss of suitable habitats (e.g., vegetation, burrows, rock piles), degradation of habitats through fragmentation and edge effects, and degradation through the introduction or spread of noxious and invasive weed species that would alter native plant species' compositions and densities. These effects could lead to adverse impacts on special status wildlife species and their habitats, including increased predation, lower reproductive success, loss of foraging habitat, habitat avoidance, lower carrying capacities of remaining suitable habitats, and altered fire regime. These indirect impacts would be permanent at all permanent project components, including new structures related to the 66-kV subtransmission line and telecommunications routes, new access roads, and areas of improvement on existing access roads. Indirect impacts at the work areas surrounding new structures, tower removal sites, laydown yards, pull and tensioning sites, and any areas with ground disturbance that would be restored post-construction would be temporary in nature, although re-growth of some wildlife habitats, such as shrubs and trees, could be long-term in duration. Given that many special status

wildlife species are considered rare or have reduced range sizes, indirect impacts resulting from habitat loss or degradation could result in significant impacts on a species.

The extent of permanent and temporary impacts to vegetation in the project area is detailed in Table 4.4-2.

Table 4.4-2 Disturbance to Vegetation within the Project Area

Vegetation Type	Permanent Disturbance (acres)	Temporary Disturbance (acres)
Chaparral	2.765	4.108
Grassland	1.814	2.278
Coastal Sage Scrub	43.892	57.313
Woodland	13.8634	22.473
Agriculture	6.587	10.848

Source: SCE 2012

Impacts on federally, state, and county protected species would be partially reduced through compliance with the conditions of applicable county, state, and federal permits. Additionally, implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), APM AQ-1 (minimization of fugitive dust, including vehicle speed limits), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan) would reduce impacts on special status plants and wildlife species in general, but not to a level that is insignificant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-7 (Section 4.4.5) would further reduce impacts. MM BIO-1 requires all project-related construction activities to be restricted to approved access roads and construction areas that are clearly indicated. This measure also requires sensitive resources such as hydrologic features, special status natural communities, special status plants, and known wildlife habitat, including active bird nests and habitat occupied by special status species, to be clearly marked (e.g., with signs, flagging, ropes, or fencing) and avoided, unless previously approved. MM BIO-2 stipulates that ~~the~~ pre-construction surveys and clearance sweep surveys will be conducted for special status species. MM BIO-3 requires the applicant to develop a noxious and invasive species control plan that will aid with the restoration of native plant communities and the protection of native wildlife habitat. MM BIO-4 limits the impacts on native vegetation and trees, thereby also reducing impacts on special status wildlife habitats by limiting habitat removal. MM BIO-5 requires the applicant to develop a habitat restoration and monitoring plan (HRMP) prior to construction and mitigate for impacts on specific special status plants, trees, and natural communities that may be important to native wildlife habitats.

MM BIO-6 and MM BIO-8 would further reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant for wildlife. MM BIO-6 provides measures to prevent entrapment of wildlife in project trenches and other excavations as well as to protect wildlife by preventing access to project-related trash. MM BIO-7 provides guidelines for reducing impacts on special status wildlife resulting from lighting during nighttime construction. MM BIO-8 reduces impacts on special status aquatic wildlife species by placing restrictions on travel and construction near hydrologic features.

The species discussed below are analyzed individually because they were observed during field surveys; have a "High" potential to occur within the project area; have an elevated conservation status (i.e., listed as threatened or endangered, or designated critical habitat is present); or require a permit or compensation for impacts they or their habitat may incur as a result of the proposed project.

Special Status Plants

Two special status plant species were observed during field surveys at numerous locations along access roads and at tower sites on Segment 4: Santa Barbara honeysuckle and Nutall's scrub oak. The potential for impacts via the loss of individual specimens of these species is high. Other special status plant species were not observed but still have a moderate or high potential to occur (Appendix E).

Special Status Invertebrates

Monarch butterflies would be impacted if coastal conifer forests or eucalyptus groves that serve as winter roost sites are disturbed. Direct impacts could occur either through removal/injury to trees or through noise or ground vibrations that would disturb a wintering colony. Implementation of APM BIO-1 through APM BIO-3 and APM GEN-1 would reduce impacts, but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-8, described above, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, will further reduce impacts on this species to a level that is less than significant.

Special Status Fish

Impacts on special status fish would primarily result from ground disturbance associated with construction activities in or near streams, ponds, rivers, or other aquatic habitats, including excavation as well as vehicle and equipment traffic. These activities could result in direct impacts on special status fish through mortality or injury to individuals. Mortality and injury could result from collisions with vehicles traveling through water features, in-stream excavation, increased sediment loads, and hazardous material spills. Indirect impacts on special status fish would primarily result from the degradation or loss of suitable spawning, rearing, or migrating habitats or the deterioration of water quality. In addition, alteration of streambeds, loss of in-water structures and debris that provide cover from predators, and loss of riparian vegetation on the banks of aquatic habitat that helps lower water temperatures and prevents erosion could all result in indirect impacts on special status fish and fish in general. Higher sediment loads resulting from construction excavation or run-off could affect fish not only at project crossing sites, but also fish populations for miles downstream.

The applicant has proposed access road rehabilitation, widening, or other construction ground activities at 15 locations on Segment 4 where access roads cross streams. The detailed work plans are not finalized, but some would disturb the current streambed and/or riparian habitat.

Arroyo chub (Gila orcuttii)

Arroyo chub is known to be present in drainages throughout the region and was observed near Segment 1 during field visits in the breeding season (SCE 2013). Direct and indirect impacts on arroyo chub may result from construction during road rehabilitation/widening at Segment 4 stream crossings. Road rehabilitation/widening could result in direct impacts if releases of hazardous materials occurred from the project vehicles or equipment, or from short-term increases in turbidity or sediment discharge during construction, particularly if construction occurs during spawning season for this species. The short-term sediment increases could be significant during high water levels and could exceed the level of disturbance caused by storm flows and cattle crossing. Arroyo chub are adapted to survive relatively turbid and hypoxic conditions; however, depending on the flow levels and construction methods used, these disturbances could create

conditions that would exceed the physiological threshold of the species or eggs. Long-term indirect impacts could occur on arroyo chub as a result of habitat changes or increased sediment releases due to the removal of riparian habitat, changes in the streambed (e.g., from the installation of gabion retaining walls or culverts), or changes in the slopes and areas of access roads during road rehabilitation/widening. Long-term sediment releases would be localized, are not expected to create conditions that would exceed the physiological threshold of the species or eggs, and are not expected to be greater than those caused by storm flows, cattle crossing, and the vehicular use of the channel at other locations. Loss or degradation of habitat due to removal of riparian vegetation could be localized and permanent.

Implementation of APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness) would reduce impacts on Arroyo chub, but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-4 through MM BIO-7, for special status wildlife in general, would further reduce impacts on this species. In addition, incorporation of MM BIO-8 (in-stream restrictions to avoid spawning season and a monitoring plan for jurisdictional streams) would reduce impacts on Arroyo chub to a level that is less than significant.

Southern California Steelhead DPS (Including Critical Habitat)

Steelhead is known to be present in drainages throughout the region and in the project area, including recent sightings documented in the Ventura River less than 0.5 mile from the intersection of Segments 1 and 2, and in lower reaches of Carpinteria Creek at least 5 miles downstream of proposed project work areas (Entrix and Woodward Clyde 1997; Stoecker et al. 2002). Additionally, multiple rainbow trout, the non-anadromous form of the species, have been documented approximately two miles downstream from the project area in Carpinteria Creek (Stoecker et al. 2002). Steelhead spawning season extends from January to March in most drainages, but lasts from January to June in larger streams, including the Ventura River (Entrix and Woodward Clyde 1997). Designated critical habitat for this species (USFWS 2013b) is present in drainages that would be crossed by the project alignment, including Cañada Larga and Cañada Seca on Segment 1, the Ventura River and Coyote Creek on Segment 2, and Carpinteria Creek, Gobernador Creek, and Sutton Creek on Segments 3A and 4.

The applicant is planning in-stream work associated with road rehabilitation in and upstream of designated critical habitat for this species in the Carpinteria Creek drainage system on Segment 4, in designated critical habitat at the access road crossing of Sutton Creek, and in two ephemeral drainages that flow into critical habitat in Sutton Creek and four ephemeral drainages that flow into critical habitat in Carpinteria Creek (Sites 5-11, Figure 4.4-1). Road rehabilitation at other stream crossings in the project area not associated with critical habitat (Sites 1-4, 12-14, Figure 4.4-1) could impact steelhead or restoration potential downstream of the project area in Franklin Creek or Las Sauces Creek. Steelhead are not known to be present at any stream crossings where ground-disturbing work is proposed; however, the habitat value for steelhead is considered high in parts of the project area, including the upper Carpinteria Creek drainage system (Entrix and Woodward Clyde 1997; Stoecker et al. 2002; Cachuma Resource Conservation District & Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition 2005; BioResource Consultants, Inc. 2013e). Until recently, the Carpinteria Creek drainage system has had numerous barriers against movement to the ocean downstream of the project alignment (Stoecker et al. 2002; Cachuma Conservation Resource District et al. 2005), preventing migration between the creeks in the project area and the ocean. However, multiple current efforts to remove barriers and restore streams for steelhead are rapidly changing habitat availability in the Carpinteria Creek drainage system and in the region. Additionally, the Carpinteria

Creek system possesses the best restoration potential for steelhead in the region, and the presence of rainbow trout in the system indicates the habitat suitability for the species (Stoecker et al. 2002; Cachuma Resource Conservation District & Carpinteria Creek Watershed Coalition 2005).

Direct impacts on steelhead critical habitat and indirect impacts on downstream steelhead may result from construction during the clearance of riparian vegetation and road widening at Sutton Creek. These activities would lead to a permanent impact on approximately one acre of critical habitat. Additionally, indirect impacts on downstream steelhead and/or critical habitat may result from road widening, the installation of stabilized structures (e.g., retaining walls, culverts, down-gradient velocity dissipaters), and the clearance of riparian vegetation associated with road rehabilitation at other project stream crossings (Boughton et al. 2006). These construction activities could lead to releases of hazardous materials, transport of increased sediment loads, particularly during spawning season and in high flow conditions, barriers to steelhead migration, or loss or degradation of rearing habitat (Stoecker et al. 2002 Boughton et al. 2006). If steelhead migrate into streams in the project area after restoration is complete, additional impacts due to increased sediment loads, introduced barriers, or habitat loss could occur.

Implementation of APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness) would reduce impacts on critical habitat and steelhead present at downstream locations, but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-4 through MM BIO-7, for special status wildlife in general, would further reduce impacts on this species and critical habitat. In addition, incorporation of MM BIO-8 (in-stream restrictions to avoid steelhead spawning season and a monitoring plan for jurisdictional streams) would reduce impacts on critical habitat and steelhead to a level that is less than significant.

Special Status Amphibians

The project area contains suitable habitat for coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) and California red-legged frog ~~(Rana draytonii)~~. Coast range newt was observed in Sutton Canyon Creek during field surveys in Segment 4 (BioResources 2013d). California red-legged frog was not observed during surveys, but USFWS-designated critical habitat is located less than one mile upstream of the Ventura River project crossing (in San Antonio Creek; USFWS 2013b), and individuals or habitat may be present in streams throughout the project area. Impacts on these species would primarily occur at access road crossings of streams where ground disturbance is planned during road improvement and curve-widening activities. ~~The applicant has not identified any wetlands or streams at or adjacent to tower work sites.~~ At the sites where habitat is present, direct impacts on these species through loss or injury could result from vehicle and equipment collisions, if hazardous materials spills occur, or if sediment loads and turbidity levels are increased in water. Small areas of habitat used by these species may be temporarily impacted due to trimming or removal of riparian or upland vegetation, and small areas of habitat may be permanently lost as a result of access road rehabilitation.

Due to the limited amount of habitat loss relative to the regional availability of habitat for coast range newt, which is a California Species of Special Concern, ~~these species~~ impacts on ~~these~~ this species would be considered ~~adverse but~~ low and would be reduced with implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness) ~~but not to a level that is less than significant~~, such that impacts would not likely contribute to a trend toward listing or a loss of viability of these populations or this species.

Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-7, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, and MM BIO-8 (in-stream restrictions to avoid breeding season and a monitoring plan for jurisdictional streams), would further reduce adverse impacts to this species. Impacts on the California red-legged frog would be considered adverse but reduced with implementation of APM BIO-1, APM BIO-2, APM BIO-3, APM BIO-7, and APM GEN-1 but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-8 and MM BIO-9 (red-legged frog impact reduction measures) ~~will~~ would further reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant.

Special Status Reptiles

The project area contains suitable habitat for western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*), California legless lizard (*Aniella pulchra pulchra*), coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*). Western pond turtle was observed during field surveys near Segment 1 (SCE 2013). Small areas of habitat used by these species may be temporarily impacted due to vegetation trimming or removal, or the construction and use of a temporary construction pad, and small areas of habitat may be lost as a function of construction (e.g., access road rehabilitation~~, or the construction of~~ new spur roads~~, or~~ permanent crane pads). In the case of western pond turtle, impacts could occur primarily at access road crossings of streams where ground disturbance is planned during road improvement and curve-widening activities. ~~The applicant has not identified any wetlands or streams at or adjacent to tower work sites.~~ At the sites where habitat is present, direct impacts on these species through loss or injury could result from vehicle and equipment collisions, if hazardous materials spills occur, or if sediment loads and turbidity levels are increased in water. Due to the limited amount of habitat loss relative to the availability of habitat for these species in the region, impacts on reptile species in general would be considered adverse but reduced with implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness) but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, ~~will~~ would further reduce impacts on this species to a level that is less than significant.

Special Status Birds and Migratory Birds

The project area contains suitable habitat for special status birds and those protected by the MBTA and BGEPA. Foraging and nesting habitat used by birds, including special status species observed during field surveys [Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), bald eagle ~~(*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)~~, loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus ludovicianus*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), and least Bell's vireo ~~(*Vireo belli pusillus*)~~], may be temporarily impacted due to vegetation trimming or removal for project construction, and some habitat may be lost on Segments 3A, 3B, and 4 as a function of access road rehabilitation or the construction of new spur roads. These activities could result in direct take of birds through mortality or injury to individual birds or the loss of active nests. Noise and visual disturbances during construction could result in direct impacts on birds through nesting habitat avoidance or nest abandonment, both within work areas and in adjacent areas. Additional direct impacts could result from collision with structures and electrocution on the subtransmission lines, which can be difficult for birds to detect for various reasons such as during night flight or during inclement weather conditions. Many standard designs of electrical industry hardware place conductors and groundwires close enough together that larger birds can touch them simultaneously with their wings or other body parts, causing electrocution. Standards to avoid conflicts between birds and new power lines have been well described by the Avian Power

Line Interaction Committee (APLIC 2006 and 2012) and the applicant has committed to designing structures consistent with these guidelines for the 66-kV subtransmission lines (see Project Description, Section 2.2.1.6). Unless the species is very rare, any direct impacts resulting from the loss of individuals would be temporary in terms of the overall survival of a species.

Vegetation clearing, grading, and other ground-disturbing activities would result in indirect impacts on birds by removing nesting habitat, foraging habitat, and by degrading adjacent habitat through fragmentation and the introduction or spread of noxious or invasive wildlife and plant species. Construction activities across the proposed project may discourage foraging within the immediate vicinity of an active work site; this disruption in foraging is expected to be localized and temporary.

Construction disturbance that results in loss of individual birds, or during the general bird breeding season for the region that results in loss of fertile eggs or nestlings, or otherwise leads to nest abandonment, would be considered a "take" by the USFWS under the MBTA, as well as by the CDFW under the CFGC (see Section 4.4.3). With implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-4 (nesting bird protection measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan), impacts on nesting birds would be partially reduced. APM BIO-4 requires bird nest surveys if construction is scheduled to occur during breeding season. Additionally, APM BIO-4 requires that if work is scheduled to take place in close proximity to an active nest that either appropriate disturbance buffers be implemented or a Nesting Bird Management Plan be prepared; however, APM BIO-4 does not require a Nesting Bird Management Plan. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, described above, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, and MM BIO-10, designed for nesting birds specifically, ~~and MM BIO-11, the creation of an avian protection plan,~~ would reduce impacts on birds to a level that is less than significant. MM BIO-10 requires the applicant to develop an agency-approved Nesting Bird Management Plan before the start of construction if any portion of the proposed project is scheduled to occur during the general bird breeding season.

Burrowing Owl

Portions of Segments 1, 3B, and 4 contain habitat suitable for burrowing owl (BioResources 2014). These areas provide suitable foraging and nesting habitat, and this species has been documented as a migrant or winter visitor in the vicinity of the proposed project (Appendix E). If burrowing owls are present in future seasons, however, construction of the proposed project could result in direct mortality of individuals and temporary and permanent habitat loss. Impacts on foraging or nesting burrowing owls would be considered adverse according to the MBTA and CFGC. With implementation of APM BIO-1, APM BIO-2, APM BIO-3, APM BIO-4, APM BIO-6 (burrowing owl protection measures) and APM GEN-1, impacts on burrowing owl populations would be partially reduced. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, described above, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, MM BIO-10 ~~and MM BIO-11~~, designed for birds in general, and MM BIO-~~12~~11, designed for burrowing owls specifically, would reduce impacts on this species to a level that is less than significant. MM BIO-11~~2~~ requires slightly more stringent measures than those provided under APM BIO-6, including the requirement for pre-construction surveys no more than 14 days prior to construction during breeding season.

Southwestern willow flycatcher (Including Critical Habitat)

USFWS-designated critical habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher would be crossed by the proposed project at the Ventura River and its associated riparian habitat in Segment 2 (USFWS

2013b; Figure 4.4-1)~~, and there are records of this species' occurrence in the project area in Segment 3A and 3B (Appendix E)~~. Impacts on foraging and/or nesting southwestern willow flycatcher, including removal of a delineated territory (even if removal occurs outside the breeding season), would be considered a "take" according to the ESA, MBTA, and CFGC. With implementation of APM BIO-1, APM BIO-2, APM BIO-3, APM BIO-4 and APM GEN-1, impacts on southwestern willow flycatchers would be partially reduced. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, MM BIO-10~~ and MM BIO-11~~, for impacts on birds in general, and~~ MM BIO-13~~ MM BIO-12, designed for this species specifically, would reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant. ~~MM BIO-13~~ MM BIO-12 requires habitat assessments at all jurisdictional drainages identified by the applicant (Figure 4.4-1) and any other drainage where this species could be affected, including the critical habitat at the Ventura River (due to overhead stringing by helicopter), with follow-up protocol nesting season surveys where habitat is present.

Least Bell's vireo

The proposed project would not traverse USFWS-designated critical habitat for least Bell's vireo (USFWS 2013b). However, this species uses riparian habitat similar to that used by the southwestern willow flycatcher. One individual of this species was observed for approximately five minutes near Segment 1 at Cañada Larga during field surveys in late July 2013 (SCE 2013). In addition, there are other records of least Bell's vireo at the Ventura River south of the proposed project and approximately 1 mile west of the proposed project (Appendix E). Impacts on foraging and/or nesting least Bell's vireo, including removal of a delineated territory (even if removal occurs outside the breeding season), would be considered "adverse" or "take" according to the ESA, MBTA, and CFGC. With implementation of APM BIO-1, APM BIO-2, APM BIO-3, APM BIO-4 and APM GEN-1, impacts on southwestern willow flycatchers would be partially reduced. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general, MM BIO-10~~ and MM BIO-11~~, designed for birds in general, and~~ BIO-13~~ MM BIO-12, designed for this species specifically, would reduce impacts on this species to a level that is less than significant. ~~MM BIO-13~~ MM BIO-12 requires habitat assessments at all jurisdictional drainages identified by the applicant and any other drainage where this species could be affected, including the Ventura River (due to overhead stringing by helicopter), with follow-up protocol nesting season surveys where habitat is present.

Special Status Mammals

The project area contains suitable habitat for American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*), San Diego desert woodrat, mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and mountain lion (*Puma concolor*). Evidence of presence was confirmed for American badger, mule deer, and mountain lion during field surveys (Appendix E). Small areas of habitat used by these species may be temporarily impacted due to vegetation trimming or removal, or the construction and use of temporary laydown/work areas, and small areas of habitat may be lost as a function of access road rehabilitation or the construction of new spur roads or permanent crane pads. Due to the limited amount of habitat loss relative to the availability of habitat for these species in the region, impacts on these species would be considered low, and would be ~~partially~~ reduced with implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-5 (San Diego desert woodrat protection measures), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan), such that impacts would not likely contribute to a trend toward listing or a loss of viability of these populations or species. APM BIO-5 reduces impacts on San Diego desert woodrat specifically by requiring disturbance buffers for active middens during breeding season. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM-BIO-8, described above, for impacts on special status wildlife species in general would further reduce impacts on these

species.~~, and MM BIO-14~~ MM BIO-13, designed for ringtails and American badgers specifically, would reduce impacts on these two species to a level that is less than significant.

Operations and Maintenance Impacts

Operation of the proposed project would involve periodic inspection of the subtransmission structures, conductor, telecommunications cable, and substation infrastructure, and maintenance of access and spur roads and areas around subtransmission structures (e.g., grading, vegetation removal) to enable safe access. Inspection and maintenance activities would be infrequent, confined to previously disturbed areas, and of much lower intensity than the construction-related activities described above. Accordingly, these activities are not anticipated to have any substantial adverse effect on any candidate, sensitive, or special status species; however, any grading or vegetation removal could impact special status species or habitat. Therefore, in order to ensure that impacts remain less than significant, the applicant would comply with MM BIO-14, which would require that the applicant assess whether grading and vegetation removal, including tree trimming, would impact resources in the project area and issue an Environmental Clearance to O&M staff outlining appropriate APMs, MMs, and state and federal permit conditions. ~~However, the applicant will continue to adhere to the special status plant and wildlife APMs and MMs discussed in this document for any future inspection and maintenance activities (Section 4.4.4.1 and 4.4.5). The magnitude of adverse impacts on special status species during operations would be reduced to less than significant by complying with the conditions of applicable state and federal permits covering activities and by implementing the APMs and MMs described above for the construction phase of the proposed project.~~

Impact BIO-2: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS?

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

Several special status natural communities are present within the proposed project area, including riparian communities, Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, Southern California Walnut Woodland, and Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland. CDFW considers these plant communities to be regionally sensitive because of their limited acreage, high wildlife value, lack of recruitment, and gradual loss to development. Additionally, the Coastal Commission and Santa Barbara County consider streams and native vegetation in the Coastal Zone to be ESHAs and specify measures for their protection.

Impacts from grading, trimming, or removal of plants within these communities may be adverse. Direct impacts on riparian communities, Southern California Walnut Woodland, Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland, and ESHAs by the proposed project would result from vegetation removal and/or trimming during rehabilitation or widening of access roads, construction of new roads, grading of adjacent soils, or during construction of temporary or permanent drilling pads, laydown/work areas, storage yards, pull-tensioning sites, or crane pad/turnaround areas (Table 4.4-3). Additional direct impacts would result from fugitive dust deposits, which reduce plant photosynthesis~~, and the application of herbicides for fire protection and weed control~~. Indirect impacts would result primarily through limited habitat fragmentation or the introduction or spread of noxious and invasive weed species.

Riparian communities are present in Segment 4 of the project area. Direct impacts on these riparian communities would include trimming of riparian vegetation and grading/alteration of streambanks

and streambeds during road improvements. Less than one acre of riparian habitat would be disturbed on Segment 4. Waters of the State were used as an estimate of disturbance to riparian communities in the project area because the applicant did not measure it directly. Waters of the State were measured to the outer boundary of the greater of either the top of bank measurement or the extent of associated wetland or riparian vegetation (BioResources 2013e).

Table 4.4-3 Special Status Plant Communities found within the Project Area

Special Status Plant Communities	Segment (s) of Occurrence	Temporary Disturbance Acreage [1]	Permanent Disturbance Acreage	Total Disturbance Acreage
Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian ~~Woodland~~Forest	1, 2, 3B, ~~3A,~~ 4, and 5	~~6.69~~ 1.62	~~6.69~~ 1.31	~~**14.70**~~ **2.93**
Southern California Black Walnut Woodland	2, 3B	~~0.12~~ 0.16	0.~~12~~ 0.20	~~**0.20**~~ **0.36**
Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland	2	~~0.01~~ 0.24	0.01	~~**0.11**~~ **0.25**
	Total Acreage	~~**1.54**~~ **2.02**	~~**6.83**~~ **1.52**	~~**8.18**~~ **3.54**
Riparian Communities[2]	4	n/a	n/a	~~**0.49**~~ **0.50**

Source: SCE 2012, BioResources 2013e, Appendix L

Notes:

[1] Disturbance area is defined as all proposed project sites where ground disturbance could occur, including crane pads, laydown areas, pull-tensioning sites, tower foundation removal sites, associated yards, new spur roads, and sections of existing roads to be widened.

[2] The estimate for riparian habitat impacts is based on the calculated impacts on waters of the state (BioResources 2013e), and the actual amount of riparian habitat may change.

Southern California Walnut Woodland plant community is present in at least two locations in the project survey area (includes a 500-foot buffer) but was documented at only one location in the project area: at the location of a tower footing removal site on Segment 2 (Figure 4.4-2). The amount of habitat present is negligible and would likely be avoidable by construction crews. If avoided, no impacts on the native community are anticipated.

Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest plant community is documented at multiple locations and ~~in all~~ segments of the route. ~~(~~Figure 4.4-2 shows the presence of coast live oak woodland in the project survey area, which consists of multiple communities, including the special status community, southern coast live oak riparian forest~~). A number of~~ Some towers and associated work areas, and sites of planned access road improvement would be located in southern coast live oak riparian forest ~~this plant community~~ on Segments ~~3A,~~ 3B and 4. Multiple tower footing removal sites on Segments 1 and 2 are ~~present in~~ adjacent to this ~~woodland~~ community; however, none are located within it. In total, less than ~~seven~~ three acres of this natural community could be impacted at these sites. ~~The CDFW considers several types of Coast Live Oak communities to be special status; however, because the Proponent's Environmental Assessment combined all of the Coast Live Oak community types under the more general "Coast Live Oak Woodland," this document cannot separate out the special status types and thus considers the entire group to be special status.~~

Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland plant community was not recorded during the applicant's field surveys; however, California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) was recorded, and a CNDDB record for this plant community is present at one tower footing removal site on Segment 2 (Figure 4.4-2). Analysis of aerial photographs indicates that this site is densely treed, and impacts on individual trees are possible. However, the tower footing removal site is within a disturbed area with limited existing vegetation (e.g., ground cover). As such, none to minimal vegetation

disturbance is expected during construction activities to the surrounding vegetation, which includes scrub and oak habitat. The applicant would not remove the tower footing if it would result in impacts on sensitive biological resources (e.g., native trees or habitat), or result in erosion concerns.

Coastal Commission Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas in the proposed project include native plants and streams in the Coastal Zone (Segment 3A and portions of Segment 4; Figure 4.4-1). Temporary or permanent impacts on streams or native vegetation, including native oaks, in the Coastal Zone could occur during construction, including access road rehabilitation.

Implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), APM AQ-1 (minimization of fugitive dust), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan) would partially reduce impacts on these special status plant communities, but not to less than significant levels. The incorporation of MM BIO-1 and MM BIO-3 through MM BIO-5 would reduce impacts on special status natural communities to levels that are less than significant. MM BIO-1 requires all project related construction activities, including ground disturbance, vehicle travel, and materials storage, to be restricted to approved access roads and construction areas that are clearly indicated by stakes, flagging, and signage. This measure also requires sensitive resources such as waterbodies, special status natural communities, and special status plant sites to be clearly marked and avoided, unless previously approved. MM BIO-3 requires the applicant to develop a noxious and invasive species control plan that will aid with the restoration of natural plant communities. MM BIO-4 limits the removal of native vegetation and trees, and requires consultation with resource agencies to reduce impacts on special status natural communities. MM BIO-5 requires the applicant to develop a habitat restoration and monitoring plan prior to construction, and also mitigate for impacts on specific special status plant species and communities.

Operation Impacts

Operation and maintenance of the proposed project would involve periodic inspection of the subtransmission structures, conductors, telecommunications cables, and substation infrastructure. In addition, access and spur roads and areas around subtransmission structures would periodically be maintained (e.g., grading, vegetation removal) to enable safe access. Routine inspection activities would not impact special status natural communities, as vehicles would remain on approved access roads and previously disturbed work areas under normal circumstances. However, any grading or vegetation removal could impact special status species or habitat. Therefore, in order to ensure that impacts remain less than significant, the applicant would comply with MM BIO-14, which would require that the applicant assess whether grading and vegetation removal, including tree trimming, would impact resources in the project area and issue an Environmental Clearance to O&M staff outlining appropriate APMs, MMs, and state and federal permit conditions. ~~The magnitude of adverse impacts on special status natural communities during operations would be reduced to less than significant by complying with the conditions of applicable state and federal permits covering activities and by implementing the APMs and MMs described above, for the construction phase of the proposed project~~.

Impact BIO-3: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

Fifteen streams and no wetlands were identified as jurisdictional during field surveys in project work areas (Table 4.4-4; Figure 4.4-1).

Direct impacts on wetlands and waterways as defined by Section 404 of the CWA may result from ground disturbance associated with installing or removing towers, constructing new access roads, and improving or widening existing access roads that are within hydrologic features (e.g., streams), particularly during the wet season or during rain events. Grading, excavation, placement of fill, and other ground disturbance in hydrologic features could result in impaired water quality in downstream locations during construction if water is present or after construction during a rain event. In such cases erosion and scour would increase turbidity and sediment loads. Direct impacts could also result from impaired water quality if hazardous materials (e.g., oil, diesel, hydraulic fluids) from project vehicles or equipment spilled directly into streams. Indirect impacts could result from ground disturbances, vegetation clearing, and hazardous materials spills in upland areas adjacent to hydrologic features. Clearing of vegetation in upland areas and hydrologic features could expose topsoil to weathering and erosion, which could result in increased turbidity and sediment loads in drainages during rain events. Hazardous materials located upslope could be transported into hydrologic features during rain events. Some beneficial impacts may be realized from the replacement/upgrading of existing degraded culverts and gabion walls in these areas, thus reducing hydrological interruption.

Because the 15 identified streams are ephemeral (13) or intermittent (two), they are not likely to be wet at the time of construction. Nevertheless, excavation during road rehabilitation at these sites could be significant, and transport of sediments or hazardous materials downstream is a possibility. Driving numerous vehicles and heavy equipment on a dry stream bed may cause rutting and erosion. Because these crossings are mostly situated on steep slopes, any rain events would likely result in high water velocities capable of increased scour and could transport sediments or hazardous materials relatively far downstream. The work plans for the 15 streams are still being finalized.

Where avoidance of hydrologic features is not feasible and work is required within jurisdictional waters, the applicant would obtain and comply with all necessary USACE and CDFW permits under the CWA and CFGC Section 1600 regulations. While adherence to any applicable regulatory requirements would contribute to a reduction in impacts, the MMs below are proposed to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

1

Table 4.4-4 Identified Jurisdictional Crossings in the Project Area

ID	Name	Project Segment	Description	Linear Feet	Waters of US (acres)	State Waters (acres)	Jurisdiction (USACE, CDFW, RWQCB)
1	Unnamed tributary to Franklin Creek	4	Ephemeral	0	0	0	Tbd
2	Unnamed tributary to Franklin Creek	4	Ephemeral	140	0.0090	0.0090	Tbd
3	Unnamed tributary to Franklin Creek	4	Ephemeral	50	0.0060	0.0502	Tbd
4	Franklin Creek	4	Ephemeral	24	0.0010	0.0495	Tbd
5	Unnamed tributary to Sutton Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral	50	0.0034	0.0901	Tbd
6	Unnamed tributary to Sutton Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral-Intermittent	31	0.0009	0.0955	Tbd
7	Sutton Creek[2]	4	Ephemeral-Intermittent	55	0.0198	0.0382	Tbd
8	Unnamed tributary to Carpinteria Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral	31	0.0032	0.0032	Tbd
9	Unnamed tributary to Carpinteria Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral	25	0.0030	0.0276	Tbd
10	Unnamed tributary to Carpinteria Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral	38	0.0030	0.0299	Tbd
11	Unnamed tributary to Carpinteria Creek[1]	4	Ephemeral	40	0.0047	0.0358	Tbd
12	Unnamed tributary to Los Sauces Creek	4	Ephemeral	50	0.0038	0.0638	Tbd
13	Unnamed tributary to Los Sauces Creek	4	Ephemeral	32	0.0028	0.0028	Tbd

Table 4.4-4 Identified Jurisdictional Crossings in the Project Area

ID	Name	Project Segment	Description	Linear Feet	Waters of US (acres)	State Waters (acres)	Jurisdiction (USACE, CDFW, RWQCB)
14	Unnamed tributary to East Casitas Pass Creek	4	Ephemeral	19	0.0029	0.0029	Tbd
15[3]	Casitas Creek	4	Ephemeral	Tbd	Tbd	Tbd	Tbd

Notes:
[1] Drains into NMFS-designated critical habitat for Southern California steelhead DPS
[2] NMFS-designated critical habitat for Southern California steelhead DPS
[3] This crossing was added to the project description after the preparation of the 2013 Jurisdictional Delineation. Therefore, confirmation and total extent of impacted jurisdictional waters has not been determined.
Key:
CDFW California Department of Fish and Wildlife
DPS distinct population segment
NMFS National Marine Fisheries Service
RWQCB Regional Water Quality Control Board
Tbd to be determined
USACE U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Impacts on federally and state protected wetlands would be partially reduced through compliance with the conditions of applicable state and federal permits covering activities in hydrologic features. The implementation of APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures), APM AQ-1 (minimization of fugitive dust), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan), designed to reduce impacts on native vegetation and habitats, would reduce impacts on streams but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1, MM BIO-3, MM BIO-4, and MM BIO-5, for impacts on native vegetation and habitats, will further reduce impacts. In general, these measures would reduce the extent of ground disturbance and aid with successful restoration and revegetation (with native plant species) of drainage features, reducing erosion issues in the future. By incorporating MM BIO-8 (in-stream restrictions and a monitoring plan for jurisdictional streams), construction will avoid much of the wet season, thereby reducing the potential for erosion, turbidity, and increased sediment transport. The incorporation of the above MMs will reduce impacts on streams to a level that is less than significant.

Operations and Maintenance Impacts

Operation and maintenance of the proposed project would involve periodic inspection of the subtransmission structures, conductors, telecommunications cables, and substation infrastructure. In addition, access and spur roads and areas around subtransmission structures would periodically be maintained (e.g., grading, vegetation removal) to enable safe access. Normal inspection activities would have no impacts on hydrologic features, as vehicles would remain on approved previously disturbed areas outside of mapped wetlands and waterways. Long-term access and spur road maintenance may require the replacement of drains or other features that could affect federally protected aquatic features. Any such work would be permitted by the appropriate regulatory agencies (USACE, CDFW, and/or the appropriate RWQCB). Also, MM BIO-14 would further ensure that impacts remain less than significant by requiring that the applicant assess whether grading and vegetation removal would impact resources in the project area and issue an Environmental

Clearance to O&M staff outlining appropriate APMs, MMs, and state and federal permit conditions. ~~The magnitude of adverse impacts on federally protected wetlands and waterways during operations would be reduced to less than significant by complying with the conditions of applicable state and federal permits covering activities in wetlands, and by implementing the APMs and MMs described above, for the construction phase of the proposed project.~~

Impact BIO-4: Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION

Construction Impacts

There are no known native wildlife nursery sites within the project area. The construction of the proposed project may interfere with the movement of wildlife on a local scale. In general, the proposed project would not substantially impede the movement of migratory species such as birds or large mammals, but would have impacts on fish movement. Interference with wildlife movement at the local scale is expected to be isolated and temporary with mitigation.

Impacts could occur on migratory fish populations at sites where in-stream work is planned. Road improvements are planned at 15 jurisdictional streams, including one in southern California steelhead DPS Critical Habitat (Sutton Canyon Creek on Segment 4). Fish that potentially use project stream crossings to migrate to other sections of these systems include steelhead and arroyo chub. Although water levels in project drainages vary greatly by season and are often completely dry for periods of the year, migration within these systems is possible under suitable conditions. Implementation of APM BIO-3 and APM GEN-1 would reduce impacts by providing biologists who would inspect for impacts on passing fish, such as being entrained, or blocked from passing. Additionally, APM BIO-7 (SWPPP measures) would protect stream habitat. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-7, described above, for impacts on special status species, would further reduce impacts on migratory fish. In addition, by incorporating MM BIO-8 (in-stream restrictions), construction will avoid wetted conditions when fish migration would occur, thereby reducing impacts to a level that is less than significant.

At the regional scale, the project area is located in the Pacific Flyway and provides suitable foraging habitat for many resident and migratory avian species. The installation of marker balls on conductor may be recommended by the Federal Aviation Administration, which could result in disruption of migration patterns. The proposed project will adhere to recommendations in Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2012 (APLIC 2012; see Section 2.2.1.~~6~~ 7 of the Project Description), which would partially reduce impacts but not to a level less than significant. The implementation of MM BIO-7 would reduce impacts in the Pacific Flyway by constraining night lighting, and the implementation of ~~MM BIO-11~~ MM BIO-10 would require ~~an avian protection plan~~ a Nesting Bird Management Plan; together these would reduce impacts to a level that is less than significant.

Operation Impacts

Operations-related activities may cause native resident or migratory wildlife species to temporarily displace due to noise or human activities. This may affect wildlife movements in known migratory corridors and may affect the movement of native resident wildlife species. These impacts are expected to be isolated and temporary and, therefore, locally adverse but minor. The infrequent

nature of operations-related activities would result in less than significant impacts from operation of the proposed project. In addition, if any grading or vegetation removal is required during O&M that could impact special status species or habitat, the applicant would comply with MM BIO-14. MM BIO-14 would require that the applicant assess whether grading and vegetation removal, including tree trimming, would impact resources in the project area. The applicant would then issue an Environmental Clearance to O&M staff outlining appropriate APMs, MMs, and state and federal permit conditions to ensure that impacts remain less than significant.

Impact BIO-5: Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?
LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT WITH MITIGATION

Construction Impacts

Construction activities or access road improvements proposed in Segment 1, 3B, and 4 would require the trimming or removal of trees protected by Santa Barbara or Ventura County. Impacts would occur on a maximum of 139 protected trees at construction sites or associated with access roads, based on the 60% design (BioResource Consultants, Inc. 2013b). Coast live oak and California black walnut are the protected species that would be impacted. Eight protected trees were observed in impact areas in the Santa Barbara County Coastal Zone.

The proposed project would carry out tree trimming and removal activities in accordance with applicable county regulations and the terms of any applicable permits. Implementation of APM BIO-1 (pre-construction surveys), APM BIO-2 (minimize impacts on vegetation), APM BIO-3 (biological monitoring), and APM GEN-1 (Worker Environmental Awareness Plan), designed to reduce impacts on native vegetation and habitats, would reduce impacts on trees, but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-5, designed to reduce impacts on native vegetation and special status species, including trees and special status natural communities (Table 4.4-3), would reduce impacts on trees to a level that is less than significant. By incorporating the measures described above, the proposed project would not conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, including tree preservation policies or ordinances.

Operation

Operation of the proposed project would require periodic maintenance of access and spur roads and areas around subtransmission structures. This periodic maintenance may require trimming of protected trees to ensure safe operation of the subtransmission lines and to ensure access for routine and emergency maintenance. This maintenance work would be conducted consistent with CPUC GO 95, Rule 35 and California Public Resources Code Sections 4292 and 4293. MM BIO-14 would require that the applicant assess whether tree trimming would impact resources in the project area and issue an Environmental Clearance to O&M staff outlining appropriate APMs, MMs, and state and federal permit conditions. Implementation of MM BIO-14 would ensure that impacts remain less than significant. ~~Additionally, implementation of APM BIO-1 through APM BIO-3 and APM GEN-1, designed to reduce impacts on native vegetation and habitats, would reduce impacts on trees, but not to a level that is less than significant. Incorporation of MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-5, designed to reduce impacts on trees and sensitive natural woodland communities, would reduce impacts on trees to a level that is less than significant. By incorporating the mitigation measure described above, the proposed project would not conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, including tree preservation policies or ordinances.~~

4.4.5 Mitigation Measures

MM BIO-1: Limits of Construction Activities: Project Boundaries and Sensitive Areas Clearly Marked. In all locations of the project, construction activities, vehicular traffic (including movement of all equipment), and storage of construction materials will be restricted to approved access roads and established construction areas indicated by flagging, fencing, and/or signage. The applicant will ensure that exclusionary fencing is installed prior to the start of construction activities around laydown/work and staging areas, where necessary, to prevent inadvertent encroachment into the native habitat adjacent to areas of impact. Identified sensitive resources such as hydrologic features, special status plants and natural communities, and known wildlife habitat of special status species (e.g., nests, burrows, dens, middens) will be assigned a buffer as appropriate and clearly marked (e.g., with signs, flagging, ropes, and/or fencing) and avoided unless previously approved. A CPUC-approved qualified biologist will propose a buffer distance if sensitive resources are identified, and the applicant will consult with the CPUC and resource agency (ies) to determine whether the proposed buffer distance is appropriate. The CPUC-approved qualified biologist will perform or supervise flagging and fencing to ensure that these activities are conducted without harm to sensitive species or habitat.~~Identified sensitive resources such as hydrologic features, special status plants and natural communities, and known wildlife habitat (e.g., nests, burrows, dens, middens) will be assigned a buffer as appropriate and clearly marked (e.g., with signs, flagging, ropes, and/or fencing) and avoided unless previously approved. A CPUC-approved qualified biologist will propose a buffer distance to the CPUC, and the CPUC will determine the need for consultation with appropriate resource agency (ies) . The CPUC-approved qualified biologist will perform or supervise flagging and fencing to ensure that these activities are conducted without harm to sensitive species or habitat.~~

MM BIO-2: Pre-construction Survey Timing and Location Stipulations. Pre-construction surveys for special status plant and wildlife species will be conducted in all access, laydown/work, and staging areas where suitable habitat is present, including all tower installation sites, existing and proposed access roads, staging areas, and tower footing removal sites. Pre-construction surveys will not include searches for special status fish. Rather, fish presence will be assumed at the locations described in this analysis, and CPUC-approved biological monitors ~~would~~ will record any loss, injury, or other interactions with special status fish (as required in APM BIO-3).

Additionally, a CPUC-approved qualified biologist will conduct pre-construction clearance sweeps for special status species at all access, staging, and laydown/work areas where suitable habitat is present within approximately 24 hours of construction activities each day.

If a special status species is found at any time~~, the CPUC-approved biologist~~ the applicant will contact the appropriate wildlife agency(ies), in addition to the CPUC, within 48 hours.

MM BIO-3: Noxious and Invasive Weed Control Plan. Prior to construction, the applicant will submit a Noxious and Invasive Weed Control Plan that is to be implemented before, during, and after construction and restoration of the proposed project. The final Noxious and Invasive Weed Control Plan shall be implemented, as specified, throughout construction and restoration. This plan will include measures designed to avoid the introduction and spread of noxious weeds and invasive plant species designated by the state, the counties, or local weed control boards. At a minimum, this plan will include the following measures:

- Pre-construction surveys for special status plant species (APM BIO-1 and MM BIO-2) will include surveys for state- and county-designated noxious weed species. The applicant will coordinate with the appropriate agencies, including the CPUC, to determine appropriate species-specific measures to implement, or whether control or treatment of a species is feasible.
- If an invasive weed species is present at a given site, soils excavated from this location for use in construction and restoration activities (e.g., backfilling, road rehabilitation, etc.) will not be transported to a location that does not already contain the said invasive species.
- All vehicles and equipment will be cleaned off site prior to initial arrival at the project.
- Crews, with construction inspector oversight, will ensure that vehicles and equipment are free of soil and debris capable of transporting noxious weed seeds, roots, or rhizomes before the vehicles and equipment are allowed use of access roads.
- Vehicle and equipment wash stations (mobile or built in place) will be erected at strategic locations on the right-of-way where designated weed species have been detected, and where doing so would help prevent the spread of these species.
- Straw, hay, gravel, soil, or other construction materials that could inadvertently contain unwanted plant propagules will come from state-cleared sources that are free of invasive weeds.
- All seeds to be used in revegetation and reclamation activities will come from weed-free sources.
- All temporary disturbance areas not subject to existing infestations of invasive plants, including access roads, transmission line corridors, and towers, will be monitored for invasive species establishment on a quarterly basis for at least one year after project construction and restoration is completed. If evidence of invasive species introduction is found, the applicant will coordinate with appropriate agencies, including the CPUC, to determine appropriate species-specific measures to implement.
- This plan will be developed in consultation with resource agencies (CDFW, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, CPUC, as appropriate) and will be provided to these agencies for review and comment. The plan must be finalized and approved by the CPUC prior to the start of construction. ~~six months prior to the start of construction, with the intent to produce a final draft of the plan no later than two months prior to the start of construction.~~

MM BIO-4: Limit Removal of Native Plants, Trees, and Natural Communities.

- Temporary construction areas will be impacted in such a way that facilitates post-construction restoration. For example, drive-and-crush methods in areas with native vegetation will be employed where possible.
- The applicant will consult with a qualified arborist for the trimming and removal of all native vegetation. The applicant will work with the qualified arborist to determine the minimum amount of vegetation removal required to accommodate project construction and restoration, as well as the correct trimming procedures to employ.
- The applicant will consult with the appropriate agency, including the CPUC, and will adhere to any regulations and permit conditions for the following impacts:
  - Impacts on Critical Habitat.

- Impacts on ESHAs in the Coastal Zone.
- Impacts on special status natural communities, including riparian communities, southern California black walnut woodland, southern coast live oak riparian forest, and southern sycamore alder riparian woodland.

MM BIO-5: Habitat Restoration and Mitigation.

- The applicant will ensure that all areas that are temporarily impacted are restored as closely to pre-construction conditions as possible. Alternatively, areas that do not provide habitat to special status species or sensitive resources may be restored to the conditions agreed upon between the landowner and the applicant.
- Prior to construction, the applicant will submit a Habitat Restoration and Mitigation Plan to address areas of habitat loss to be restored or mitigated (for disturbances to jurisdictional features, see MM BIO-7). This plan will be developed in consultation with resource agencies (NMFS, USFWS, CDFW, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, CPUC, as appropriate) and will be provided to these agencies for review and comment. The plan must be finalized and approved by the CPUC prior to the start of construction. ~~six months prior to the start of construction, with the intent to produce a final draft of the plan no later than two months prior to the start of construction.~~
- The plan will include details, including but not limited to, topsoil segregation and conservation; vegetation treatment and removal; revegetation methods, including seed mixes, rates, and transplants; criteria to monitor and evaluate revegetation success; and compensation and remedial measures to be implemented as needed.
- All disturbances to special status plants, county-protected trees, and special status natural communities will be restored or mitigated, and the plan will specify how each type will be addressed in terms of the above restoration details and/or other mitigation. For special status plant species, such as Santa Barbara honeysuckle or Nuttall's scrub oak, or special status natural communities in which mitigation requirements may not be specified through permits, restoration will occur after construction at a level of 1:1. This will be completed through one of the following methods:
  - Establishing the species/natural community habitat within the proposed project areas (onsite);
  - Establishing the species/natural community habitat outside the proposed project areas (offsite); or
  - Purchasing credits and/or mitigation lands at an entity approved by CDFW.

  For Options 1 and 2 (onsite and offsite), post-construction monitoring will be performed for one to five years, depending on the disturbance level and restoration level, and the success criteria will be specified in the plan.

MM BIO-6: Wildlife Protection. To prevent entrapment of wildlife, all steep-walled trenches, auger holes, or other excavations will be covered at the end of each day. Fencing will be maintained around the covered excavations at night. For any open excavations, earthen escape ramps will be maintained. A CPUC-approved biological monitor will inspect all trenches, auger holes, or other excavations a minimum of twice per day during non-summer months and a minimum of three times per day during the summer (hotter) months, and also immediately prior to back-filling. Any wildlife species found will be safely removed and relocated out of harm's by a CPUC-approved biological

monitor, using suitable tools such as a pool net when applicable. ~~For safety reasons, biological monitors will under no circumstance enter open excavations.~~

Measures will be taken to prevent impacts from project-related trash. All trash, including decomposable food scraps, will be stored in sturdy, animal-proof containers, and emptied regularly. All project construction vehicles will be equipped with trash bags.

MM BIO-7: Night Lighting. Night lighting for construction and restoration use, such as to illuminate staging areas, may be used from dusk to dawn. All lighting will be shielded and directed downward to minimize the potential for glare or spillover onto adjacent properties and to reduce impacts on local wildlife. The applicant will indicate anticipated measures to resource agencies and the CPUC for approval prior to construction. The approved measures will be provided to the CPUC.

MM BIO-8: Impact Reduction on Hydrologic Features and Aquatic Habitat. Prior to project construction for all proposed project components in the vicinity of hydrologic features, the applicant will:

- Ensure that CPUC-approved biological monitors will establish and maintain a minimum exclusionary buffer of 50 feet from the delineated extent of all jurisdictional features during construction and restoration. If the applicant cannot maintain the 50 foot exclusionary buffer from the delineated bed/bank of a drainage feature or associated riparian habitat during project construction and restoration, the applicant will ~~obtain~~ consult with appropriate agencies about the need for ~~all~~ any necessary permits ~~from appropriate agencies~~ (e.g., USFWS, NMFS, CDFW, USACE, CPUC, County, as appropriate); will provide standard SWPPP BMP measures to prevent any solid or liquid materials from entering the drainage; and ~~the applicant~~ will submit proposed measures to CPUC for approval prior to construction. Measures should include information on crossing streams on road beds. Vehicle or equipment travel and construction or restoration of any proposed project component that requires altering, removing, or filling the bed or bank of seasonal drainages or other jurisdictional or potentially jurisdictional water features will be performed only when water is not present in the feature, unless otherwise permitted by agencies (e.g., USFWS, NMFS, CDFW, USACE, CPUC, and County, as appropriate).
- Prior to construction. the applicant will submit a Hydrologic Features Mitigation Monitoring Plan for affected hydrologic features in consultation with resource agencies (USFWS, NMFS, CDFW, USACE, Santa Barbara County, CPUC, as appropriate) and will provide to these agencies for review and comment. The plan must be finalized and approved by the CPUC. ~~four months~~ prior to the start of construction~~, with the intent to produce a final draft of the plan no later than one months prior to the start of construction.~~
- The plan will provide measures to accomplish restoration, criteria for restoration success, a post-construction monitoring schedule, and compensation ratios for impacted jurisdictional areas.

MM BIO-9: California Red-Legged Frog Impact Reduction Measures. To reduce impacts on California red-legged frog, the following measures will be implemented:

- A CPUC-approved qualified biologist will conduct habitat assessment surveys in accordance with the most recent USFWS protocol (e.g., USFWS Revised Guidance on Site Assessments and Field Surveys for the California Red-legged Frog, August 2005) for California red-legged

frog at all jurisdictional drainage features that would be impacted in project area prior to construction (Table 4.4-4).

- In areas where suitable habitat is determined to be present, pre-construction surveys in accordance with the most recent USFWS protocol (e.g., USFWS Revised Guidance on Site Assessments and Field Surveys for the California Red-legged Frog August 2005) for the California red-legged frog will be conducted to determine presence in the vicinity of the project area.
- If this species is identified in the project area at any time, the USFWS, CDFW, and CPUC will be notified within 48 hours and the applicant will consult with these agencies to determine the appropriate next steps.
- In suitable habitat for California red-legged frog, the applicant may perform protocol level, pre-construction surveys to confirm the absence of the species. If such surveys are not conducted, or if the surveys do not confirm absence, the applicant and/or its contractors will minimize impacts on California red-legged frog by avoiding suitable habitat whenever possible. Additional measures to avoid and minimize impacts to California red-legged frog and their habitat will be implemented as required by USFWS, but will include the following at a minimum:
    - A USFWS-approved biologist will survey the work site no more than two weeks before the onset of construction activities.
    - If California red-legged frogs are found, relocations will be conducted only in consultation with the USFWS. If the USFWS approves moving animals, the approved biologists will be allowed sufficient time to move California red-legged frog from the work site before work activities begin. Only USFWS-approved biologists will participate in activities associated with the capture, handling, and monitoring of California red-legged frog. Evidence of the USFWS's approval of red-legged frog biologists will be submitted to the CPUC.
    - Before any construction activities begin on a project, a USFWS-approved biologist will conduct a training session for all construction personnel. At a minimum, the training will include a description of the California red-legged frog and its habitat and the general measures that are being implemented to conserve the California red-legged frog as they relate to the project.
    - A USFWS-approved biologist will be present at the work site until such time as all removal of California red-legged frogs, instruction of workers, and habitat disturbance have been completed. After this time, the applicant may designate a CPUC-approved qualified biological monitor to monitor on-site compliance with all minimization measures.
    - The qualified CPUC-approved biological monitor and the USFWS-approved biologist will have the authority to halt any action that may result in impacts to California red-legged frog.
    - During project activities, all trash that may attract predators will be properly contained, removed from the work site, and disposed of regularly. Following construction, all trash and construction debris will be removed from work areas.
    - All fueling and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment and staging areas will occur at least 100 feet from any riparian and aquatic habitat. All workers will be informed of the importance of preventing spills and the appropriate measures to take should a spill occur.

MM BIO-10: Nesting Bird Management Plan. Prior to construction, the applicant will submit a project-specific Nesting Bird Management Plan in consultation with the USFWS, CDFW, and CPUC, which provides measures and an adaptive management program designed to avoid or reduce impacts on special-status and MBTA-protected bird species during nesting periods. The final Nesting Bird Management Plan shall be implemented, as specified, throughout construction and restoration. This plan will include the following information:

- Appropriate survey timing, extents, and methods; approved nest deterrent methods, including areas where vegetation will be cleared for the purpose of deterring nesting; inactive nest management; monitoring and reporting protocols during construction; protocol for determining whether a nest is active; protocol for documenting, reporting, and protecting active nests within construction and restoration areas. If pre-construction survey protocols exist for a certain species, the plan will outline the implementation of these protocols.
- Appropriate and effective buffer distances, including horizontal buffers from nests, horizontal buffers from territories if appropriate, and vertical buffers for helicopters. Buffers will not be based on generalized assumptions regarding all nesting birds, but will be site- and species/guild-specific and account for specific stage of nesting cycle and construction work type.
- During construction and restoration, a CPUC-approved avian biologist will implement the appropriate buffer distance in accordance with the Nesting Bird Management Plan.
- A process for reducing nesting bird buffer distances~~for a reduction from the plan's nesting buffer distances~~. Buffer reductions for special-status species and raptors must ~~be approved~~ receive concurrence by appropriate wildlife agencies and the CPUC. Buffer reductions for common species will be determined by the CPUC-approved biologist, and the applicant will notify the CPUC prior to implementation. ~~must be approved by the CPUC.~~
- The minimum requirements to become a CPUC-approved avian biologist and biological monitor for nesting birds, including education, experience in conducting biological surveys, and experience with specific birds in the project area.
- The CPUC-approved biological monitor will halt work if it is determined that active nesting would be disturbed by construction or restoration activities until further direction or approval to work is obtained from the CPUC and/or appropriate wildlife agencies.

This plan will be submitted to the wildlife agencies and the CPUC for review and comment, and the plan will be finalized and approved by the CPUC prior to the start of construction.~~The plan will be submitted to the wildlife agencies and the CPUC for review and comment four months prior to construction and finalized no less than one month prior to the start of construction.~~

~~**MM BIO-11: Avian Protection Plans.** At least three months prior to construction, the applicant will submit an avian protection plan in accordance with Avian Protection Plan Guidelines (APLIC and USFWS 2005). The final avian protection plan shall be implemented, as specified, throughout construction and restoration. The avian protection plan will include provisions to reduce impacts on avian species during construction, restoration, and operation of the proposed project, and will provide for the adaptive management of project-related issues. The avian protection plans will be reviewed and approved by the CDFW, USFWS, and CPUC prior to construction.~~

MM BIO-~~12~~11: Burrowing Owl Impact Reduction Measures. To further reduce impacts on burrowing owls, the following measures will be implemented:

- A CPUC-approved qualified biologist familiar with burrowing owl biology and survey methods will conduct pre-construction surveys for this species.
- Surveys for burrowing owls will be conducted no more than 30 days prior to construction activities during the non-breeding season and no more than 14 days prior to construction in the breeding season, to confirm whether burrowing owls occupy the site, and if so, whether the owls are actively nesting. Surveys will be done throughout the project areas of potential effect, plus an additional area extending 300 feet from the proposed project's boundaries.
- If an occupied burrow is identified, the CPUC-approved qualified biologist will recommend an appropriate buffer ~~distances prescribed~~ based on the circumstances (e.g., owl tolerance and construction activity level) and as explained by the *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFG 2012 or more recent). The buffer will be approved by the CPUC ~~will be implemented~~.
- If preconstruction surveys identify a burrowing owl then the applicant will submit a Burrowing Owl Compensation Plan in consultation with appropriate wildlife agencies and the CPUC that is consistent with mitigation guidelines as outlined in the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFG 2012 or more recent) prior to construction. The final Burrowing Owl Compensation Plan shall be implemented, as specified, throughout construction and restoration. The plan will describe the compensatory measures that will be undertaken to address the loss of burrowing owl burrows within the project area. This will include mitigation for permanent impacts on nesting, occupied and satellite burrows and occupied burrowing owl habitat with (a) permanent conservation of similar vegetation communities comparable to or better than that of the impact area, and (b) sufficiently large acreage, and presence of fossorial mammals.
- The ~~CPUC-approved qualified biologist will report all project-related burrowing owl injuries or mortalities to~~ CDFW and the CPUC will be notified of all project-related burrowing owl injuries or mortalities within 12 hours of discovery and will follow CDFW's recommended actions.

MM BIO-~~13~~12: Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo Impacts Reduction Measures. To reduce impacts on southwestern willow flycatcher, the following measures will be implemented:

- A CPUC-approved qualified biologist will conduct habitat assessment surveys for southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo at all jurisdictional drainage features that would be impacted in project area (Table 4.4-4). In addition, habitat assessments should be conducted at any other drainage where construction activities (e.g., overhead stringing by helicopter) could impact this species, including the section of Ventura River that is spanned by the project.
- In areas where suitable habitat is determined to be present, pre-construction nesting season surveys following the most recent USFWS protocol for the southwestern willow flycatcher and least Bell's vireo will be conducted to determine presence in the vicinity of the project area.
- If either species is found to actively nest in the project area, the USFWS, CDFW, and CPUC will be notified within 48 hours of nesting or territory confirmation. In the event that a

southwest willow flycatcher or least Bell's vireo individual or nest is observed, biologists will establish and maintain an exclusionary buffer as specified in the Nesting Bird Management Plan (MM BIO-10).

MM BIO-~~14~~13: Ringtail and American Badger Impacts Reduction Measures. To reduce impacts on ringtail and American badger, the following measures will be implemented:

- If occupied ringtail dens or badger burrows are observed during pre-construction surveys or sweeps a CPUC-approved qualified biologist will recommend an appropriate buffer distance around the den or burrow to the CPUC. Once the distance is approved by the CPUC, the biologist will demarcate the disturbance buffer and construction activities will be restricted within the buffer.
- CPUC-approved qualified biologists will be notified if ringtails or badgers are observed within the project area during construction activities. Work will immediately be stopped in the area if the CPUC-approved qualified biologists find an occupied den or burrow within 100 feet of construction activities. Work can resume once the den or burrow is confirmed to be unoccupied by a CPUC-approved qualified biologist or an appropriate buffer is approved by the CPUC and implemented.
- If badger burrows cannot be avoided, a CPUC-approved qualified biologist will ensure passive relocation of the occupants by installing one-way trap doors on the burrow. The burrow will be collapsed after the badger vacates.
- During the spring months when young may be present in burrows, burrows must be checked for young before installation of the one-way trap door. If young are present during relocation efforts, all work will stop within 100 feet of the burrow until the young have left the burrows within the project area.
- If ringtail dens cannot be avoided, the applicant will consult the appropriate agencies (CDFW, CPUC) to determine an appropriate course of action, including potential passive relocation or other measures.
- Prior to any relocation efforts, the applicant will obtain specific approval from the appropriate agencies (CDFW, CPUC).

MM BIO-14: O&M Mitigation. For any O&M activities that would require ground disturbance or vegetation clearance, including tree trimming, SCE will conduct an environmental review prior to conducting work to determine potential risks to resources and to determine whether additional permitting is required. If it is determined that O&M activities pose risks to sensitive species in the project area, SCE would prepare an Environmental Clearance, which would incorporate appropriate APMs and MMs, as listed herein, as well as state and federal permit requirements, in order to ensure that O&M impacts remain less than significant. SCE will submit the Environmental Clearance to the CPUC for approval. Once the Environmental Clearance is approved, SCE will issue the Environmental Clearance to O&M work crews to adhere to during preconstruction and construction for O&M activities.