

3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

<i>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated</i>	<i>Less Than Significant Impact</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
2. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES				
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and the forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.				
Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code section 4526) or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3.2.1 Environmental Setting

The Project would be constructed, operated, and maintained primarily within existing PG&E easements. Neither the soil conditions nor current land uses within the Project boundary support agricultural use, and none of the land is dedicated to the conservation or protection of private land for agricultural or open space uses. As discussed in *Section 3.10, Land Use and Planning*, the undeveloped portions of the Project alignment consist of agriculture, grasslands and oak woodlands. None of this land is zoned for timberland production and none of the land is used to grow trees for the commercial production of timber or other forest products.

3.2.2 Regulatory Setting

State

California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection (CDC) maps important farmlands throughout California through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring

Program (FMMP). Farmland is classified into the following categories based on soil conditions (i.e., their suitability for agriculture) and current land use.

Prime Farmland: Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for long-term crop production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when appropriately treated and managed. In addition, the land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production in the last four years to qualify under this category.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: Land that is similar to Prime Farmland in that it has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for crop production, but with minor shortcomings such as greater slopes and less ability to store moisture.

Unique Farmland: Land that does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance but has been used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include the types of non-irrigated orchards or vineyards that are found in some climatic zones of California. Unique Farmland must have been in agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

Farmland of Local Importance: Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by the county. This land is either currently producing crops or has the capability of production, but does not meet the criteria of the preceding categories.

Grazing Land: Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.

The FMMP monitors the conversion of the State's farmland and produces a biennial report on the amount of land converted from agricultural to non-agricultural use. The FMMP is an informational service only and does not have regulatory jurisdiction over local land use decisions. For the purpose of this environmental analysis, the term "Farmland" includes Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Statewide Importance.

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is the state's primary program aimed at conserving private land for agricultural and open space uses. The Williamson Act provides a mechanism through which private landowners can contract with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open-space uses. In return, Williamson Act contracts offer tax incentives by ensuring that land is assessed for its agricultural productivity rather than its highest and best use. Contracts typically restrict land use for a period of 10 years; however, some jurisdictions exercise the option to extend the term for up to 20 years. Contracts are automatically renewed unless the landowner files for non-renewal or petitions for cancellation. The California Department of Conservation prepares countywide maps of lands enrolled in Williamson Act contracts.

Forest Land and Timberland Zoning

Section 12220(g) of the California Public Resources Code defines forest land as "land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural

conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.” Timberland is land (other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection as experimental forest land) that is available for and capable of growing trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products.

Local

County of El Dorado General Plan

Lands surrounding or within the Project alignment are not designated as agricultural lands or agricultural district by the El Dorado County General Plan (El Dorado County, 2004).

City of Folsom General Plan

The City of Folsom General Plan does not designate any agricultural lands along the Project alignment (City of Folsom, 1988).

County of El Dorado Zoning Ordinance

The Project would be adjacent to or traverse parcels designated as *Agricultural*, and *Exclusive Agriculture* in the El Dorado County Zoning Ordinance. The *Agricultural* designation is intended “provide for the orderly development of land having sufficient space and natural conditions compatible to horticultural and agricultural pursuits and to promote and encourage these pursuits by providing additional opportunities for the sale, packing, processing, and other related activities which tend to increase their economic viability and to provide for the protection from encroachment of unrelated uses tending to have adverse effects on the development of the area.” The *Exclusive Agriculture* designation applies only to those lands subject to the Land Conservation Act of 1965 (El Dorado County, 2010).

City of Folsom Zoning Ordinance

The Project would traverse parcels designated as *Agricultural Reserve* by the City of Folsom Zoning Ordinance. The *Agricultural Reserve* designation to provide areas for interim agricultural and livestock grazing uses until community services are available for urban development, and to direct the orderly expansion of urban development consistent with the City of Folsom General Plan (City of Folsom, 1990).

3.2.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

No APMs are intended to address potential impacts to agriculture or forestry resources.

3.2.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- a) Whether the Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use: *NO IMPACT*.**

The California Department of Conservation's Important Farmland Maps for El Dorado County and Sacramento County indicated that the Project would not cross land identified as important farmland (Department of Conservation 2012, 2013). Furthermore, construction work areas or activities, including stringing or laydown activities, would not be located on any lands categorized as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. As such, no Important Farmland would be affected by the Project.

- b) Whether the Project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract: *NO IMPACT*.**

The Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural uses, as it would generally replace existing power lines in an existing utility corridor and minor modifications made to the substation would not expand the existing facilities. In addition, utility corridors are generally considered to be a compatible land use with agricultural land because the installation of overhead lines does not affect the continued use of the underlying ground for agricultural uses. See *Section 3.10, Land Use and Planning*, for further discussion on existing zoning and land use designations in the Project area.

The Project alignment traverses one mapped area of Williamson Act Non-Prime Agricultural Land in non-renewal, located just east of El Dorado Hills Boulevard and straddling both sides of Highway 50, in El Dorado County. This area is mapped as Grazing Land and Other Land (Department of Conservation, 2013). Williamson Act Non-Prime Agricultural Land is land enrolled under California Land Conservation Act contract and does not meet any of the criteria for classification as Prime Agricultural Land. Work at this location consists of replacing TSPs along approximately 2,000 feet of the Missouri Flat-Gold Hill Line, replacing wood poles along approximately 3,000 feet of the Gold Hill No. 1 Line, and reconductoring activities on both lines. The Project would not remove any land from Williamson Act contracts and existing agricultural land uses would resume after completion of Project construction. Based upon the proposed construction timetable (Table 2-6 in the Project Description), work at this location would take about two weeks. Therefore, there would be no impact related to Williamson Act contracts.

- c) Whether the Project would conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)): *NO IMPACT*.**

There is no statutorily-defined forest land or timberland located within or adjacent to the Project boundary, and none of the land that could be affected by the Project is zoned Timberland Production. Therefore the Project would not conflict with the existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production.

d) Whether the Project would result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use: *NO IMPACT.*

As discussed under criterion c), there is no forest land within or adjacent to the Project area. Therefore the Project would not result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to a non-forest use. See *Section 3.4 Biological Resources*, and *Section 3.10, Land Use and Planning*, for analysis of the Project's proposed removal of approximately 225 trees, primarily including native oak trees.

e) Whether the Project would involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use: *NO IMPACT.*

The Project does not propose and would not result in or otherwise involve additional changes in the existing environment that, due to their location or nature, could permanently result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or of forest land to a non-forest use. As indicated under criterion b), a portion of the Project alignment crosses an area designated as Grazing Land. Work at this location could temporarily preclude use of a portion of this area for grazing purposes. Both of the power lines are located either on or near the boundary of this farmland; therefore, the area temporarily affected during the approximate two-week construction period would be very limited. As noted above, there is no forestland within or adjacent to the project area. The presence of the Project is generally a compatible use with existing agricultural zoning and land uses along the alignment. Furthermore, the Project does not include any features that would indirectly result in the conversion of such lands. As such, the Project would have no impact on the permanent conversion of agricultural land or forest land resulting from other changes in the environment.

References

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