

3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section presents the environmental setting and impacts on agriculture and forestry resources that would result from the Proposed Project. This section includes existing agriculture and forestry resources information, applicable regulations, environmental impacts, and mitigation measures to reduce or avoid significant effects of the Proposed Project.

3.2.1 Environmental Setting

Agricultural Resources

The Proposed Project is located on and adjacent to land that is designated, zoned, and/or actively used for agricultural activities in Kern County, Los Angeles County, and the City of Bakersfield.

Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) classifies land according to agricultural suitability through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) based on land uses, irrigation, and soil conditions. FMMP categories applicable to CEQA are defined below (CDOC n.d.).

- **Prime Farmland.** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance.** Farmland like Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland.** Farmland of lesser quality soils used to produce the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the 4 years prior to the mapping date.

As shown in Figure 3.2-1, Segments 1, 2, 3, and 5 of the Proposed Project area contain FMMP-designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland.

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Agricultural Land Uses and Zoning Designated by Local Jurisdictions

Agricultural land uses and/or zoning in the Proposed Project area are established by Kern County, Los Angeles County, and the City of Bakersfield.¹ Kern County designates agricultural districts in the General Plan as Exclusive Agriculture and Limited Agriculture. Los Angeles County designates agricultural districts in the General Plan as A-2-2 (Heavy Agriculture). The City of Bakersfield designates agriculture districts in the General Plan as A-HD (Agricultural-Hillside Development Overlay). Agricultural zoning is shown in Figure 3.2-2

Williamson Act Contract Lands

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open-space use for periods of 10 to 20 years (CDOC n.d.). Until the passage of SB 574 in 2021, the DOC and counties were required to collect and publish program enrollment data in biennial reports, the most recent, and final, publication being the Williamson Act Status Report 2020–2021 (CDOC 2022). Under the new Williams Act reporting requirements (section 5127.5), each city or county provides to the Department of Conservation, on or before January 30 of each year, GIS data files of all agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracted land in existence at the end of the preceding year. That information is now made available through the California Williamson Act Enrollment Finder. Lands in the Proposed Project region that are subject to Williamson Act contract are shown in Figure 3.2-3.

Active Agricultural Operations

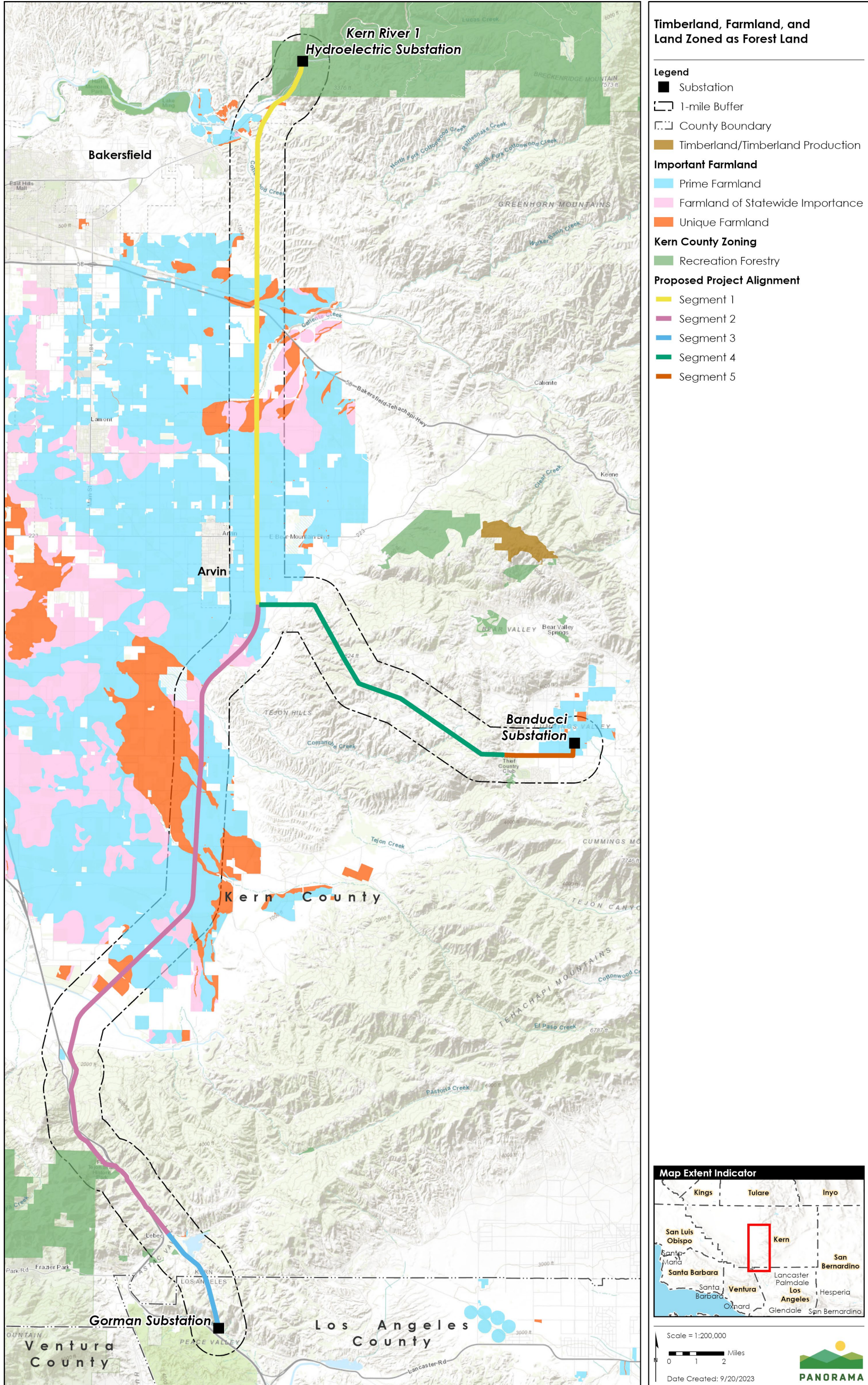
Agricultural operations, including existing permits or leases, may occur on land that is not FMMP-designated farmland or subject to local agricultural land use or zoning designations. Active agricultural operations that may be important to the region, but are not within designated agricultural areas, are considered agricultural resources. Active agricultural operations include areas where there is evidence of existing agricultural production both within and outside designated Farmland, local land use and zoning, or Williamson Act contract lands.

Active agricultural operations in the Proposed Project area includes areas with irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, pastures, fallow lands, ranch and farm facilities, and windrows. Crops observed within the Proposed Project area alignment include grapes, almonds, alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), and various other fruit, nut, vegetable, and graminoid species that likely serve as livestock feed.

¹ The City of Arvin does not have any specific designation for agriculture land.

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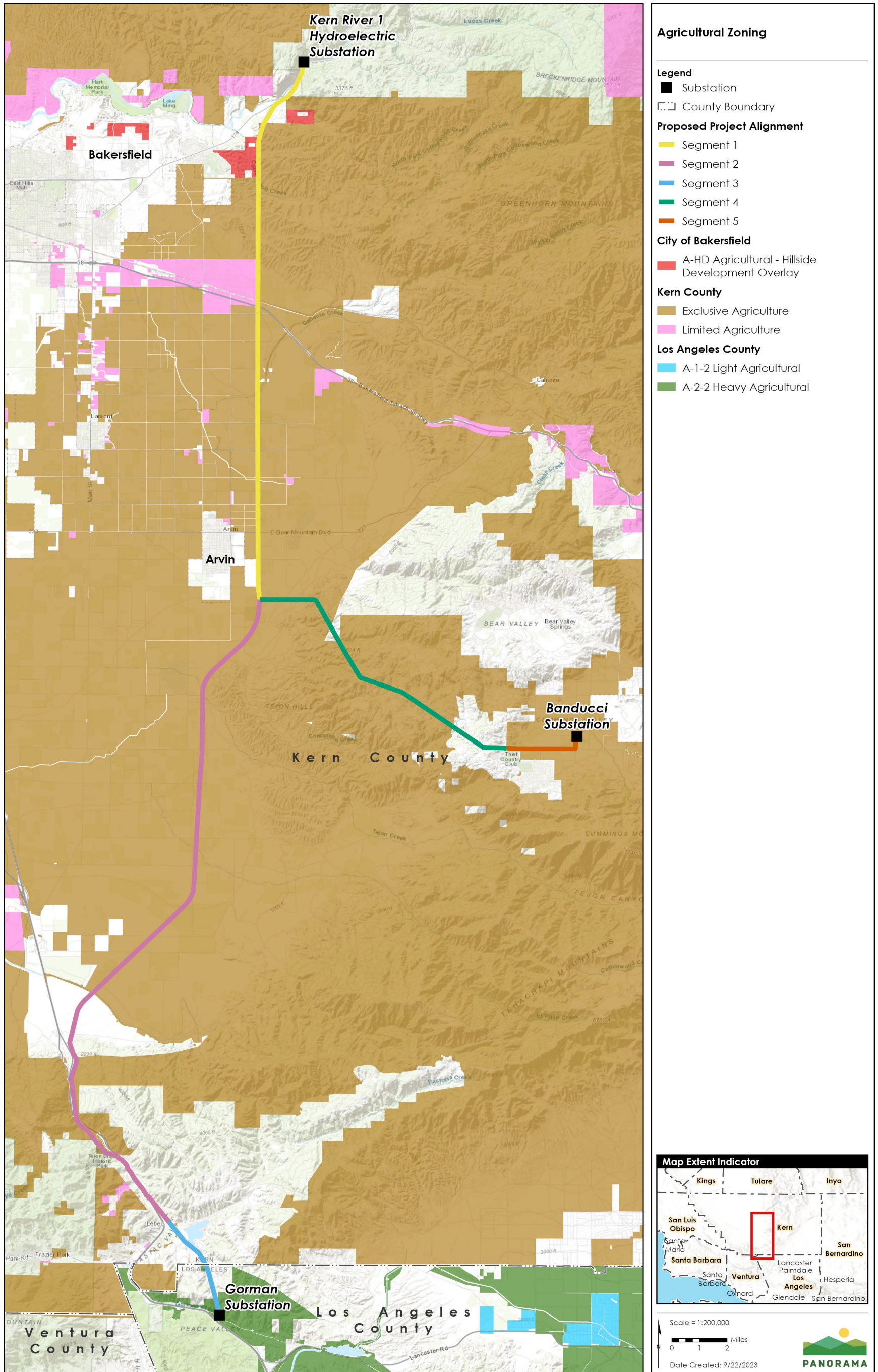
Figure 3.2-1 Farmland and Forest Land



Source: (CDOC 2018; CAL FIRE FRAP 2015; CAL FIRE 2023)

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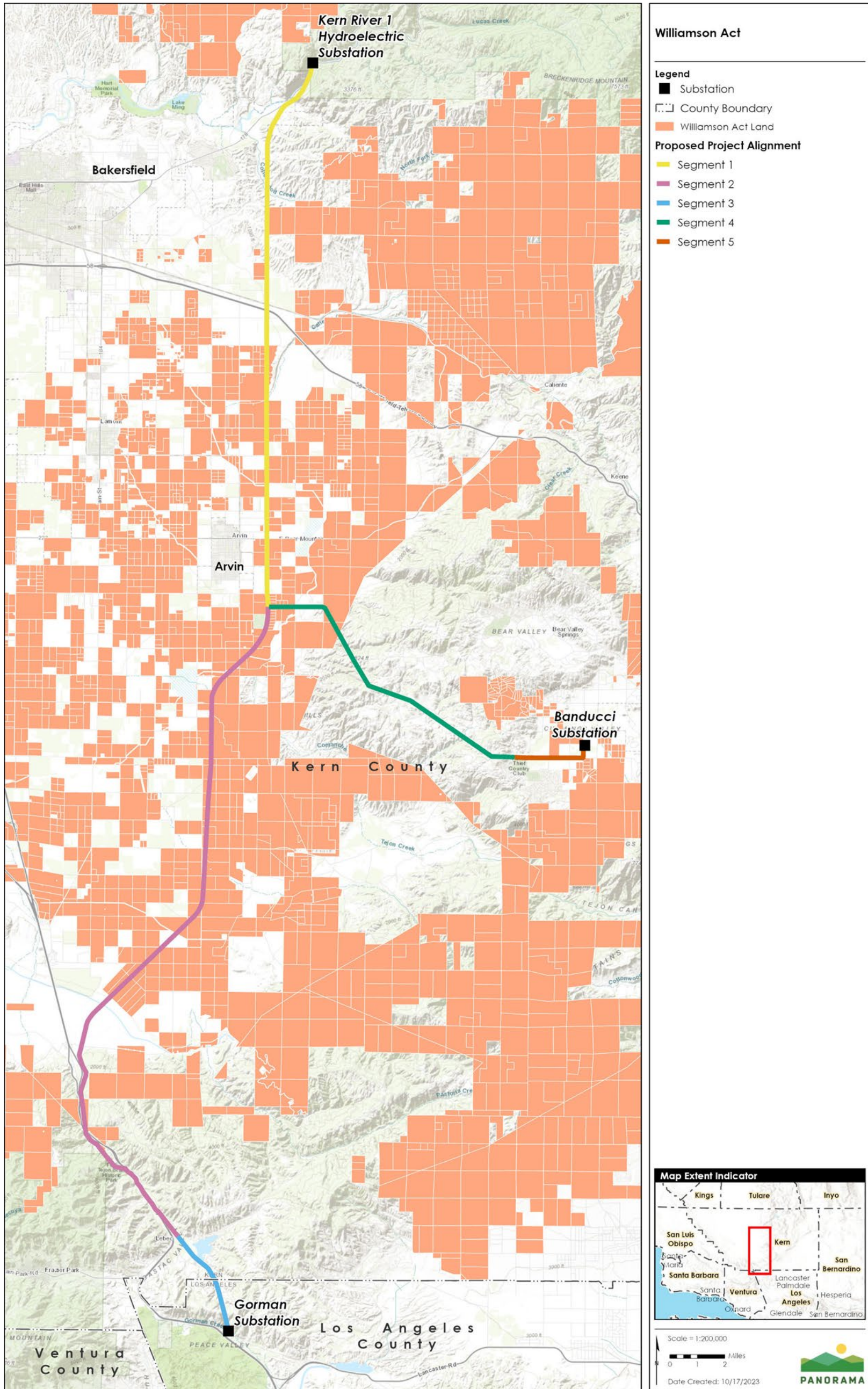
Figure 3.2-2 Agricultural Zoning for the Proposed Project Area



Source: (Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department 2023; City of Bakersfield Planning Department 2022; County of Los Angeles 2023)

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Figure 3.2-3 Williamson Act Land



Source: (County of Kern GIS, 2023)

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Forestry Resources

Portions of the Proposed Project area within Segments 1 and 2 are located on lands zoned for recreational forestry, as shown in Figure 3.2-1. Forestry resources are also defined more broadly in the PRC as follows:

- **Forest Land (PRC § 12220(g))** 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 (PRC § 4526)** Land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (board) as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of a commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the board on a district basis.
- **Timberland Production Zone (California Government Code § 51104(g))** With respect to the general plans of cities and counties, “timberland preserve zone” means “timberland production zone”. Timber production zones are areas that have been zoned for and are devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, as defined below. “Compatible use” is any use that does not significantly detract from the use of the property for, or inhibit, growing and harvesting timber and shall include, but not be limited to, any of the following, unless in a specific instance such a use would be contrary to the preceding definition of compatible use:
 - Management for watershed
 - Management for fish and wildlife habitat or hunting and fishing
 - A use integrally related to the growing, harvesting, and processing of forest products, including but not limited to roads, log landings, and log storage areas.
 - The erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electric, water, or communication transmission facilities
 - Grazing
 - A residence or other structure necessary for the management of land zoned as timberland production

The Fremont Cottonwood Forest, Live Oak Forest, Blue Oak Forest, Valley Oak Riparian Forest, Mixed Oak Forest, and Red Willow Riparian Forest vegetation communities within the Proposed Project area may meet the definition of forest land under PRC § 12220(g). Although vegetation communities are present that may meet the definition of forest land, no commercial harvesting of forest materials occur in these areas.

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3.2.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

Federal Regulations, Policies, and Standards

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The 1980 Congressional report *Compact Cities: Energy-Saving Strategies for the Eighties* identified the need for Congress to implement programs and policies to protect farmland and combat urban sprawl and the waste of energy and resources that accompanies sprawling development. The Compact Cities report indicated that much of the sprawl was the result of programs funded by the federal government (U.S. Congress 1980).

In 1981, the Final Report for the National Agricultural Land Study (NALS) was released. NALS was a two-year project commissioned to document the extent and cause of the loss of prime farmland in the United States. The NALS Final Report conclude that large areas of prime farmland in the United States were being permanently converted into nonagricultural uses and that federally sponsored programs were a major contributor to that conversion (USDA and CEQ 1981). Congress responded with the passage of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) subtitle I of Title XV, Section 1539-1549 as part of the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-98) (also known as the 1981 Farm Bill), with the first initial rule issued in 1984. Congress made significant changes to the law in 1985, with those changes addressed in in 1987 with a new proposed rule that was finalized in 1994 (American Farmland Trust 2022). On June 17, 1994, the final rules and regulations were published in the Federal Register (NRCS 1994).

The FPPA is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. It assures that to the extent possible federal programs are administered to be compatible with state, local units of government, and private programs and policies to protect farmland. Federal agencies are required to develop and review their policies and procedures to implement the FPPA every two years (American Farmland Trust 2022).

Forest Service Master Special Use Permit

Forest Service special use permits require that permittees comply with all applicable federal, state, county, and municipal laws, regulations, and other legal requirements. Permittees have a general duty to protect all federal land and interest from damage, and are liable for all damage, including fire suppression costs, associated with the use and occupancy authorized by the permit (Clause IV F). Power line permits are classified as a high-risk use by Forest Service regulations (36 CFR 251.56(d)(2)) and are subject to strict liability requirements. The Forest Service would recover compensation for any damages with the assistance of the U.S. Justice Department. The Forest Service has also adopted California Public Resource Code (PRC) sections 4292 and 4293, by Regional Forester Order, which incorporates the power line clearing requirements established by CAL FIRE and described in the following section in more detail. The rules established by CPUC General Order 95 would also apply to the permittee (CAL FIRE and CPUC 2021).

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State Regulations, Policies and Standards

Williamson Act

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value (CDOC n.d.).

The CDOC assists all levels of government, and landowners in the interpretation of the Williamson Act related government code. The CDOC also researches, publishes, and disseminates information regarding the policies, purposes, procedures, and administration of the Williamson Act according to government code. Participating counties and cities are required to establish their own rules and regulations regarding implementation of the Act within their jurisdiction. These rules include but are not limited to: enrollment guidelines, acreage minimums, enforcement procedures, allowable uses, and compatible uses (CDOC n.d.).

Local Regulations, Policies and Standards

The CPUC has sole and exclusive State jurisdiction over the siting and design of the Proposed Project because it authorizes the construction, operation, and maintenance of investor-owned public utility facilities. Pursuant to GO 131-D section XIV.B, “Local jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electric power line projects, distribution lines, substations, or electric facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the CPUC’s jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local agencies regarding land use matters.” Consequently, public utilities are directed to consider local regulations and consult with local agencies, but the counties’ and cities’ regulations are not applicable as the counties and cities do not have jurisdiction over the Proposed Project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local land use laws, regulations, and policies is provided for informational purposes only.

Kern County General Plan

The Kern County General Plan Land Use Open Space and Conservation Element guides the long-term conservation of natural resources and preservation of available open space areas. The Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Element contains a number of goals and policies relevant to the analysis of agricultural and forestry resources for the Proposed Project, including the following:

The Kern County General Plan states that agriculture is vital to the future of Kern County and sets goals to protect important agricultural lands for future use and prevent the conversion of prime agricultural lands to other uses (e.g., industrial, residential). The Kern County General Plan includes three designations for agricultural land, as follows:

- 8.1 Intensive Agriculture (minimum parcel size 20 acres gross): lands devoted to the production of irrigated crops or having potential for such use

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- 8.2 Resource Reserve (minimum parcel size is 20 acres gross, except to a Williamson Act Contract/Farmland Security Zone Contract, in which case the minimum parcel size shall be 80 acres gross): lands devoted to areas of mixed natural resource characteristics including rangeland, woodland, and wildlife habitat which occur in an established Kern County water district
- 8.3 Extensive Agriculture (minimum parcel size 20 acres gross, except lands subject to a Williamson Act contract/Farmland Security Zone contract, in which case the minimum parcel size shall be 80 acres gross): lands devoted to uses involving large amounts of land with relatively low value-per-acre yields, such as livestock grazing, dryland farming, and woodlands

Kern County Zoning Ordinance

The Kern County Zoning Ordinance designates Agricultural Districts as Exclusive Agriculture or Limited Agriculture Districts. The purpose of the Exclusive Agriculture District is to designate areas suitable for agricultural uses and to prevent the encroachment of incompatible uses onto agricultural lands and the premature conversion of such lands to nonagricultural uses. Uses in the Exclusive Agriculture District are limited primarily to agricultural uses and other activities compatible with agricultural uses. The purpose of the Limited Agriculture District is to designate areas suitable for a combination of estate-type residential development, agricultural uses, and other compatible uses.

Per section 19.08.090 of the Kern County Zoning Ordinance, the provisions of the ordinance do not apply to the construction, installation, operation, and/or maintenance of electrical utility lines, which would be replaced under the Proposed Project.

Los Angeles County General Plan

The Los Angeles County General Plan Land Use Element guides the long-term conservation of natural resources and preservation of available open space areas. The Land Use Element contains a number of goals and policies relevant to the analysis of agricultural and forestry resources for the Proposed Project, including the following (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning 2015):

- Policy LU 6.2: Encourage land uses and developments that are compatible with the natural environment and landscape.
- Policy LU 6.3: Encourage low density and low intensity development in rural areas that is compatible with rural community character, preserves open space, and conserves agricultural land.

Los Angeles County Zoning Ordinance

Title 22 of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances is the zoning ordinance. Los Angeles county designates agricultural districts as A-1 (Light Agriculture) and A-2 (Heavy Agriculture). The sections of Title 22 that address the zoning designations do not identify electric utility infrastructure as a prohibited use within A-1 or A-2 zoning (Los Angeles County, 2022).

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City of Arvin General Plan, Land Use Element

The City of Arvin Land Use Element contains the following goals and policies related to agricultural resources: (City of Arvin, 2012).

- Goal 13: Protect highly productive, prime agricultural lands from premature conversion to nonagricultural use.
- Policy LU-13.1 Encourage participation in Williamson Act contracts for agricultural lands within and adjoining the City of Arvin.
- Policy LU-13.2 Require that proposals to convert agricultural lands to non-agricultural use demonstrate a need for the conversion and create a benefit to the community.
- Goal 14: Promote wise management of agriculturally productive soils to ensure their long-term viability in the production of food and fiber.
- Policy LU-14.1 Encourage good agricultural practices to maximize the useful life of the soils.
- Policy LU-13.2 Encourage cooperation among responsible agencies to protect the prime soils from dangers such as erosion and misuse

City of Arvin Zoning Ordinance

Title 17 of the Arvin Municipal Code is the City of Arvin's land-use zoning ordinance (City of Arvin, 2022): The City of Arvin does not have any specific designations for agricultural land use.

City of Bakersfield General Plan

The City of Bakersfield General Plan does not contain any goals or policies relevant to agricultural or forestry resources.

City of Bakersfield Zoning Ordinance

Title 17 of the Bakersfield Municipal Code is the City of Bakersfield's land use zoning ordinance. The City of Bakersfield designates agricultural land use as A (Agriculture Zone). Chapter 17.32 of Title 17 that addresses permitted uses within lands zoned for agricultural uses does not list electric utility infrastructure as a prohibited use (City of Bakersfield, 2022).

3.2.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

SCE has proposed measures to reduce environmental impacts. The significance of the impact is first considered prior to application of applicant proposed measures (APMs) and a significance determination is made. The implementation of the APMs is then considered as part of the Proposed Project when determining whether impacts would be significant and thus would require mitigation. The APM would be incorporated as part of any CPUC project approval, and SCE would be required to adhere to the APM as well as any identified mitigation measures. The APM is included in the MMRP for the Proposed Project, and the implementation of the measure would be monitored and documented in the same manner as mitigation measures. There are no APMs that would apply to potential impacts on Agriculture and Forestry Resources for the Proposed Project.

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3.2.4 Environmental Analysis

Summary of Impacts

Table 3.2-1 presents a summary of the CEQA significance criteria and impacts on agriculture and forestry resources that would occur during construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project.

Table 3.2-1 Summary of Proposed Project Impacts to Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Would the proposed project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 by 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Impact Discussion

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**

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project would involve temporary disturbance in staging areas, helicopter landing zones, temporary work pads, temporary guard structure locations, conductor pulling and tensioning locations, and splice sites. Temporary construction disturbance areas are located on FMMP-designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. The temporary construction disturbance would generally just involve vehicles traveling over the land surface in the case of helicopter landing zones, conductor pulling and tensioning, splice sites, guard structures and overland travel zones, which would not permanently convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use. Any land that may be disturbed in a staging area would be returned to preconstruction conditions following construction completion. Temporary work pads could result in permanent impacts on areas Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance if the temporary work pads were not returned to preconstruction conditions. Mitigation Measure AGR-1 requires restoration of areas of temporary impact within Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to pre-project conditions. Because SCE would restore areas of temporary impact to pre-project conditions, construction would not permanently convert any Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, to nonagricultural use and the impact would be less than significant with mitigation.

Operations and Maintenance

The Proposed Project includes the replacement of existing subtransmission structures with new subtransmission structures at either a one-to-one ratio, or at a better-than one-to-one ratio, where more than one existing structure would be removed for each new subtransmission structure installed. The new subtransmission structures would be installed adjacent to the existing subtransmission structures that would be removed. The proposed monopole structures would be smaller in diameter than the existing subtransmission lattice steel tower structures. As summarized in Table 2-5 in the Project Description, the Proposed Project would result in a net reduction in total permanent disturbance due to removal of existing structures. Because the Proposed Project would result in reduced permanent impact including in areas of Farmland, the Proposed Project would not result in a net conversion of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to nonagricultural use and the resulting impact would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: MM AGR-1

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Mitigation Measure

Mitigation Measure AGR-1: Farmland Construction Impact Mitigation

SCE shall implement the following measures for temporarily disturbed Farmland:

- The applicant shall photo or video document the conditions of temporary work pads within Farmland (i.e, meeting the definition of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance as defined by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency) prior to construction to define the existing conditions of the Farmland areas.
- The applicant shall return all temporary disturbance areas in Farmlands to pre-construction conditions after the completion of construction. The applicant shall photo or video document the post-construction condition to verify it matches pre-construction conditions.
- In areas containing crops or irrigation infrastructure used to maintain crops that must be removed to gain access to temporary work areas for construction purposes, SCE will provide compensation to farmers and/or landowners for replacement of the removed crops and/or irrigation infrastructure.
- If topsoil is removed from an area to accommodate temporary construction activities, it shall be restored to preconstruction conditions within two months of the completion of construction.

Applicable Locations: Within construction areas located in Farmland as defined by the FMMP.

Performance Standards and Timing:

Before construction: Document the pre-construction condition of temporary disturbance area within Farmlands with photos or video.

During construction: N/A

After construction: Restore all temporary disturbance areas to pre-construction conditions after the completion of construction and compensate farmers and/or landowners for replacement of the removed crops and/or irrigation infrastructure.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

Construction, Operations and Maintenance

The Proposed Project would be located on lands with active Williamson Act contracts in Kern County. The Agricultural Preserve Standard Uniform Rules (Kern County, 2013) identify the erection of electric utilities as compatible use on lands under a Williamson Act contract. In addition, as discussed in Impact a) above, the Proposed Project involves replacement of existing subtransmission structures with new structures that would result in a net reduction in permanent impacts within areas under Williamson Act contracts. The areas of the existing structures on land under Williamson Act contract would be returned to agricultural use. Because electrical utilities are a compatible use on lands with Williamson Act contracts and the Proposed Project would allow for a net increase in agricultural use, the Proposed Project would have no impact from a conflict with a Williamson Act contract.

The Proposed Project is also located on lands zoned for agricultural use in the City of Bakersfield (A zoning), Kern County (A, A-1, and AWE), and Los Angeles County (A-2). The construction, operation, and maintenance of electric utility infrastructure is not listed as prohibited use in the descriptions of these zoning classifications in their jurisdiction's respective zoning ordinances. In addition, as discussed in Impact a) above, the Proposed Project involves

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replacement of existing subtransmission structures with new structures that would result in a net reduction in permanent impacts within areas with agricultural zoning. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use. The impact would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None required.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104[g])?

Construction

The Proposed Project would cross 0.35 miles of SNF in Segment 1 and approximately 0.17 miles of the LPNF in Segment 2. The SNF and LPNF are zoned as forest land. No areas zoned as timberland or timberland production are located within the Proposed Project area. While the Proposed Project would require new right-of-way to construct the Proposed Project on areas zoned as forest land. The new right-of-way would replace the existing right-of-way and would not cause rezoning of any forest land.

In 2018, SCE was issued a Master Special Use Permit (MSUP) for its existing transmission and distribution easements. The Proposed Project construction activities were considered a Class II activity under the existing USFS MSUP and SCE is seeking approval from USFS to construct portions of the Proposed Project in compliance with the MSUP conditions. Therefore, construction of the Proposed Project would not conflict with zoning for forest land and the impacts would be less than significant.

Operations and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project on areas zoned as forest service land would be conducted in compliance with the USFS MSUP in the same manner as operation and maintenance activities are conducted for the existing subtransmission line. Because the Proposed Project would comply with the MSUP, the Proposed Project would not conflict with zoning for forest land. Therefore, the impact from conflict with zoning for forest land would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None required.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Construction

The Proposed Project crosses approximately 0.35 miles of SNF in Segment 1 and approximately 0.17 miles of the LPNF in Segment 2. Both SNF and LPNF meet the definition of forest land. In addition, areas with greater than 10 percent native tree cover that meet the definition of forest land occur along Segments 2, 3, and 4 of the Proposed Project. Construction of the Proposed Project would require removal of approximately 1,689 trees located within work areas and pruning of approximately 116 trees that overhang the work areas. The trees that would be

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removed during construction are dispersed along the Proposed Project alignment. Tree removal would be limited to those trees within or overhanging a work area. The tree removal would not result in loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use because of the limited area of trees removed at each work area and because the trees are not currently used for commercial forest production. The impact would therefore be less than significant.

Operations and Maintenance

The Proposed Project would use a 10-foot vegetation free clearance zone around each structure and trimming of vegetation to comply with PRC Section 4292. The firebreak clearances required by PRC Section 4292 are applicable within an imaginary cylindrical space surrounding each pole or tower on which a switch, fuse, transformer or lightning arrester is attached and surrounding each dead end or corner pole. The vegetation clearance zone for the Proposed Project will replace the areas maintained for the existing subtransmission lines. In addition, because the proposed structures will be smaller in diameter than the existing lattice steel towers, the Proposed Project would result in a smaller permanent disturbance associated with tree trimming to maintain clearance zones and would comply with PRC Section 4292. Therefore, the impact on forest land from maintenance of the Proposed Project would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: None required

a) 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?

Construction

Construction of the Proposed Project may temporarily impact existing irrigation infrastructure used to maintain crops located near and/or along the subtransmission line and therefore, may result in converting farmland to non-agricultural use. In order to reduce temporary impacts to the existing irrigation infrastructure, mitigation measure AGR-1 would be implemented, and owners would be compensated for the temporary loss of irrigation infrastructure and crops. No permanent impacts to agricultural operations would occur as a result of the Proposed Project and therefore, the impact would be less than significant.

Operations and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not impact any existing agricultural operations because the proposed monopole structures that will be used to replace the existing lattice steel tower structures would be smaller in diameter and would result in a net reduction in total permanent disturbance due to removal of existing structures. Because the Proposed Project would result in a reduced permanent impact, impacts from operations and maintenance would be less than significant.

Required APMs and MMs: MM AGR-1

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3.2.5 References

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