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4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless APMs 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 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 by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined 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"/>

4.2.1 Introduction

This section of the PEA describes the existing conditions and potential project-related impacts to agricultural and forestry resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. In addition, this section evaluates the consistency of the Proposed Project with the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) and the Williamson Act, otherwise known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965. Although some segments of the Proposed Project pass through important farmland and/or the Cleveland National Forest, the existing power line currently passes through these areas, and the Proposed Project would not convert or otherwise adversely affect any agricultural or forestry resources and not impact would occur.

4.2.2 Methodology

The agriculture and forestry resources analysis within this section involved a review of various documents, including aerial photographs of the Proposed Project area, the general plan for the County of San Diego, and online information sources. The California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection farmland map was reviewed to determine if, and where, Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance were located within the Proposed Project area. The *County of San Diego General Plan* Land Use and Conservation and Open Space Elements were reviewed to locate any existing Williamson Act contracts within the Proposed Project area. The subregional plans for the three County

subregions the Proposed Project crosses were also reviewed to determine if any County-designated agricultural preserves are present within the Proposed Project area.

4.2.3 Existing Conditions

4.2.3.1 Regulatory Setting

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The goal of the FMMP, administered by the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California’s agricultural land resources. The basis of the mapping program is an agricultural land classification system that combines technical soil ratings based on soil classifications and current land use. The survey defines eight agricultural land categories:

- Prime Farmland: has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. Prime Farmland must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance: is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Farmland of Statewide Importance must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Unique Farmland: includes areas of lower quality soils that do not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but that have been used for the production of specific high economic value crops during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Local Importance: includes areas other than Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland that is either currently producing crops, has the capability of such production, or is used for the production of confined livestock. Farmland of Local Importance may be important to local economies due to its productivity or value, defined by each county’s local advisory committee, and adopted by its Board of Supervisors.
- Grazing Land: is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock and includes, at a minimum, 40 acres.
- Urban and Built-up Land: is occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. Such lands include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.

- **Other Land:** land not included in any other mapping category such as low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and non-agricultural land greater than 40 acres and surrounded on all sides by urban development is also mapped as Other Land.
- **Water:** includes perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

The California Department of Conservation prepares, updates, and maintains maps and data used for categorizing agricultural potential (as described above) and assessing the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands over time. The maps are updated every two years based on aerial photograph review, computer mapping analysis, public input, and field reconnaissance. Coverage includes 47.9 million acres (96 percent of the state's private lands) and is based on the extent of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service soil surveys. Most large government land holdings, including national parks, forests, and BLM land, are not included in the FMMP's survey area.

The Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, has been the State's primary agricultural land protection program since its enactment in 1965. More than 16 million of the State's 30 million acres of farm and ranch land are currently protected under the Williamson Act. The Williamson Act creates an arrangement whereby private landowners agree with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict land to agricultural and open-space uses. In return, the landowner receives property tax assessments that are lower than normal because the assessments are based on farming and/or open space uses rather than full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971. Williamson Act contracts automatically renew each year for a new 10-year period, unless either party files a "notice of non-renewal" to terminate the contract before the end of the current 10-year period. During the ensuing 10-year cancellation period following a "notice of non-renewal," property taxes are gradually raised to the applicable level for developable land.

The Williamson Act also authorizes cities and counties to establish Agricultural Preserves, referred to as Farmland Security Zones. An Agricultural Preserve defines the boundary of an area within which a city or county will enter into Williamson Act contracts with landowners. The boundary is designated by resolution of the board or city council having jurisdiction. Agricultural Preserves must include at least 100 acres, and generally are intended to avoid areas where public utility improvements and related land acquisitions may be required. Farmland Security Zone contracts require a minimum initial term of 20 years and they renew annually unless either party files a "notice of nonrenewal," similar to a Williamson Act contract. To be eligible for a Farmland Security Zone contract, the subject land must be designated on the Important Farmland Series maps as predominantly Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Local Importance.

Public agencies may avoid the requirements of Government Code Section 51292 (conditions under which public improvement may not be located within preserve) if the public improvement is exempt from the requirements pursuant to Government Code Section 51293 (special exemptions). The Proposed Project would fall under Government Code Section 51293 (c) The

location or construction of any public utility improvement which has been approved by the CPUC.

Timberland and Timberland Production Zones

Timberland is privately owned land or land acquired for State forest purposes that is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, and that is capable of growing an average annual volume of wood fiber of at least 15 cubic feet per acre. A Timberland Production Zone is an area that has been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 of the Government Code and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses. In California, a county board of supervisors may designate areas of timberland in the county as timberland preserves, which is the same as the state zoning designation of Timberland Production Zone. The land in a Timberland Production Zone is restricted in use to the production of timber for an initial 10-year term and is considered enforceably restricted. The Proposed Project is not located within timberland or a Timberland Production Zone.

Local

County of San Diego

While the *County of San Diego General Plan* does not have an agricultural land use designation, the Proposed Project alignment runs through lands designated as Rural and Semi-rural, which both encourage agricultural operations. The *County of San Diego General Plan* includes one policy relevant to the preservation of agricultural activity in relation to development.

Policy COS-6.2: Protect existing agricultural operations from encroachment of incompatible land uses by doing the following:

- Limiting the ability of new development to take actions to limit existing agricultural uses by informing and educating new projects as to the potential impacts from agricultural operations.
- Encouraging new or expanded agricultural land uses to provide a buffer of non-intensive agriculture or other appropriate uses (e.g., landscape screening) between intensive uses and adjacent non-agricultural land uses.
- Allowing for agricultural uses in agricultural areas and designing development and lots in a manner that facilitates continued agricultural use within the development.
- Requiring development to minimize potential conflicts with adjacent agricultural operations through the incorporation of adequate buffers, setbacks, and project design measures to protect surrounding agriculture.
- Supporting local and State right-to-farm regulations.
- Retain or facilitate large and contiguous agricultural operations by consolidation of development during the subdivision process.

There are no policies within the *County of San Diego General Plan* regarding forestry.

Ramona Community Plan

The *Ramona Community Plan* includes Goal COS 1.2: The Preservation of Agriculture in the Planning Area. Relevant policies include:

Policy COS 1.2.1: Promote and preserve viable agricultural land uses and provide an attractive agricultural industry atmosphere within the Ramona Planning Area.

Policy COS 1.2.3: Encourage the protection of areas designated for agricultural activities from scattered and incompatible urban intrusions. Greenbelts/buffers shall be encouraged in special cases between incompatible uses and high-intensity agricultural zoning.

Central Mountain Subregional Plan

The *Central Mountain Subregional Plan* covers the area generally between the Ramona Subregion and the community of Santa Ysabel. Agricultural uses in the Central Mountain Subregion include cattle grazing, small-scale animal husbandry, and dry land oat/hay farming.

There is one relevant agricultural policy:

Policy 4: Clearing the land of native vegetation should be discouraged; any land cleared should be limited to what is required; and land cleared and not used should be replanted to blend in with the natural surroundings.

North Mountain Subregional Plan

Santa Ysabel and the surrounding area are within the North Mountain Subregion. Most of the privately owned lands in the North Mountain Subregion are designated as Rural, specifically for cattle grazing and dairies. There are no agricultural or forestry policies relevant to the Proposed Project.

4.2.3.2 Agricultural and Forestry Setting

The County of San Diego is consistently ranked among the top 10 agricultural counties (ranked eight for several years) in California. The County has the fourth highest number of farms of any county in the country and third highest number of farms of any county in California. Agriculture is the fifth largest component of the County's economy. As described below, portions of the Proposed Project alignment crosses land designated as Important Farmland and the Cleveland National Forest.

Designated Farmland

Land designated Farmland of Local Importance is adjacent to the Proposed Project alignment as it follows Creelman Lane within the Ramona Subregion. The alignment also passes through land designated as Farmland of Local Importance as it runs north into Santa Ysabel (North Mountain Subregion). None of the soils found in the central portion of the Proposed Project area (Central Mountain Subregion) are classified as having special use constraints by the USDA (refer to Section 4.2.3.1 for an explanation of soil types in relation to Farmland classifications).

Williamson Act

The Proposed Project crosses two Agricultural Preserves: Ramona and Rancho Santa Ysabel. The Proposed Project does not cross through land under Williamson Act contract. As discussed in Section 4.2.3.1, the Proposed Project would be exempt from the land use requirements of an Agricultural Preserve under Government Code Section 51293 (c).

Agricultural General Plan Designations and Zoning

According to the *County of San Diego General Plan* Land Use Element, the Proposed Project passes through the following land use designations: Semi-rural, Rural Lands, Open Space – Recreation, and Public Agency Lands. Agricultural operations are encouraged in Semi-rural and Rural Lands.

The Semi-rural category identifies areas of the County that are appropriate for lower-density residential neighborhoods, recreation areas, agricultural operations, and related commercial uses that support rural communities. The westernmost portion of the alignment passes through this land use designation in the community of Ramona. The Rural Lands category is applied to large open space and very-low-density private and publicly owned lands that provide for agriculture, managed resource production, conservation, and recreation. The Proposed Project area between the Mt. Gower Preserve and the Cleveland National Forest consists primarily of Rural Lands.

Electric utility poles and lines are classified in the County’s zoning ordinance as Essential Services. Essential Services are permitted uses under all zones, including the General Agriculture (A72), Limited Agriculture (A70), Open Space (S80), and General Rural (S92) zones that the Proposed Project crosses.

A small portion of the Proposed Project (approximately 2,000 linear feet) passes through the Cleveland National Forest, which is designated Public Agency Lands in the *County of San Diego General Plan*. The County does not have jurisdiction over the lands designated as Public Agency.

Designated Forest Land

The Proposed Project crosses a small portion (approximately 2,000 linear feet) of USFS land within the Cleveland National Forest. This land is zoned Back Country in the Cleveland National Forest Land Management Plan, and includes areas of the National Forest that are generally undeveloped with few roads. Most of the National Forest’s remote recreation and administrative facilities are found in the Back Country zone. Only two of the existing TL 637 poles are located within the Cleveland National Forest. Both of these existing poles are steel poles that do not need to be replaced at this time. The work within this area would be limited to reconductoring, adding the new fiber optic line, and associated pole top work to the existing poles.

4.2.4 Potential Impacts

4.2.4.1 Significance Criteria

Thresholds of significance were incorporated from Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Under these guidelines, the Proposed Project could have a potentially significant impact to agricultural resources if it would:

- a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
- c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in PRC Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by PRC Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g));
- d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or
- 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.

4.2.4.2 Question 2a - Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

Construction – No Impact

A large portion of the area between the San Diego Country Estates subdivision and the community of Santa Ysabel consists of undeveloped land, ranchland and grazing pastures. The area is designated as rural lands and public agency lands, and the main land uses are crop cultivation and ranchland for cattle and horses. However, even with the presence of important agricultural areas in the vicinity of the site, the Proposed Project would be replacing poles within the existing TL 637 ROW and would not expand the existing power line use or introduce it as a new use. Temporary staging areas and stringing sites located outside SDG&E ROW and/or easements are needed to support the Proposed Project. The Creelman Staging Yard is located on largely undeveloped land designated as agricultural. The Warnock and Santa Ysabel Staging Yards and the Littlepage Road HLZ are all located on active grazing land. Portions of the Proposed Project alignment cross areas designated as Farmland of Local Importance; however, within these areas the stringing sites are located within existing roadways or the disturbed area along the existing power line and, therefore, would not convert or otherwise impact Farmland to non-agricultural use.

SDG&E communicates with local agencies (i.e., the County of San Diego) about the use of these temporary stringing sites and staging areas to ensure the avoidance of any temporary land use impacts. The use of these staging areas and stringing sites would be temporary and compatible with existing land uses designations, as discussed in Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not alter any existing agricultural uses and would not convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. No impacts would occur.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

SDG&E currently maintains and operates existing electric power, distribution and substation facilities throughout the Proposed Project site, and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing electric facilities within existing SDG&E ROW and substation property. SDG&E’s existing facilities and operations and maintenance activities are in the baseline for evaluating the impacts of the Proposed Project. Operations and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project would decrease slightly compared to baseline conditions due to the increased reliability of the new power line components included in a typically wood to steel replacement project, the installation of fewer poles along the alignment, and the relocation of poles outside of jurisdictional features. Any future potential maintenance-related construction projects would be evaluated under G.O. 131-D and CEQA for purposes of assessing whether further CPUC approval is required. Therefore, the operations and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not result in any potential impacts relating to the conversion of important farmland to non-agricultural use.

4.2.4.3 Question 2b - Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

Construction – No Impact

Agricultural Preserves within the Proposed Project area include the Ramona Preserve and the Rancho Santa Ysabel Preserve. The Proposed Project would be exempt from the land use requirements of an Agricultural Preserve under Government Code Section 51293 (c) The location or construction of any public utility improvement which has been approved by the CPUC. The Proposed Project is not located in any areas under a Williamson Act contract. Electric utility poles and lines are classified in the County’s zoning ordinance as Essential Services, which are permitted uses under all zones in the municipal code and all agricultural land use designations in the County’s general plan. Because the Proposed Project would be exempt from the Agricultural Preserve regulations and utilities are permitted uses in all other agricultural lands along the alignment, the Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agriculture use. There would be no impacts to existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

SDG&E currently maintains and operates existing electric power, distribution and substation facilities throughout the Proposed Project site, and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing electric facilities within existing SDG&E ROW and substation property. SDG&E’s existing facilities and operations and maintenance activities are in the baseline for evaluating the impacts of the Proposed Project. Operations and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project would decrease slightly compared to baseline conditions due to the increased reliability of the new power line components included in a typically wood to steel replacement project, the installation of fewer poles along the alignment, and the relocation of poles outside of jurisdictional features. Any future potential maintenance-related construction projects would be evaluated under G.O. 131-D and CEQA for purposes of assessing whether further CPUC approval is required. Therefore, the operations and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not result in any potential impacts relating to zoning or Williamson Act contracts.

4.2.4.4 Question 2c - 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 – No Impact

Major utility corridors are considered a suitable use in designated areas of the Back Country zone of the Cleveland National Forest, and the Proposed Project is not located within timberland or a Timberland Production Zone. The Proposed Project would replace existing wood poles with steel poles along an existing power line, and neither of the two existing poles within the Cleveland National Forest needs to be replaced at this time. Thus, the Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production, and no impacts would occur.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

SDG&E currently maintains and operates existing electric power, distribution and substation facilities throughout the Proposed Project site, and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing electric facilities within existing SDG&E ROW and substation property. SDG&E's existing facilities and operations and maintenance activities are in the baseline for evaluating the impacts of the Proposed Project. Operations and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project would decrease slightly compared to baseline conditions due to the increased reliability of the new power line components included in a typically wood to steel replacement project, the installation of fewer poles along the alignment, and the relocation of poles outside of jurisdictional features. Any future potential maintenance-related construction projects would be evaluated under G.O. 131-D and CEQA for purposes of assessing whether further CPUC approval is required. Therefore, the operations and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning or cause rezoning of forest land, timberland or timberland zoned Production Timberland, and there is no impact.

4.2.4.5 Question 2d - Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Construction – No Impact

A small portion (approximately 2,000 linear feet) of the Proposed Project area briefly runs through the Cleveland National Forest; however, only two poles are located in that portion, neither of the poles needs to be replaced and any construction activities would be completed within the disturbed areas surrounding the existing poles. The work within this area would only involve pole top work to existing poles. The Proposed Project would be replacing poles where the land is already being used for the existing TL 637 power line and would not change the existing land use within the Proposed Project alignment or in adjacent areas. Thus, the Proposed Project would not result in the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest. Impacts to forest land would not occur.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

SDG&E currently maintains and operates existing electric power, distribution and substation facilities throughout the Proposed Project site, and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing electric facilities within existing SDG&E ROW and substation property. SDG&E’s existing facilities and operations and maintenance activities are in the baseline for evaluating the impacts of the Proposed Project. Operations and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project would decrease slightly compared to baseline conditions due to the increased reliability of the new power line components included in a typically wood to steel replacement project, the installation of fewer poles along the alignment, and the relocation of poles outside of jurisdictional features. Any future potential maintenance-related construction projects would be evaluated under G.O. 131-D and CEQA for purposes of assessing whether further CPUC approval is required. Therefore, the operations and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not result in any potential impacts relating to the loss of forest land or the conversion of forest land to non-forest use.

4.2.4.6 Question 2e - 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 – No Impact

The Proposed Project would be replacing poles within the existing TL 637 and would not expand the existing power line use or introduce it as a new use. The Proposed Project would not change the existing environment in a way that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, construction of the Proposed Project would not result in any other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

SDG&E currently maintains and operates existing electric power, distribution and substation facilities throughout the Proposed Project site, and the Proposed Project is the reconstruction of existing electric facilities within existing SDG&E ROW and substation property. SDG&E’s existing facilities and operations and maintenance activities are in the baseline for evaluating the impacts of the Proposed Project. Operations and maintenance activities for the Proposed Project would decrease slightly compared to baseline conditions due to the increased reliability of the new power line components included in a typically wood to steel replacement project, the installation of fewer poles along the alignment, and the relocation of poles outside of jurisdictional features. Any future potential maintenance-related construction projects would be evaluated under G.O. 131-D and CEQA for purposes of assessing whether further CPUC approval is required. Therefore, the operations and maintenance of the Proposed Project would not result in any other changes that could result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use or forest land to non-forest use.

4.2.5 Project Design Features and Ordinary Construction/Operating Restrictions

There are no project design features or ordinary construction/operating restrictions related to agriculture or forestry that are applicable to the Proposed Project.

4.2.6 Applicant Proposed Measures

The Proposed Project has no potentially significant impacts relating to agricultural and forestry resources; therefore, no APMs are proposed.

4.2.7 Detailed Discussion of Significant Impacts

Based on the preceding analysis, no significant impacts relating to agriculture and forestry are anticipated from the Proposed Project.

4.2.8 References

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