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## 4.2 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?				✓
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 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))?				✓
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				✓
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?				✓

### 4.2.0 Introduction

This section describes the agricultural resources in the vicinity of the proposed San Diego Gas & Electric Company Tie Line (TL) 649 Wood-to-Steel Replacement Project (Proposed Project) and analyzes potential impacts to these resources from construction and operation of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project will have no impact on agriculture or forestry resources. The Proposed Project components will not cross any land that is under a Williamson Act contract; land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance; or land designated or zoned as forest land or timberland.

### **4.2.1 Methodology**

Agricultural resources crossed by the Proposed Project were analyzed to determine if proposed construction activities will affect the use or value of existing agricultural land. Research for this analysis involved a review of the City of San Diego's 2008 General Plan; the City of San Diego's 2010, 2012, and 2015 General Plan Amendments; the County of San Diego General Plan; the County of San Diego Otay Subregional Plan; and the City of Chula Vista Vision 2020 Plan. A review was also conducted of the following: the California Department of Conservation's (DOC's) Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP); the Joint Powers Agency of the City of San Diego and the San Diego Geographic Information Source (SanGIS) database for Williamson Act parcels; United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA) U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program (FLP) data; California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) Fire and Resource Protection Program (FRAP) data; and general plan and zoning maps for the Proposed Project area.

For the purposes of this section, "Important Farmlands" include Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance.

### **4.2.2 Existing Conditions**

#### **Regulatory Background**

Federal, state, and local regulations were reviewed for relevancy to the Proposed Project.

#### ***Federal***

##### ***Forest Legacy Program Land Designations***

The FLP was created to protect environmentally-important forest land threatened with conversion to non-forest uses, such as subdivision of forest lands for residential or commercial development. To help maintain the integrity and traditional uses of private forest lands, the FLP advocates the creation of conservation easements on a voluntary basis. The federal government manages the program in cooperation with state and local agencies, private organizations, and individual landowners. In California, the FLP is administered by CAL FIRE.

#### ***State***

##### ***Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program Important Farmland Designations***

The DOC Division of Land Resource Protection generates maps depicting Important Farmlands, which are categorized according to specific criteria, including soil quality and irrigation conditions. Approximately 94 percent of the FMMP study area is based on the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service soil classification system, which evaluates both physical and chemical conditions, including soil temperature, moisture regime, pH, flooding, groundwater depth, erodibility, permeability, and sodium content. FMMP maps are updated every two years using an aerial imagery review, field reconnaissance, computer mapping analyses, and public input. The minimum land use mapping unit is 10 acres, and smaller units of land are generally incorporated into surrounding map classifications.

The DOC has established the following eight land use classifications:

- **Prime Farmland:** Prime Farmlands have the optimum combination of physical and chemical conditions that are able to sustain long-term agricultural production. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply on Prime Farmlands provides conditions to produce sustained high yields. Prime Farmlands must have been used for irrigated production within four years of the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Farmlands of Statewide Importance are similar to Prime Farmlands, but with minor shortcomings, such as a higher slope or decreased ability to store soil moisture. Similar to Prime Farmlands, Farmlands of Statewide Importance must have been used for irrigated production within four years of the mapping date.
- **Unique Farmland:** Unique Farmlands have lower-quality soils and are used for the production of California's leading agricultural products. Unique Farmlands are typically irrigated, but may also include non-irrigated vineyards or orchards found in certain climatic zones. Unique Farmlands must have been cropped within four years of the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance:** Farmlands of Local Importance are those vital to the local agricultural economy, as identified by each county's local advisory committee and board of supervisors.
- **Grazing Land:** Grazing Lands are those on which existing vegetation is suitable for livestock grazing.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land:** Urban and Built-Up Lands are defined as lands occupied by buildings or other structures at a minimum density of one unit to 1.5 acres (or approximately six structures to 10 acres). These lands are used for development purposes, including residential, commercial, industrial, construction, public administration, institutional, transportation yards, airports, cemeteries, golf courses, sewage treatment, sanitary landfills, and water control structures.
- **Other Land:** Other Lands include all lands that are not in any other map category—such as waterbodies smaller than 40 acres; low-density rural developments; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; and brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing.
- **Water:** Waters include all perennial waterbodies that are a minimum of 40 acres.

#### *Williamson Act Land Designations*

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (California Government Code [CGC] § 51200 et seq.), preserves agricultural and open space lands from conversion to urban land uses by establishing a contract between local governments and private landowners to voluntarily restrict their land holdings to agricultural or open space use. In return,

landowners receive property tax assessments based on farming or open space use rather than assessments based on the full market property value, which is typically 20 to 75 percent higher. Williamson Act contracts are valid for a minimum of 10 years and are automatically renewed each year for an additional 10-year term, in the absence of a notice of nonrenewal.

The Williamson Act also allows local governments to establish Agricultural Preserves, parcels of land for which cities or counties are willing to enter into Williamson Act contracts. Agricultural Preserves must include a minimum of 100 acres (CGC § 51230) and typically avoid areas in which public utility improvements and associated land acquisitions may be necessary. Although the Williamson Act does not specify compatible land uses for property located adjacent to contract lands or Agricultural Preserves, it does state that cities and counties must determine compatible land use types while recognizing that temporary or permanent population increases frequently impair or hamper agricultural operations (CGC § 51220.5). San Diego County zoning regulations permit agricultural uses, open space use, recreational use, and other uses determined to be compatible by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors Policy I-38.

#### *California Public Resources Code*

The California Public Resources Code provides definitions of forest land and timberland, which is referenced in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. California Public Resources Code Section 12220(g) 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.” California Public Resources Code Section 4526 defines timberland as “land, other than land owned by the federal government and land designated by the [State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection] as experimental forest land, which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees. Commercial species shall be determined by the [State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection] on a district basis.”

#### *California Government Code*

The California Government Code provides the definition of timberland production zone (TPZ), which is referenced in the CEQA Guidelines. California Government Code Section 51104(g) defines TPZ as “an area which has been zoned pursuant to Section 51112 or 51113 and is devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber, or for growing and harvesting timber and compatible uses, defined in subdivision (h). With respect to general plans of cities and counties, ‘timberland preserve zone’ means ‘timberland production zone.’” Sections 51112 and 51113 describe the process for designating a TPZ. Subdivision (h) describes compatible uses with a TPZ. San Diego County, the City of San Diego, and the City of Chula Vista do not have zoning designations for TPZs as there are no TPZs in their jurisdictions.

#### ***Local***

Because the California Public Utilities Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over the siting, design, and construction of the Proposed Project, the Proposed Project is not subject to local discretionary land use regulations. The following discussion of the local regulations relating to

agriculture and forestry resources is provided for informational purposes. As outlined in the following subsections, the construction and operation of the Proposed Project will not conflict with any environmental plans, policies, or regulations related to agriculture and forestry resources.

*County of San Diego*

Farmland of Local Importance is land of value to the local economy, as defined by each county's local advisory committee and adopted by its Board of Supervisors. Farmland of Local Importance is either currently producing or has the capability to produce agricultural products, but does not meet the criteria of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland. Authority to adopt or to recommend changes to the category of Farmland of Local Importance rests with the Board of Supervisors of San Diego County.

The County of San Diego General Plan includes one policy in the Land Use Element relevant to agricultural activities. This policy states the following:

“LU-7.1: Agricultural Land Development. Protect agricultural lands with lower-density land use designations that support continued agricultural operations.”

The County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element includes one policy relevant to agricultural activities. The policy states the following:

“COS-6.2: Protection of Agricultural Operations. 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 the 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 contiguous agricultural operations by consolidation of development during the subdivision process”

The County of San Diego Otay Subregional Plan includes one policy—Chapter 2 Policies: Land Use A-5: Encourage Interim Agriculture—relevant to encouraging agriculture activities in the Proposed Project area. This policy states the following:

“Because

- A) the long term development of Otay Mesa will provide opportunities for continued agricultural production as an interim use, and
- B) such interim uses are compatible with industrial uses as has been demonstrated in many other areas in California and throughout the United States,

The County recognizes the opportunities for interim agricultural uses on the Otay Mesa and will, in cooperation with affected property owners, encourage such uses to the greatest extent possible.”

#### *City of San Diego*

The City of San Diego 2008 General Plan and 2010, 2012, and 2015 General Plan Amendments were reviewed for agriculture and forestry resource policies that are relevant to the Proposed Project. No specific policies for protection of agriculture or forestry resources were identified within these plans.

#### *City of Chula Vista*

The City of Chula Vista Vision 2020 General Plan and Zoning Ordinance was reviewed for agriculture and forestry resource policies that are relevant to the Proposed Project. One objective of the general plan—Chapter 9 Objective - E4—seeks to preserve agricultural land and states the following:

“Maintain the opportunity for limited agricultural and related uses to occur as an interim land use within the planned development areas and as a potential permanent land use within appropriate locations.”

### **Environmental Setting**

#### ***Agricultural Setting***

The Proposed Project does not cross and is not located on any land designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland; or land under a Williamson Act Contract. However, the Proposed Project crosses portions of open space, rural, and vacant land designated as Farmland of Local Importance throughout the entire alignment. Table 4.2-1: Farmland of Local Importance Crossed by the Proposed Project details the approximate length of the Proposed Project alignment that crosses designated Farmland of Local Importance, as well as the poles that are located on Farmland of Local Importance within each jurisdiction crossed by the Proposed Project.

The Proposed Project crosses approximately 0.7 mile of land zoned Agricultural and 0.2 mile of land zoned Residential-Agricultural west of Heritage Road; however, these lands are not currently being used for agricultural purposes. A landscape business is located approximately



0.3 mile east of Heritage Road, just north of the Proposed Project alignment; however, no part of the Proposed Project area is currently under active crop cultivation or being used for livestock grazing.

**Table 4.2-1: Farmland of Local Importance Crossed by the Proposed Project**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Approximate Length of Farmland of Local Importance Crossed (Miles)</b>	<b>Poles Location Numbers Within Farmland of Local Importance</b>
County of San Diego	1.3	83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 108, 108.1, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117
City of San Diego	< 0.1	1
City of Chula Vista	2.0	9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.3, 18.31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 37.1, 38, 47, 48, 49, 50, 50.1, 50.2, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 63.1, 64, B
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>- -</b>

Source: SanGIS, 2015

### ***Forestry Setting***

The Proposed Project does not cross any forest land or land zoned as forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. The only FLP project in San Diego County is located approximately 43 miles northeast of the Proposed Project. The closest National Forest to the Proposed Project alignment is the Cleveland National Forest, located approximately 13.5 miles northeast of the eastern terminus of the Proposed Project.

### **4.2.3 Impacts**

The following subsections describe the criteria of significance used to assess potential impacts to agricultural and forestry resources that may result from implementation of the Proposed Project, and examine those potential impacts.

#### **Significance Criteria**

Standards of significance were derived from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Impacts to agricultural and forestry resources would be considered significant if the Proposed Project:

- Converts Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use;
- Conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract such that it requires rezoning or cancellation of the contract;

- Conflicts with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production such that it requires rezoning or cancellation of the contract;
- Results in the permanent loss or conversion of more than five percent of forest land in the Proposed Project area to non-forest use; or
- Involves other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in permanent or long-term conversion of more than five acres of Farmland to non-agricultural use or more than five percent of forest land in the Proposed Project area to non-forest use.

#### **Question 4.2a – Farmland Conversion**

##### ***Construction – No Impact***

The Proposed Project is not located on, does not span, and will not impact any land designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland. The Proposed Project does span approximately 3.3 miles of land designated as Farmland of Local Importance, and will result in the permanent conversion of approximately 0.03 acre of Farmland of Local Importance to non-agricultural use. The Proposed Project will also result in approximately 12.6 acres of temporary impacts to Farmland of Local Importance. However, as stated previously, no land designated as Farmland of Local Importance in the Proposed Project area is currently being used for active crop cultivation or grazing. Additionally, the relatively small amount of permanent impacts to Farmland of Local Importance as a result of construction of the Proposed Project will not conflict with any local farmland conversion plans or policies. While the Proposed Project will impact Farmland of Local Importance, it will not impact Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural use; therefore, no impact will occur.

##### ***Operation and Maintenance – No Impact***

Operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project will involve annual inspection and repair of the power line, pole brushing, and other approved activities consistent with current operation and maintenance plans and procedures. These activities will be conducted using existing access and spur roads, and will not require the creation of additional roads that could convert Farmland to non-agricultural use. Thus, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project will not result in the conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use, and no impact will occur.

#### **Question 4.2b – Zoning or Williamson Act Contract Conflicts – No Impact**

The Proposed Project will cross land zoned for agricultural use, as discussed herein in Section 4.10 Land Use and Planning. However, because the Proposed Project will replace an existing electric power line with a new electric power line in generally the same alignment, the Proposed Project will not result in conflicts with agricultural zoning or result in any change of existing land uses. Additional details on zoning in the Proposed Project area are provided in Section 4.10 Land Use and Planning.

The Proposed Project will not cross any land under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, there will be no conflicts with Williamson Act contracts, and no impact will occur.

**Question 4.2c – Conflict with Forest Land Zoning – No Impact**

The Proposed Project will not cross any area zoned for forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timber Production. Therefore, the Proposed Project will not conflict with or cause the rezoning of these lands, and there will be no impact.

**Question 4.2d – Loss or Conversion of Forest Land – No Impact**

The Proposed Project will not cross any forest land. Therefore, no forest land will be lost or converted to a non-forest use as a result of the Proposed Project, and there will be no impact.

**Question 4.2e – Other Farmland or Forest Land Conversion – No Impact**

No changes in the environment will occur as a result of the Proposed Project that will result in any other conversion of Farmland to non-agriculture use or forest land to non-forest use. In addition, operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project facilities will not require additional access roads or other appurtenant facilities which may otherwise induce the conversion of Farmland to non-agriculture use or forest land to non-forest use. As a result, no impact will occur.

**4.2.4 Applicant-Proposed Measures**

Because the Proposed Project will not result in any significant impacts to agricultural or forest resources, no applicant-proposed measures have been proposed.

**4.2.5 References**

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