

C.3 Agricultural Resources

Introduction

This section describes effects associated with agricultural resources that would be caused by implementation of the VSSP. The following discussion addresses existing environmental conditions in the affected area, identifies and analyzes environmental impacts for the proposed Project, and recommends measures to reduce or avoid significant impacts anticipated from proposed Project construction, operation, and maintenance. In addition, existing laws and regulations relevant to agricultural resources are described. In some cases, compliance with these existing laws and regulations would serve to reduce or avoid certain impacts that might otherwise occur with the implementation of the proposed Project.

Scoping Issues Addressed

During the scoping period for the EIR (May 5 through June 8, 2015), written comments were received from agencies, organizations, and the public. These comments identified various substantive issues and concerns relevant to the EIR analysis. However, no issues associated with agricultural resources were raised during scoping.

C.3.1 Environmental Setting

This setting presents information on agricultural resource conditions in the proposed Project area. The Regional Setting provides information on the baseline conditions in the Project region, and the Project Setting describes baseline conditions for agricultural resources along the proposed Project route.

Data collection was conducted through review of the following resources: online maps and geographic information systems (GIS) data for the California Department of Conservation's (DOC) Farmland Monitoring and Mapping Program (FMMP) and Williamson Act program under the Land Conservation Act; the County's GIS data for Agricultural Preserves; the applicable local general plan documents; and aerial photography.

C.3.1.1 Regional Setting

The Project site is located in southwestern Riverside County, primarily within unincorporated County lands and portions of the route would be within the cities of Menifee, Murrieta, and Temecula. Based on the most recently published Riverside County Agricultural Production Report, agriculture's total direct economic contribution to the County's economy is \$2.77 billion. The County's total direct economic output provided by agriculture is 2.5 percent, which ranks this industry at 15th in size compared to other industries in the County. The top five agricultural valuations are nursery stock, milk, table grapes, hay, and bell peppers (County of Riverside, 2013).

C.3.1.2 Project Setting

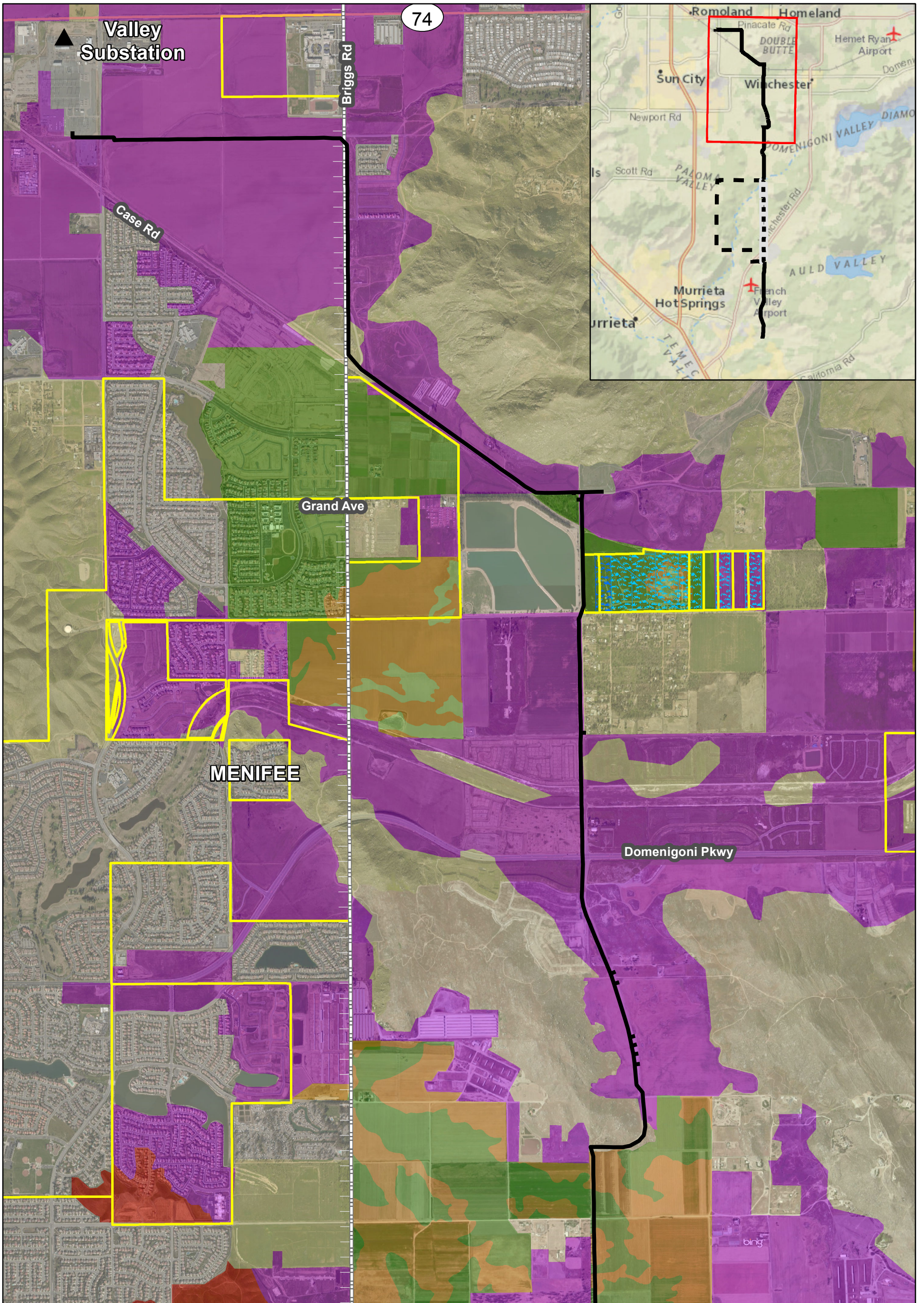
The total Project route is 15.4 miles, the majority of the route would be located within existing easements and public rights-of-way (ROWs) where SCE holds franchise rights; however, 4.4 miles of the route would require new or upgraded land rights (easement). Along this route, the ROW would be located along several land uses, including medium-density and rural residential areas, active and fallow agricultural land, designated areas of open space, and disturbed vacant land.

The DOC provides designations for important farmland throughout the State through the FMMP. Figures C.3-1a through C.3-1c show the FMMP designations along the proposed Project route. The setting below includes the FMMP designations within each jurisdiction that the Project route would traverse. The majority of the route would traverse land with the designation of Farmland of Local Importance. The following are the definitions for each designation:

- Prime Farmland – Irrigated land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term production of agricultural crops. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance – Irrigated land similar to Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of agricultural crops. This land has minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture than Prime Farmland. Land must have been used for production of irrigated crops at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- Unique Farmland – Lesser quality soils used for the production of 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 four years prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Local Importance – Soils that would be classified as Prime and Statewide but lack available irrigation water. Lands planted to dryland crops of barley, oats, and wheat; Lands producing major crops for Riverside County but that are not listed as unique crops. These crops are identified as returning one million or more dollars on the 1980 Riverside County Agriculture Crop Report. Crops identified are permanent pasture (irrigated), summer squash, okra, eggplant, radishes, and watermelons; dairylands, including corrals, pasture, milking facilities, hay and manure storage areas if accompanied with permanent pasture or hayland of 10 acres or more; lands identified by city or county ordinance as Agricultural Zones or Contracts, which includes Riverside City "Proposition R" lands; and lands planted to jojoba that are under cultivation and are of producing age.
- Grazing Land – Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category is used only in California and was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities.
- Urban and Built-Up Land – Urban and Built-Up land is occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. Common examples include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.
- Other Land – Land which does not meet the criteria of any other category. Typical uses include low density rural development, heavily forested land, mined land, or government land with restrictions on use. (DOC, 2014)

The DOC also regulates the Land Conservation Act, which enables local governments (counties and cities) to enter into contracts (e.g. Williamson Act 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. (DOC, 2013)

Williamson Act maps are available online, however, the scale of the maps make it difficult to determine the exact route of a linear project. Therefore, data was used from Aspen's data library, which only has 2008 GIS data for Williamson Act lands in Riverside County. According to this data, the proposed route would not traverse Williamson Act lands; Williamson Act lands are approximately 300 feet from the proposed Project route.



Source: County of Riverside, 2015a; DOC, 2012

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

▲ Existing Substation
 - - Preferred Project
 - Alternative Project
 - Common to both
 City Boundaries

FMMP Designations

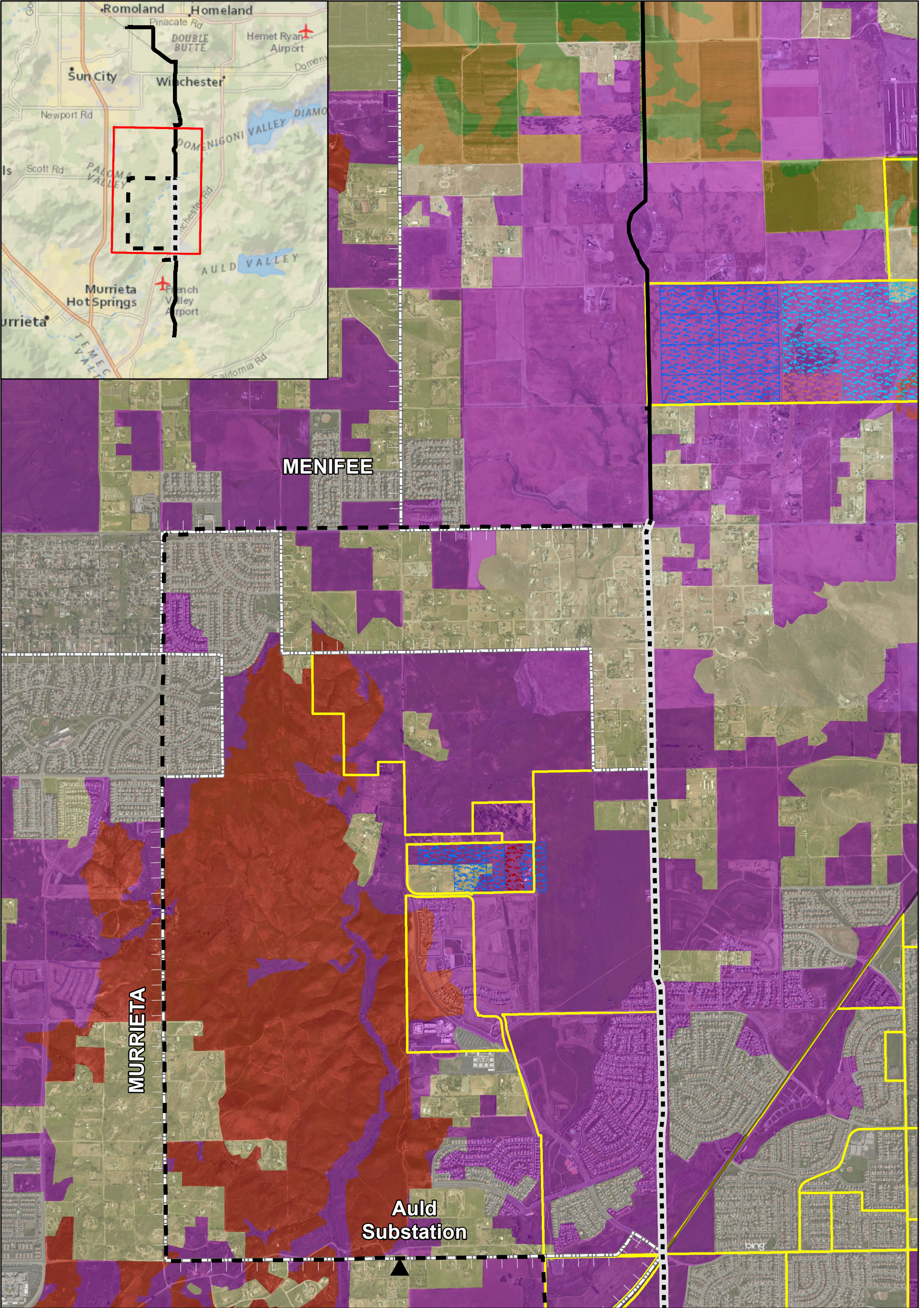
- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Urban and Built-up Land
- Grazing
- Unique Farmland
- Other Land

Williamson Act Land

- Prime
- Prime, Non-Renewal

Agriculture Preserve
 Williamson Act Land

Figure C.3-1a
Farmland Designations



Source: County of Riverside, 2015a; DOC, 2012

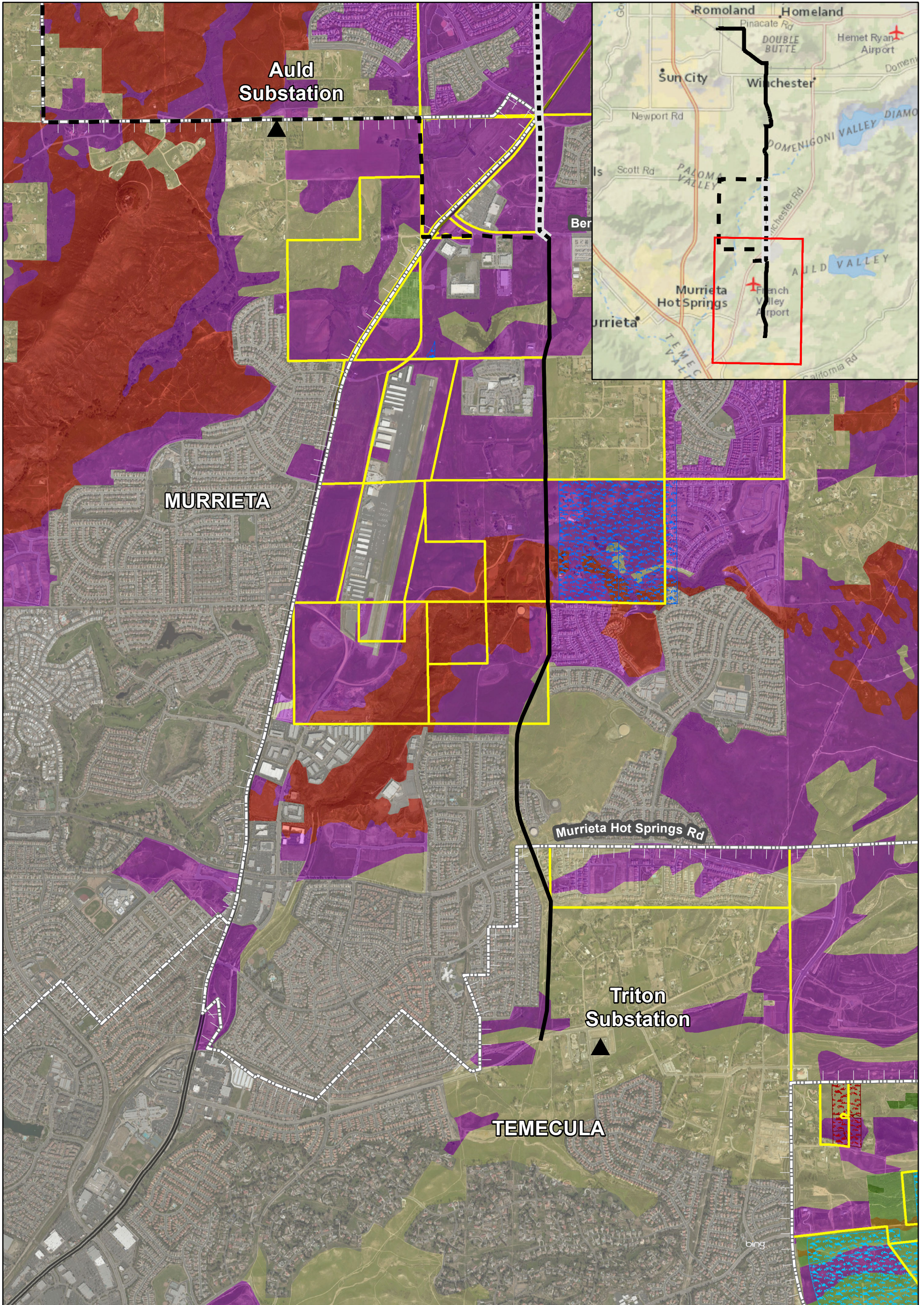
0 0.25 0.5 Miles

▲ Existing Substation
 - - - Preferred Project
 - - - Alternative Project
 - - - Common to both
 City Boundaries

FMMP Designations
 Prime Farmland
 Farmland of Statewide Importance
 Farmland of Local Importance
 Urban and Built-up Land
 Grazing
 Unique Farmland
 Other Land

Williamson Act Land
 Agriculture Preserve
 Non-Prime
 Non-Prime, Non-Renewal
 Prime
 Prime, Non-Renewal

Figure C.3-1b
Farmland Designations




<p>Source: County of Riverside, 2015a; DOC, 2012</p> 	<p>▲ Existing Substation</p>	<p>FMMP Designations</p>	<p>■ Agriculture Preserve</p>	<p>Williamson Act Land</p>
	<p>▬ Preferred Project</p> <p>▬ Alternative Project</p> <p>▬ Common to both</p> <p>▬ City Boundaries</p>	<p>■ Prime Farmland</p> <p>■ Farmland of Statewide</p> <p>■ Farmland of Local Importance</p> <p>■ Urban and Built-up Land</p>	<p>■ Grazing</p> <p>■ Unique Farmland</p> <p>■ Other Land</p>	

Figure C.3-1c
Farmland Designations

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

The County also administers their own Agricultural Preserves program. An agricultural preserve is established through a Land Conservation Contract signed by the owners of the property in agriculture and the County. This contract is founded upon the provisions of the Williamson Act (County of Riverside, 2015a). Based on the County’s Agricultural Preserve GIS data, the proposed route would traverse the Winchester and Murrieta Hot Springs Agricultural Preserves, which account for eight separate parcels along the proposed Project alignment (County of Riverside, 2015b).

The following subsections provide a breakdown of the agricultural designations by jurisdiction.

Riverside County

The majority of the proposed Project route would traverse unincorporated County lands. Project components within County lands would include the majority of Segments 1 and 2, and Staging Yard 2 at the north end of Segment 2. The dominant land uses along the proposed route are rural and medium-density residential development. However, there are portions of the proposed route, particularly at the north ends of Segments 1 and 2, that would traverse or be located adjacent to active or fallow agricultural lands. Table C.3-1 provides the FMMP designations that would be traversed by the Project route, which are also shown in Figures C.3-1a, C.3-1b and C.3-1c.

FMMP Designation	Distance (in acres)
Prime Farmland	0.73
Farmland of Statewide Importance	0.49
Farmland of Local Importance	8.46
Unique Farmland	0.04
Grazing Land	0.26
Urban and Built-Up Land	0.75
Other Land	2.04

Staging yard 2 is a two-acre site that may have previously been used for agricultural production; however, the site is now vacant and surrounded by commercial and residential development.

Out of the eight Agricultural Preserves parcels that would be traversed by the proposed Project, seven are within the County’s jurisdiction. The location of these preserve areas are shown in Figures C.3-1a through C.3-1c.

City of Meniffee

The northern end of Segment 1 would be located within the City of Meniffee. Table C.3-2 shows the FMMP designations that would be traversed by this portion of Segment 1. Figure C.3-1a also shows the FMMP designations. Based on the scale of this figure, it appears that the route may traverse more than 0.01 mile of Prime Farmland. However, upon zooming in to the GIS map, the majority of the route would traverse Farmland of Local Importance. The majority of the proposed route would be located along an existing SCE access/farm road adjacent to lands that are active or fallow agricultural lands.

FMMP Designation	Segment 1 Distance (in miles)
Prime Farmland	0.01
Farmland of Local Importance	1.24
Urban and Built-Up Land	0.02
Other Land	0.90

In addition, four of the six potential temporary staging yards would be located in the City of Meniffee. Staging Yard 1 is a two-acre site that would be located on land within the Farmland of Local Importance designation; however, this yard is on previously disturbed land that is not in use for agriculture. Staging Yards 4, 5 and 6 would be located on lands within the Urban and Built-Up Land designation. The site for Staging Yard 4 is an area that is surrounded by light industrial land uses, and Staging Yards 5 and 6 are located at existing SCE facilities.

City of Temecula

The southern end of Segment 2 would traverse the northeast end of the City of Temecula. The proposed route is surrounded by medium-density residential development to the west and low-density residential development to the east. No active agricultural land is in the vicinity. Table C.3-3 shows the FMMP designations that would be traversed by this portion of Segment 2.

Also, a portion of Segment 2 within the City of Temecula would traverse land that is within the County's Agricultural Preserve program. The location of this preserve is shown in Figure C.3-1c.

FMMP Designation	Distance (in miles)
Farmland of Local Importance	0.13
Other Land	0.69

City of Murrieta

The southern end of Segment 1 would traverse 18 feet of land located at the east boundary of the City of Murrieta. This area is designated as Farmland of Local Importance, but there are no active agricultural lands. The proposed Project route would traverse vacant land that is surrounded by residential and commercial development.

City of Perris

If selected, proposed Staging Yard 3 would be located on a 2.4-acre site in the City of Perris. This site would be located on land within the Urban and Built-Up and Other Land designations. No other Project components would be located in the City of Perris.

C.3.2 Regulatory Framework

C.3.2.1 Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 United States Code [USC] Section 4201)

The purpose of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) is to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. It additionally directs federal programs to be compatible with state and local policies for the protection of farmlands. Congress passed the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-98) containing the FPPA—Subtitle I of Title XV, Section 1539-1549. The final rules and regulations were published in the Federal Register on June 17, 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 and local governments, 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. The FPPA does not authorize the federal government to regulate the use of private or nonfederal land or, in any way, affect the property rights of owners.

For the purpose of FPPA, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land.

C.3.2.2 State

California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The DOC's FMMP applies the National Resource Conservation Service soil classifications to identify agricultural lands, and these agricultural designations are used in planning for the present and future of California's agricultural land resources. The DOC has a minimum mapping unit of 10 acres, with smaller than 10-acre parcels being absorbed into the surrounding classifications. Grazing Land is mapped at a minimum scale of 40 acres. The FMMP designations are outlined in the setting, above.

C.3.2.3 Local

County of Riverside

According to the County's General Plan, one of County's most important land uses in terms of historic character and economic strength is its widespread and diverse agriculture lands. The agriculture land use designation has been established to help conserve productive agricultural lands within the County. These include row crops, nurseries, citrus groves and vineyards, dairies, ranches, poultry and hog farms, and other agricultural related uses (County of Riverside, 2014). The General Plan includes policies addressing the protection of agricultural uses. However, the only policy that applied to the proposed Project was identified in the discussion of land use compatibility in the General Plan (see policy noted below).

LU 6.4 Retain and enhance the integrity of existing residential, employment, agricultural, and open space areas by protecting them from encroachment of land uses that would result in impacts from noise, noxious fumes, glare, shadowing, and traffic.

City of Meniffee

The City of Meniffee's Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan includes a goal and policy regarding agriculture. Goal OSC6 addresses high-value agricultural lands and includes the following policy:

OCS-6.1 (Policy): Protect both existing farms and sensitive uses around them as agricultural acres transition to more developed land uses. (City of Meniffee, 2012)

City of Murrieta

The City of Murrieta's economy was once based on agriculture, and there is still farmland within the City and the City's Sphere of Influence. The City's Conservation Element of the General Plan includes a goal with policies regarding agriculture. However, the goal applies to growing food locally and promoting healthy eating; therefore, none of the policies under this plan apply to the proposed development. (City of Murrieta, 2011)

City of Temecula

The City of Temecula's Open Space/Conservation Element of the General Plan was adopted to conserve natural resources and agriculture. Goal 7 of this plan provides for "Protection of prime agricultural land from conversion to urbanized uses" (City of Temecula, 2005). Two policies under this goal are applicable to the Project. These policies are listed below.

Policy 7.1 Encourage conservation and continued use of prime agricultural lands in and around the Planning Area.

Policy 7.4 Discourage urban development in agricultural areas outside built-up areas of the City.

C.3.3 Applicant-Proposed Measures

In its Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA), SCE has listed a number of Applicant-Proposed Measures (APMs) that are designed to reduce impacts from the proposed Project. None of the APMs are specifically applicable to agricultural resources. However, the impact discussion in Section C.3.4 (below) identifies mitigation measures, where appropriate, to reduce significant adverse impacts that could result from construction and operation of the VSSP.

C.3.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The study area for this resource has been defined as including the agricultural land uses immediately adjacent to the proposed Project ROW and agricultural land uses located near the construction staging yards. Detailed discussions of each impact and the specific locations where each is identified are presented in the following sections.

C.3.4.1 Criteria for Determining Significance

To satisfy CEQA requirements, conclusions are made regarding the significance of each identified impact that would result from the Project. The following significance criteria for Agricultural Resources were derived from previous environmental impact assessments for similar projects and from the CEQA Guidelines (Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, Section IX). Impacts of the proposed Project would be considered significant and would require mitigation if:

- Criterion AG1: The proposed Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farm-land Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation and the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, to non-agricultural use.
- Criterion AG2: The proposed Project would involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could impair agricultural use of other property.
- Criterion AG3: The proposed Project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or Williamson Act contract, or Agricultural Preserve.

The assessment in this section does not address criteria related to forest or timber lands because the project would not cross any forest or timberland. The proposed Project would also not conflict with any zoning for forest or timber lands. No further consideration of these issues is necessary for this project.

C.3.4.2 Impact Analysis – Direct and Indirect Effects

This section describes the direct and indirect impacts of the proposed Project. Cumulative impacts are discussed in Section C.3.4.3.

Impact AG-1 (Criterion AG1): Operation of the Project could permanently convert Farmland to a non-agricultural use. (Class III)

As described above in the Environmental Setting, the proposed Project would traverse Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. Upon completion of construction activities, the poles, anchors, access locations and access roads would represent permanent disturbances to land uses, including farmland. The permanent disturbance under the proposed Project would include the following:

- Access locations would result in 7.7 acres of permanent disturbance;

- Subtransmission line components [new Tubular Steel Poles (TSPs), light-weight steel (LWS) poles, new wood poles/wood guy stub poles, and anchors] would result in a total of 6.2 acres of permanent disturbance; and
- Land disturbance associated with an existing access road would amount to approximately 0.2 acres of permanent disturbance.

The areas associated with the access locations would traverse proposed and/or existing dedicated public street ROWs. These locations are needed temporarily until such time that the proposed and/or dedicated public streets are improved to ultimate build out as identified in the General Plan Circulation Element. Nonetheless, these access locations are being classified as permanent disturbance for environmental review and evaluation purposes. However, considering the access locations would traverse proposed and/or existing dedicated public street ROWs, there would be no impact to Farmland as a result of the permanent disturbance associated with the access locations. Similarly, for the access and spur roads, a combination of through roads and spur roads accessed from a network of existing paved and unpaved public and private roads would be used, and therefore, would not result in the conversion of Farmland.

As described in Section B.4.6.7 (Subtransmission Land Disturbance) of the Project Description, the permanently disturbed area is approximately 0.06 acres per TSP, and 0.01 acre per LWS, wood pole, wood guy stub pole, or anchor. Consequently, the subtransmission line components associated with the proposed Project would permanently convert a total of 5.92 acres of Farmland to non-agricultural uses, which is broken down as follows:

- One TSP, 10 anchors, and 22 wood poles would result in 0.38 acre of Prime Farmland permanently converted to a non-agricultural use
- One TSP and 11 wood poles would result in 0.17 acre of Farmland of Statewide Importance permanently converted to a non-agricultural use
- 23 TSPs, 67 LWSs, 120 anchors, and 211 wood poles would result in 5.36 acres of Farmland of Local Importance permanently converted to a non-agricultural use
- One wood pole would result 0.01 acre of Unique Farmland permanently converted to a non-agricultural use

The total permanent disturbance area of Farmland (5.92 acres) is less than the minimum area necessary for sustainable agriculture and less than the minimum DOC mapping unit. Also, the conversion would be predominantly located with an existing ROW. Therefore, the permanent conversion of Farmland to a non-agricultural use under the proposed Project would be considered adverse, but not significant (Class III).

Impact AG-2 (Criterion AG2): Construction activities associated with the Project could interfere with agricultural operations. (Class II)

The proposed Project would be constructed across a total of approximately 11 miles of Farmland. Construction activities across these agricultural lands would primarily consist of construction of the 115-kV subtransmission line, replacement of existing 115-kV conductor, installation of new telecommunication infrastructure, and rehabilitation of the existing road network for access and spur roads. These construction activities could conflict with existing agricultural operations.

The presence and use of heavy equipment, including road graders, dozers, excavators, and trucks, for construction could interfere with agricultural operations by damaging crops or soil, impeding access to certain fields or plots of land, obstructing farm vehicles, or potentially disrupting drainage and irrigation systems. In the event that agricultural operations are occurring during the construction period, these construction activities could result in temporary disruptions, which could result in reductions of agricultural productivity in the area.

In addition, the use of existing unpaved access roads may require some rehabilitation work, which may include vegetation clearing, blade-grading and re-compacting to remove potholes, ruts, and other surface irregularities in order to provide a smooth dense surface capable of supporting heavy construction and maintenance equipment. Existing unpaved roads may also require additional upgrades, such as protection for underground utilities and widening if the existing road widths are too narrow for safe vehicle operation. The rehabilitation of roadways could result in disruptions to the drainage and irrigation systems, affect the efficacy of windbreaks, fragment farms, and allow for the introduction of invasive weeds within and around disturbed areas. These interferences could also decrease the agricultural productivity of agricultural operations.

Mitigation Measure AG-1 (*Coordinate with Agricultural Landowners*) requires coordination with property owners of Farmland to determine construction scheduling, compensation for damages, and specifications for the restoration of disturbed land. This measure is recommended to reduce the potential for construction activities to adversely impact local agricultural operations. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1, impacts to agricultural operations would be minimized such that impacts would be adverse, but would be reduced to a level that is not significant (Class II).

Mitigation Measures for Impact AG-1

AG-1 Coordinate with Agricultural Landowners. Southern California Edison (SCE) shall coordinate with potentially affected property owners of Farmland (Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Farmland of Local Importance, and Unique Farmland) and Agricultural Preserve lands to reduce disruption to agricultural operations during construction of the proposed Project. This coordination shall include:

- Scheduling construction activities at a location and time when conflict with agricultural operations will be minimized, and avoiding construction during peak planting, growing, and harvest seasons, if feasible, based on outage limitations; and
- Ensuring that any damaged or disturbed Farmland is restored to a condition that closely approximates conditions that existed prior to construction-related disturbance, to the extent practicable. This could include activities such as soil preparation, regrading, and reseeding.

SCE shall document its coordination efforts with affected agricultural landowners regarding the continued use of Farmland and Agricultural Preserves, and shall submit this documentation to the California Public Utilities Commission at least 30 days prior to the start of any construction activities on the affected agricultural parcels.

Impact AG-3 (Criterion AG3): The Project could conflict with land under Agricultural Preserves. (Class II)

As stated in the Environmental Setting, according to the GIS data on Williamson Act lands, the proposed route would be approximately 300 feet from properties under a Williamson Act contract (DOC, 2012). Therefore, there would be no conflicts with land under a Williamson Act contract.

Based on the County's Agricultural Preserve GIS data, the proposed route would traverse the Winchester and Murrieta Hot Springs Agricultural Preserves, all located within unincorporated County lands with the exception of one parcel that would be traversed by Segment 2 in the City of Temecula. Construction activities across these lands would include the construction and erection of the 115-kV subtransmission line, installation of structure poles and anchors, and the stringing of conductor and overhead groundwire. Similar to the construction described for Impact AG-2, construction in this area would require the use of graders, dozers, excavators, cranes, and various trucks for clearing and grading, tower assembly and erection, and stringing and pulling. As discussed under Impact AG-2, any temporary conflicts, such as

disruptions to agricultural activities, would be mitigated through implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 (*Coordination with Agricultural Landowners*). This measure includes landowners with Agricultural Preserves; therefore, this impact would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 (Class II).

Impact AG-4 (Criterion AG3): The Project could result in the conversion of land under Agricultural Preserves to a non-agricultural use. (Class III)

In the approximately 5.2 miles of Agricultural Preserves traversed by the proposed Project, 64 poles would be constructed, which would result in the permanent conversion of approximately 0.79 acre of land under Agricultural Preserves to a non-agricultural uses. The components that would cause this conversion are as follows:

- Two TSPs and 31 wood poles would result in 0.43 acre of land within the Winchester Agricultural Preserve permanently converted to a non-agricultural use; and
- One TSP, 19 LWS poles, and 11 wood poles would result in 0.36 acre of land within the Murrieta Hot Springs Agricultural Preserve permanently converted to a non-agricultural use.

The permanent conversion of Agricultural Preserve lands would be a total of 0.79 acre, which is a negligible loss. The total permanent disturbance area of Farmland (0.79 acres) is less than the minimum area necessary for sustainable agriculture. Therefore, the conversion of 0.79 acre of Agricultural Preserve lands would be adverse, but less than significant (Class III).

C.3.4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Geographic Extent/Context

The geographic area of analysis for cumulative agricultural impacts is generally limited to areas within approximately one mile of the proposed Project route or work areas. This maximum area is defined because potential disruptions to surrounding properties from temporary construction activities could result in cumulative impacts to surrounding agricultural lands.

Existing Cumulative Conditions

The character of the area along the proposed Project route varies from undeveloped to rural (generally in the northern portions of the alignment) with pockets of urbanized areas (mostly in the southern portions of the alignment). The area appears to be under development, with new housing developments recently constructed and others planned or currently under construction, as indicated in Table C.1-1 in Section C.1 (Introduction to Environmental Analysis) of this EIR. The trend of additional development would increase the conversion of Farmland and Agricultural Preserves, and would also contribute to temporary construction impacts.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The potential for agricultural impacts of the proposed Project (described in Section C.3.4.2 Impact Analysis – Direct and Indirect Effects) to combine with the effects of other proposed, planned, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, as listed in Table C.1-1, which are within the geographic extent of the cumulative analysis are described below for each significance criterion.

Criterion AG1: The proposed Project would convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farm-land Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation and the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, to non-agricultural use.

Implementation of the proposed Project would result in an adverse but less-than-significant conversion of Farmland (Impact AG-1). The Project area includes 37 projects, which are proposed or would be developed within one mile of the Project site. A large number of these projects are for new housing developments. The cumulative projects could result in the conversion of Farmland if they are all developed. However, the proposed Project's incremental contribution to the conversion of Farmland would not be cumulatively considerable because it would be placed primarily within an existing utility corridor, and the area needed for the new ROW would not directly impact Prime Farmland. (Class III)

Criterion AG2: Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could impair agricultural use of other property.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 (*Coordinate with Agricultural Landowners*), would ensure that construction of the proposed Project would not conflict with any agricultural activities along the Project route (Impact AG-2). Construction activities associated with other projects in close proximity to the proposed Project could potentially occur at the same time as the proposed Project, which may result in similar construction conflicts with agricultural landowners. However, as noted under Impact AG-2, it does not appear that agricultural operations are widespread near the Project corridor. In addition, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1, the proposed Project's incremental contribution to this impact would not be cumulatively considerable (Class II).

Criterion AG3: The proposed Project would conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or Williamson Act contract, or Agricultural Preserve.

Implementation of the proposed Project would result in conflicts with Agricultural Preserves that are adverse, but less than significant (Impact AG-3). Conflicts with Agricultural Preserves could result from the construction of other projects in close proximity to the proposed Project. However, as noted under Impact AG-2, it does not appear that agricultural operations are widespread near the Project corridor. In addition, with implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1, the proposed Project's incremental contribution to this impact would not be cumulatively considerable (Class II).

Similarly, the conversion of Agricultural Preserves under the proposed Project would be (Impact AG-4). As noted above, the Project area appears to be under development with new housing projects. The conversion of Agricultural Preserves could occur if the cumulative projects are built. However, the proposed Project's incremental contribution to this impact would not be cumulatively considerable negligible because it would be placed primarily within an existing utility corridor, and the area needed for the new ROW would not directly impact Prime Farmland (Class III).

C.3.4.4 Impact and Mitigation Summary

This section summarizes the conclusions of the impact analysis and associated mitigation measures presented in Section C.3.4.2 for the proposed Project. Table C.3-4 lists each impact identified for the proposed Project, along with the significance of each impact.

Impact	Significance Conclusion	Reason for Conclusion
AG-1: Operation of the Project could permanently convert Farmland to a non-agricultural use.	Class III	The permanent conversion of 5.92 acres of Farmland to a non-agricultural use under the proposed Project would be considered adverse, but not significant.
AG-2: Construction activities associated with the Project could interfere with agricultural operations.	Class II	Construction activities could result in temporary disruptions to agricultural activities and could result in reductions of agricultural productivity in the area. Implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 (<i>Coordinate with Agricultural Landowners</i>) is recommended to reduce construction impacts to agricultural operations.
AG-3: The Project could conflict with land under Agricultural Preserves.	Class II	Disruptions to agricultural activities, would be mitigated through implementation of Mitigation Measure AG-1 (<i>Coordinate with Agricultural Landowners</i>).
AG-4: The Project could result in the conversion of land under Agricultural Preserves to a non-agricultural use.	Class III	The conversion of Agricultural Preserve lands would be adverse, but less than significant.

- Class I:** **Significant impact; cannot be mitigated to a level that is not significant.** A Class I impact is a significant adverse effect that cannot be mitigated below a level of significance through the application of feasible mitigation measures. Class I impacts are significant and unavoidable.
- Class II:** **Significant impact; can be mitigated to a level that is not significant.** A Class II impact is a significant adverse effect that can be reduced to a less than significant level through the application of feasible mitigation measures presented in this EIR.
- Class III:** **Adverse; less than significant.** A Class III impact is a minor change or effect on the environment that does not meet or exceed the criteria established to gauge significance.
- Class IV:** **Beneficial impact.** A Class IV impact represents a beneficial effect that would result from project implementation.