

5.13 Population and Housing

5.13.1 Environmental Setting

Population

The Proposed Project is located in a primarily agricultural area in the San Joaquin Valley within Merced County. Merced County has an estimated 2010 population of 255,793 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). The primary population centers in the project area are the incorporated Cities of Livingston, Merced, and Atwater as well as the communities of Delhi, Winton, and Cressey. Livingston is within the project area at its closest point, and rural residences are located in unincorporated areas intermittently along the project route. Table 5.13-1 summarizes the population near the Proposed Project.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) forecasts that the population of Merced County will grow between 1 and 1.5 percent per year through 2040, lower than growth rates during previous decades (Caltrans, 2011). The total population of Merced County is expected to be 389,383 people by 2040.

Housing

The number of housing units and associated vacancy rates for Merced County and for cities near the Proposed Project are listed in Table 5.13-1.

Employment

The employment rates for Merced County and for cities near the Proposed Project are listed in Table 5.13-1.

Table 5.13-1. Year 2011 Existing Conditions – Population, Housing, and Employment: Merced County

Location	Population ¹	Housing Units		Employment
		Total Units ¹	Vacancy Rate ¹	Total Employed ²
City of Livingston	13,266	3,357	4.9	4,750
City of Merced	79,259	27,422	9.3	28,895
City of Atwater	28,377	9,774	9.6	10,119
Community of Delhi	10,755	2,935	7.7	4,300
Community of Winton	10,613	3,381	10.3	3,695
Community of Cressey	394	155	0.0	291
Merced County	257,984	83,856	9.6%	94,778

1 - Feb 2011 Population estimate for cities (CADO, 2011), 2010 estimate for communities (U.S. Census, 2010b).

2 - American Community Survey 5-year estimate, 2006-2010 (U.S. Census, 2010b).

5.13.2 Environmental Impacts and Assessment

POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Displace substantial numbers of people necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Significance criteria established by CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G.

a. Would the project induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

NO IMPACT – CONSTRUCTION. The Proposed Project would not include construction of new homes or businesses, land use changes, or infrastructure extensions that would directly induce substantial population growth in the area. While the Proposed Project would strengthen the existing power infrastructure, this stronger infrastructure is meant to better serve existing customers in the area by preventing service interruptions. The purpose of the project is not to increase the electrical capacity of the system, but rather to improve transmission system reliability. Thus, the Proposed Project would not induce growth in the project area.

The Proposed Project would require a maximum of 20 to 30 construction workers at any one time. Construction workers would be drawn from the local area or commute from neighboring cities. The construction phase is short in duration (nine months) and the local PG&E workforce would be sufficient to complete the project. No direct or indirect impacts to population growth would occur.

NO IMPACT – OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE. The project would be operated using a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. Therefore, no additional operating and maintenance staff would be required after construction is completed. Existing O&M crews would operate and maintain the new equipment as part of their current O&M activities. Consequently, operation of the project would not result in substantial population growth in the project area and no direct or indirect impacts would occur.

b. Would the project displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

NO IMPACT. The Proposed Project would not displace any existing housing. No impact would occur to housing.

c. Would the project displace substantial numbers of people necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

NO IMPACT. The Proposed Project would not displace any people currently living in the project area as it would be located on property line boundaries or away from existing residences. No impact would occur to housing.