

## 9. Alternative 5 (Partial Underground): Impacts and Mitigation Measures

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The following section describes impacts of Alternative 5 (Partial Underground Alternative) on Biological Resources, as determined by the significance criteria listed in Section 4. Mitigation measures are introduced where necessary in order to reduce significant impacts to less-than-significant levels. As described in Section 1.2.5, this alternative would be the same as the proposed Project, with the exception that the line would be installed underground for approximately four miles through Chino Hills, between MP 21.9 and 25.4 of Segment 8A (3.5 miles). This underground portion would occur underneath the City of Chino Hills and increase the overall impact acreage of Segment 8 by approximately nine acres (seven acres of barren/developed and two acres of California annual grassland). Additionally, a large marshalling yard (estimated to be 20 to 30 acres in size) would be required for the storage of all electrical components and specialized materials associated with the GIL system. The location of the marshalling yard would be established as close to the boring site as possible; however, an exact location has not been identified. Depending on the final location for the marshalling yard, temporary impacts associated with ground disturbance could be potentially significant if the final location were to occur within habitat suitable for special-status plants or wildlife species.

The portion of Segment 8 that would be placed underground for Alternative 5 is situated in an area that is primarily located on developed land within the City of Chino Hills, although the Western Transition Station is located in California annual grassland. Land use on either side of the re-routed segment is characterized as barren/developed. Compared to the proposed Project, with the exception of an additional seven acres of barren/developed and two acres of California annual grassland and the 20 to 30 acres for the marshalling yard that will be impacted by Alternative 5, types of impacts to Biological Resources will be identical (See Section 6.1)

### 9.1 Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis

The significance criteria used to identify impacts to Biological Resources are introduced in Section 4.1 (Criteria for Determining Impact Significance). Impacts associated with this alternative are presented below under the applicable significance criterion.

#### Impacts to Riparian or Natural Communities (Criterion BIO1)

Impacts associated with Criterion BIO1 for Alternative 5 would be the same as impacts associated with this criterion for the proposed Project. Although this alternative introduces an underground placement of part of the proposed transmission line in the Southern Region, this section would cross identical habitats as the proposed Project (barren/developed, California annual grassland). Compared to the proposed Project, with the exception of an additional seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland, and potentially up to 30 acres of undetermined ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard that will be impacted by Alternative 5, impacts to Biological Resources will be identical (See Section 6.1). The impacts and their associated mitigation measures that fall under Criterion BIO1 are summarized in the following paragraphs. Please see Section 6.1 (Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis) for a detailed description of these impacts, as they are largely the same as the proposed Project.

***Impact B-1: Construction activities would result in temporary and permanent losses of native vegetation.***

Construction of Alternative 5 would result in the same impacts to native vegetation as the proposed Project, with the exception of the additional loss of two acres of California grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of undetermined ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard. Project-related construction activities would require additional restoration/compensation for additive impacts to this vegetation community or any other vegetation communities potentially impacted due to the final location of the marshalling yard (Mitigation Measure B-1). As described in detail in Section 6.1, with the exception of agricultural or barren/developed land, construction activities that result in the disturbance to the plant communities identified above would be considered a significant impact without mitigation (Class II). Implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-1c (Treat cut tree stumps with Sporax), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce these impacts to less than significant and no additional mitigation measures are required for this increase in impacted vegetation.

***Impact B-2: The Project would result in the loss of desert wash or riparian habitat.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of undetermined ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. These added impacts will not affect any desert wash or riparian habitat and impacts to these resources would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project. Implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce these impacts to less than significant (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these riparian habitats.

***Impact B-3: The Project would result in the establishment and spread of noxious weeds.***

Impacts related to noxious weeds for Alternative 5 would be the same as described for the proposed Project for the Northern and Central Regions. Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of undetermined ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills in the Southern Region. These added impacts would marginally increase the potential for establishment and spread of noxious weeds. However, implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-3b (Remove weed seed sources from construction routes), and B-3c (Remove weed seed sources from assembly yards, staging areas, tower pads, pull sites, landing zones, and spur roads) would reduce impacts related to noxious weeds to less than significant (Class II). Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts due to noxious weeds.

***Impact B-4: Construction activities, including the use of access roads and helicopter construction, would result in disturbance to wildlife and may result in wildlife mortality.***

Alternative 5 would include the same elements as the proposed Project and would result in similar impacts to wildlife. The underground portion of this alternative would include impacts to an additional two acres of California annual grassland and potentially up to 30 acres of undetermined ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard, which could slightly increase impacts to wildlife over those described for the proposed Project. This alternative would require the implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce impacts to less than significant (Class II) and no additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to wildlife.

***Impact B-5: Construction activities conducted during the breeding season would result in the loss of nesting birds and raptors.***

Alternative 5 contains exactly the same foraging and nesting habitat for both resident and migratory birds as the proposed Project. Displacement of native birds or raptors during the breeding season would be considered a significant impact without mitigation. To reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels, SCE would implement Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-5 (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). As described in detail in Section 6.1, the displacement of most birds during the breeding season would be a violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but Impact B-5 would be reduced to less-than-significant levels (Class II) with mitigation. No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to nesting birds.

***Impact B-6: The Project would cause the loss of foraging habitat for wildlife.***

Alternative 5 would result in the loss of an additional two acres of California annual grassland and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard, which would constitute a slightly greater impact to wildlife foraging habitat compared to the proposed Project. This alternative would require the implementation of Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), and Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits) to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required for this relatively small increase in impacted foraging habitat.

**Impacts to Endangered or Threatened Species, or Proposed or Critical Habitat  
(Criterion BIO2)**

Ground-disturbing activity, including tower pad preparation and construction, grading of new access roads, tower removal, and use or improvement of existing access roads has the potential to disturb listed

plant and wildlife species. As components of this alternative, additional ground disturbance activities would include tunnel boring, GIL system installation, and the establishment of the temporary marshalling yard. Impacts to listed plant and wildlife species are detailed below. Impacts to individual species would be the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1).

***Impact B-7: The Project could disturb endangered, threatened, or proposed plant species or their habitat.***

Alternative 5 would be subject to the same types of ground-disturbing activity as the proposed Project with the exception of those components identified above. Ground-disturbing activity, including, but not limited to, tower pad preparation and construction areas, tower removal sites, pulling and tensioning sites, assembly yards, and areas subject to grading for new access and/or spur roads has the potential to disturb the listed plant species described above in Section 6.1.4. Although no listed plant species were observed during surveys, there remains the potential that new populations of listed species could potentially establish in areas where they were not previously observed due to dispersal and/or a change in the existing conditions that could favor some listed species, such as a recent burn. Additionally, as the final location for the marshalling yard has not yet been identified, the location could encompass areas that were not subjected to botanical surveys. As such, the potential remains for listed plant species to occur in the undetermined location of the marshalling yard. Nonetheless, impacts to listed plants, if present, would be identical to those described for the proposed Project as a result of implementation of this alternative. The additional two acres of California annual grassland and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard impacted by Alternative 5 may increase impacts to endangered, threatened, or proposed species or their habitats, if present. Therefore, the implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and B-7 (Conduct preconstruction surveys for State and federally Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Petitioned, and Candidate plants and avoid any located occurrences of listed plants) would reduce impacts to endangered, threatened, and proposed plant species to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these plant species.

***Impact B-8: The Project could result in the loss of California red-legged frogs and Mountain yellow-legged frogs.***

Alternative 5 would be identical to the proposed Project in the areas potentially inhabited by these species, and impacts to these species would be identical to those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). The implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), Mitigation Measure B-8a (Conduct protocol surveys for California red-legged frogs and implement avoidance measures), and Mitigation Measure B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring) would reduce potential impacts to these species a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these amphibians.

***Impact B-9: The Project would result in the loss of arroyo toad.***

Alternative 5 would be identical to the proposed Project in the areas potentially inhabited by arroyo toads, and impacts to this species would be identical to those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). SCE would be required to implement APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-9 (Conduct protocol surveys for arroyo toads and implement avoidance measures in occupied areas), and Mitigation Measure B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring). These measures include, but are not limited to, avoiding the peak breeding period, the placement of exclusion fencing if animals are present, implementation of a capture and release program, and construction monitoring by authorized biologists. Implementation of these measures would avoid or mitigate take, including loss of habitat, if present, thereby reducing potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-10: The Project could result in the loss of desert tortoise.***

Alternative 5 would be identical to the proposed Project in the areas of the Northern Region potentially inhabited by the desert tortoise, and impacts to this species would be identical to those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). These impacts would require implementation of Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-10 (Conduct presence or absence surveys for desert tortoise and implement avoidance measures), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Implementation of these measures would avoid or mitigate effects to this species, including loss of habitat, if present, thereby reducing potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-11: The Project could result in mortality of desert tortoises as a result of increased predation by common ravens.***

As with the proposed Project, Alternative 5 would not require mitigation because increases in nest sites for common raven as a result of tower construction are not expected to change. Therefore, populations of common raven and their predation pressure on the desert tortoise are not expected as a result of this alternative, and impacts would be less than significant (Class III). Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts will not take place within the range of the desert tortoise and, therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-12: The Project could result in the loss of special-status fish.***

Alternative 5 would occur in Chino Hills in a largely developed and disturbed area, and would not impact any additional waterways that could potentially be inhabited by fish. Therefore, this impact would be

exactly the same as that described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1) and would require implementation of Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), Mitigation Measure B-12 (Implement avoidance and minimization measures for Santa Ana sucker and other aquatic organisms), and Mitigation Measure B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring). These measures would reduce impacts to special-status fish to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these species.

***Impact B-13: The Project could result in the loss of Critical Habitat for the Santa Ana sucker.***

Alternative 5 would occur in Chino Hills in a largely developed and disturbed area, and would not impact any additional critical habitat for the Santa Ana sucker. Therefore, impacts to critical habitat for this species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project. Mitigation is recommended to reduce impacts to critical habitat for the Santa Ana sucker to less than significant (Class II). These measures include Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), Mitigation Measure B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring), and B-12 (Implement avoidance and minimization measures for Santa Ana sucker and other aquatic organisms). No additional mitigation is required.

***Impact B-14: The Project could result in the loss of California condors.***

Alternative 5 would be identical to the proposed Project in the areas of the Northern and Central Regions potentially inhabited by California condors, and impacts to this species would be identical to those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). In the Southern Region, potential for transmission line strikes by this species would be slightly lower than the proposed Project as 3.5 miles of transmission line would be placed underground. This alternative would require implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring), and B-14 (Monitor construction in condor habitat and remove trash and micro-trash from the work area daily) to avoid or mitigate take, including the loss of habitat and the potential for micro-trash ingestion. Implementation of these measures would reduce impacts to this species to less-than-significant levels (Class II).

Electrocutions and/or line collisions as a result of the implementation of Alternative 5 are discussed further under Impacts B-20 and B-21. No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-15: The Project would disturb nesting southwestern willow flycatchers, least Bell's vireos, yellow-billed cuckoos, or their habitat.***

The underground portion of Alternative 5 would not occur in habitat that would support southwestern willow flycatchers, least Bell's vireos, or yellow-billed cuckoos and therefore impacts to these species

would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). These impacts would require implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-5 (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), Mitigation Measure B-15 (Conduct protocol or focused surveys for listed riparian birds and avoid occupied habitat), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). This impact would be considered significant without mitigation (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these species.

***Impact B-16: The Project would result in the loss of coastal California gnatcatchers.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of nine acres and potentially up to an additional 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills, which is within the range of the coastal California gnatcatcher. However, these habitats (barren/developed, California annual grassland) are not suitable habitats for this species, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Implementation of APMs BIO-4 through BIO-6, Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-16 (Conduct protocol or focused surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher and implement avoidance measures), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). Additional mitigation measures would not be required to eliminate or minimize impacts to the coastal California gnatcatcher.

***Impact B-17: The Project would result in the loss of critical and/or occupied habitat of the coastal California gnatcatcher.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of nine acres and potentially up to an additional 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills, which is within the range of the coastal California gnatcatcher. However, these areas are not designated as critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, and they consist of disturbed/developed and California annual grassland habitats that are not suitable for this species. Therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1) and would require implementation of APMs BIO-4 through BIO-8 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measures B-16 and B-17 (Conduct focused surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher and implement avoidance measures, Preserve off-site habitat and/or habitat restoration for the coastal California gnatcatcher), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) to reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to the coastal California gnatcatcher.

***Impact B-18: The Project could disturb nesting Swainson's Hawks.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of disturbed/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the

final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts will not disturb nesting Swainson's hawks as the area containing the underground portion of this alternative is not known to support nesting occurrences for this species. Therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as those described for the proposed Project. Project implementation could result in disturbance that causes Swainson's hawks to abandon their nests or otherwise fail to reproduce, resulting in significant impacts without mitigation. Implementation of APMs BIO-4 through BIO-6 and Mitigation Measures B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-18a and B-18b (Conduct pre-construction surveys for Swainson's hawks, Removal of nest trees for Swainson's hawks), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-19: The Project would result in the loss of foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks.***

Loss of foraging habitat for the Swainson's hawk as a result of Project implementation could substantially reduce the habitat available for the species, reduce the number, cause populations to drop below self-sustaining levels, restrict the range, or threaten to eliminate populations. Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of 7 acres of barren/developed, 2 acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. These added impacts could reduce foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks; however, implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-18a (Conduct pre-construction surveys for Swainson's hawks), B-19 (Compensate for loss of foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II) and no additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-20: The Project could result in electrocution of State and/or federally protected birds.***

Because implementation of Alternative 5 would decrease the length of conductor lines along Segment 8 by 3.5 miles, the impacted area would be smaller in size, and Impact B-20 would be lower in magnitude than the proposed Project. However, the decrease in the frequency of transmission line electrocutions due to this 3.5 mile reduction of aboveground transmission lines is expected to be quite low, because this area is not located near any established bird migratory corridors or dispersal routes. Therefore, the total number of electrocution events is still expected to be quite low and, as with the Alternative 2, insufficient to substantially reduce the number of State and/or federally protected bird species. SCE would implement APMs BIO-4 and BIO-9 as part of the proposed Project in accordance with the guidance on raptor protection in *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006* (APLIC 2006). However, because of the long duration of the construction phase of the proposed Project, APLIC may update the guidelines during this time frame. Therefore, SCE shall use the most recent APLIC guidelines for protection of raptors on power lines. Impacts to State and/or federally protected birds resulting from electrocution would be less than significant with APMs incorporated (Class III) and no additional mitigation is required.



***Impact B-21: The Project could result in result in collision with overhead wires by State and/or federally protected birds.***

Because implementation of Alternative 5 would decrease the length of conductor lines along Segment 8 by 3.5 miles, the impacted area would be smaller in size, and Impact B-21 would be slightly lower in magnitude than the proposed Project. However, the decrease in the frequency of transmission line strikes due to this 3.5 mile reduction of aboveground transmission lines is expected to be quite low, because this area is not located near any established bird migratory corridors or dispersal routes. Therefore, the total number of collision events with overhead wires is still expected to be quite low and, as with Alternative 2, insufficient to substantially reduce the number of State and/or federally protected bird species. Line collisions as a result of Project implementation will not substantially reduce the number of State and/or federally protected birds, cause populations to drop below self-sustaining levels, restrict the range, or threaten to eliminate populations. However, with implementation of APM BIO-9 and the incorporation of raptor safety protection into the project design (i.e. tower/conductor [lines] on NFS lands) impacts to State and/or federally protected birds resulting from transmission line collisions would be less than significant (Class III). No additional mitigation for Impact B-21 is required for Alternative 5.

***Impact B-22: The Project could result in disturbance to Mohave ground squirrels.***

Implementation of Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts will not take place within the range of the Mohave ground squirrel, and, therefore, impacts to Mohave ground squirrels would be exactly the same as those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Implementation of APMs BIO-4 through BIO-7, Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), and Mitigation Measures B-22a (Conduct focused surveys for Mohave ground squirrels), B-22b (Implement construction monitoring for Mohave ground squirrels), and B-22c (Preserve off-site habitat for the Mohave ground squirrel) would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

**Have a substantial adverse effect on a candidate, Forest Service Sensitive, or special-status species (Criterion BIO3)**

***Impact B-23: The Project would result in loss of candidate, Forest Service Sensitive, or special-status plant species.***

Alternative 5 would be subject to the same types of ground-disturbing activity as the proposed Project with the exception of those components identified above. Ground-disturbing activity, including, but not limited to, tower pad preparation and construction areas, tower removal sites, pulling and tensioning sites, assembly yards, and areas subject to grading for new access and/or spur roads has the potential to disturb special-status plant species. Additionally, as the final location for the marshalling yard has not yet been identified, the location could encompass areas that were not subjected to botanical surveys. As such, the potential remains for special-status plant species to occur in the undetermined location of the marshalling yard. Nonetheless, impacts to special-status plants, if present, would be identical to those described for the proposed Project as a result of implementation of this alternative. The additional two acres of

California annual grassland and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard impacted by Alternative 5 may increase impacts to special-status species or their habitats, if present. As discussed above, effects to these species shall be reduced by the implementation of Mitigation Measures AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), B-7 (Conduct preconstruction surveys for State and federally Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Petitioned, and Candidate plants and avoid any located occurrences of listed plants), and B-23 (Preserve offsite habitat/management of existing populations of special-status plants). Mitigation measures for Impact B-23 are sufficient to reduce impacts to candidate, FS Sensitive, or special-status plants to less than significant (Class II). Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required for these species.

***Impact B-24: The Project could result in mortality or injury of, and loss of nesting habitat for, southwestern pond turtles.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable habitat for southern pond turtles, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as for the proposed Project (see Section 6.1). As described for the proposed Project, if pond turtles are present, damage or destruction of southwestern pond turtle nesting areas would constitute a significant impact under CEQA without mitigation. Nesting areas are frequently used by multiple individuals, and suitable nesting habitat can be limited in many areas. Destruction of southwestern pond turtle nesting areas would result in a substantial reduction in numbers of this rare species. However, implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-3 and BIO-5 through BIO-7 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-12 (Implement avoidance and minimization measures for Santa Ana sucker and other aquatic organisms), Mitigation Measure B-24 (Conduct focused presence/absence surveys for southwestern pond turtle and implement monitoring, avoidance, and minimization measures), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would prevent mortality or injury of pond turtles, avoid damage or destruction of nesting areas, and mitigate the loss of nesting habitat, thereby reducing potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-25: The Project could result in injury or mortality of, and loss of habitat for, two-striped garter snakes and south coast garter snakes.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable habitat for two-striped garter snakes and south coast garter snakes, and, therefore, impacts to these species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project. Implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/

compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-25 (Conduct focused surveys for the two-striped garter snake and south coast garter snake and implement monitoring, avoidance, and minimization measures), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would avoid injury or mortality to these species, thereby reducing potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-26: The Project could result in injury or mortality of, and loss of habitat for, Coast Range newts.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable habitat for Coast Range newts, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-26 (Conduct focused surveys for coast range newt and implement monitoring, avoidance, and minimization measures), Mitigation Measure H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), Mitigation Measure H-1b (Dry weather construction), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would avoid injury or mortality to this species, thereby reducing impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-27: The Project could result in injury or mortality of, and loss of habitat for, terrestrial California Species of Special Concern and Forest Service Sensitive amphibian and reptile species (special-status terrestrial herpetofauna).***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of two acres of California annual grassland, which is suitable habitat for the northern red diamond rattlesnake, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard in the Chino Hills. However, this additional impacted acreage is low, and impacts to unique amphibian and reptile species would be slightly greater in magnitude than those described for the proposed Project. Mitigation measures for Impact B-27 are sufficient to minimize impacts to candidate, FS Sensitive, or special-status amphibian and reptile species. Implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7, Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-27 (Monitoring, avoidance, and minimization measures), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required for these species.

***Impact B-28: The Project could disturb wintering mountain plovers.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable habitat for wintering mountain plovers, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project. Alternative 5 would not require mitigation for this impact because the total acreage of impacted habitat is small relative to regional availability, and implementation of Alternative 5 would not restrict the range of the species. Therefore, impacts to wintering mountain plovers resulting from construction disturbance are less than significant (Class III).

***Impact B-29: The Project would result in loss of occupied burrowing owl habitat.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of two acres of California annual grassland, which is suitable habitat for the burrowing owl, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. Therefore, the loss of occupied burrowing owl habitat would potentially be slightly greater in magnitude than that described for the proposed Project. Implementation of APMs BIO-2 and BIO-4 through BIO-8 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-29 (Implement CDFG protocol for burrowing owls), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). These mitigation measures are sufficient to minimize impacts to burrowing owl; therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required for this species.

***Impact B-30: The Project would result in loss of occupied California spotted owl habitat.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of disturbed/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable habitat for California spotted owl, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). SCE would implement APMs BIO-2 and BIO-4 through BIO-6 and Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-30 (Conduct pre- and during construction nest surveys for spotted owl), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Therefore, impacts to the California spotted owl resulting from loss of occupied habitat are considered less than significant (Class II) with mitigation. No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-31: The Project could disturb nesting California spotted owls.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of disturbed/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable nesting habitat for California spotted owl, and, therefore, impacts to spotted owl habitat would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). SCE would implement APMs BIO-2 and BIO-4 through BIO-6, Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker

Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-30 (Conduct pre- and during construction nest surveys for spotted owl), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) that would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-32: The Project could disturb nesting avian “species of special concern.”***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of two acres of California annual grassland, which is suitable nesting habitat for several nesting avian “species of special concern,” including grasshopper sparrow and northern harrier. Additionally, up to 30 acres of ground surface within the Chino Hills, as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard, could be temporarily disturbed through implementation of this alternative. Therefore, overall impacts to avian “species of special concern” would be slightly greater than those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Construction-related disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort would constitute a significant impact and violate the MBTA. However, implementation of APMs BIO-4 through BIO-6, and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-5 (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). These mitigation measures are sufficient to minimize impacts to these species. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required for avian “species of special concern.”

***Impact B-33: The Project could result in mortality of, and loss of habitat for, special-status bat species.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of seven acres of disturbed/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts would not take place within suitable roosting habitat for special-status bat species, and, therefore, impacts to these species are identical to those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). If active hibernacula and maternity roosts cannot be avoided, impacts would be significant. However, implementation of APMs BIO-1, BIO-4, BIO-6, and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan), B-33a (Maternity colony or hibernaculum surveys for roosting bats), B-33b (Provision of substitute roosting bat habitat), and B-33c (Exclude bats prior to demolition of roosts) would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these species.

***Impact B-34: The Project could result in transmission line strikes by special-status bat species.***

Because implementation of Alternative 5 would decrease the length of conductor lines along Segment 8 by 3.5 miles, the impacted area would be smaller in size, and Impact B-34 would be slightly lower in magnitude than for the proposed Project. However, the decrease in the frequency of transmission line strikes due to this 3.5-mile reduction of aboveground transmission lines is expected to be quite low, because this area is not located near any established bat migratory corridors or dispersal routes. Therefore, the number of collision events with overhead wires is still expected to be quite low and, as

with the proposed project, insufficient to substantially reduce the number of special-status bat species. SCE would implement APMs BIO-1, BIO-4, and BIO-6 to minimize adverse affects to special-status bats. Line strikes as a result of Project implementation will not substantially reduce the number of special-status bat species, cause their populations to drop below self-sustaining levels, restrict their range, or threaten to eliminate their populations. Therefore, impacts to special-status bat species resulting from transmission line strikes are less than significant (Class III).

***Impact B-35: The Project could result in mortality of, and loss of habitat for, special-status mammals.***

Alternative 5 will result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat (which is suitable habitat for a variety of special-status mammals), and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. As described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1), the area of suitable habitat for the Los Angeles pocket mouse, Tehachapi pocket mouse, San Joaquin pocket mouse, Northwestern San Diego pocket mouse, Southern grasshopper mouse, Tulare grasshopper mouse, and San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit potentially impacted by Alternative 5 would be quite small relative to the overall population size and range of these species. Implementation of Alternative 5 would not substantially reduce available habitat; however, these animals would still be subject to potential mortality from construction activities. Therefore, impacts to these species as a result of Project implementation would be slightly greater than those described for the proposed Project. SCE indicates that APM BIO-1 and APM BIO-5 would be implemented, which would include preconstruction clearance surveys and the use of biological monitors during construction of the proposed Project. In addition, Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would be implemented to reduce impacts to less than significant (Class II).

***Impact B-36: The Project could result in mortality of San Diego desert woodrats.***

Construction activities associated with Alternative 5 could substantially reduce regional populations of this species in the Chino and Puente Hills. Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of two acres of California annual grassland and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. As the final location of marshaling yard is not known, impacts to this species may be greater than the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Impacts to this species as a result of Alternative 5 implementation would be reduced to a less-than-significant level (Class II) with the implementation of APMs BIO-1 and BIO-4 through BIO-6, Mitigation Measure B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), Mitigation Measure B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), Mitigation Measure B-36 (Conduct focused surveys for San Diego desert woodrats and passively relocate), and Mitigation Measure AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Additional No additional mitigation measures are required.

***Impact B-37: The Project could result in mortality of and loss of habitat for, the ringtail.***

Alternative 5 will result in the additional loss of seven acres of barren/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location

for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts will not take place within suitable habitat for ringtails, and, therefore, impacts to this species would be exactly the same as those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). The implementation of APMs BIO-1, BIO-4, and BIO-6 and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-37 (Conduct focused surveys for ringtail and passively relocate during the non-breeding season), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) would reduce project impacts to ringtails to a less-than-significant level (Class II). No additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to this species.

***Impact B-38: The Project could result in mortality of American badgers.***

Alternative 5 would result in the additional loss of two acres of California annual grassland, which is suitable habitat for the American badger, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard. This would constitute a marginal increase in potential impacts and overall impacts to American badgers would be slightly greater than those described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Construction activities could significantly reduce the number of American badger in the Antelope Valley and Chino and Puente Hills. However, impacts to the American badger would be reduced to a less-than-significant level (Class II) with the implementation of APMs BIO-1, BIO-4, BIO-5, BIO-6, and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), Mitigation Measure B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-38 (Conduct focused surveys for American badger and passively relocate during the non-breeding season), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Mitigation measures for Impact B-38 are sufficient to minimize impacts to this species. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required for the American badger.

**Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands (Criterion BIO4)**

***Impact B-39: The Project could result in the loss of wetland habitats.***

Alternative 5 will result in the additional loss of seven acres of disturbed/developed, two acres of California annual grassland habitat, and potentially up to 30 acres of ground surface as defined by the final location for the marshalling yard within the Chino Hills. However, these added impacts will not affect any federally protected wetlands, and impacts would be exactly the same as described for the proposed Project (Section 6.1). Any loss of these habitats associated with Alternative 5 is significant. If avoidance of jurisdictional waters and wetlands is not possible, implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7, and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-12 (Implement avoidance and minimization measures for Santa Ana sucker and other aquatic organisms), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan) will reduce the impacts to federally protected wetlands to less-than-significant levels (Class II). Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required to minimize impacts to these protected habitats.

## **Interfere substantially with native fish or wildlife movements, corridors, or nursery sites (Criterion BIO5)**

### ***Impact B-40: The Project could interfere with established bird and bat migratory corridors.***

Implementation of Alternative 5 would decrease the length of conductor lines along Segment 8 by 3.5 miles, resulting in a smaller impacted area that would interfere with established bird and bat migratory corridors. However, the reduction of aboveground transmission lines along Segment 8 is expected to have little effect on Impact B-40, because this area is not located near any of the established bird and bat migratory corridors. Therefore, the number of collision and other interference events with overhead wires is still expected to be very similar to the proposed Project and would require implementation of APMs BIO-1, BIO-4, and BIO-6 to minimize interference with established bird and bat migratory corridors. Line strikes as a result of implementation of Alternative 5 would not substantially reduce the numbers of migrating bird or bat species, cause their populations to drop below self-sustaining levels, restrict their range, or threaten to eliminate their populations. Thus, implementation of Alternative 5 would not substantially interfere with established bird or bat migratory corridors, and impacts to migrating bird and bat species would be less than significant (Class III). No additional mitigation for Impact B-40 is required for Alternative 5.

### ***Impact B-41: Corona noise could result in disturbance to wildlife.***

Corona generates audible noise during operation of transmission lines. The noise is generally characterized as a crackling, hissing, or humming sound and is most noticeable during wet conductor conditions such as rain or fog. Alternative 5 follows the exact same route as the proposed Project but includes an underground portion approximately 3.5 miles in length along Segment 8. Implementation of Alternative 5 would decrease the length of above-ground conductor lines along Segment 8 by 3.5 miles, resulting in a smaller area that would produce corona noise as compared to the proposed Project. In all other areas, impacts would be identical to the proposed Project. However, as the effects of corona noise on wildlife are poorly understood, it is difficult to predict the degree to which the increase in corona noise for the above-ground portions of Alternative 5 or the decrease for the underground portion will impact local wildlife. Corona noise is already present along most of Alternative 5, and while Alternative 5 will result in louder corona noise for most segments and a new source of corona noise for the new segments, wildlife can be expected to have already been exposed and likely habituated to this disturbance. Therefore, implementation of Alternative 5 will not result in substantial impacts due to corona noise. This impact would be less than significant (Class III).

### ***Impact B-42: The Project would result in effects to Management Indicator Species.***

The ANF LRMP (USDA 2005) requires forest scale monitoring of habitat status and trend for select Management Indicator Species (MIS) on the ANF. MIS are likely to be subject to various levels of disturbance from implementation of the proposed Project on NFS lands. Because the underground portion associated with Alternative 5 would occur on non-NFS lands, impacts to MIS would be exactly the same as the proposed Project and would be reduced to a less-than-significant level (Class II) with the implementation of APMs BIO-1 and BIO-4 through BIO-6 and Mitigation Measures B-1a (Provide restoration/compensation for impacts to native vegetation communities), B-1b (Implement a Worker Environmental Awareness Program), B-1c (Treat cut tree stumps with Sporax), B-2 (Implement RCA Treatment Plan), B-3a (Prepare and implement a Weed Control Plan), B-3b (Remove weed seed sources from construction routes), B-3c (Remove weed seed sources from assembly yards, staging areas, tower



pads, pull sites, landing zones, and spur roads), B-5 (Conduct pre-construction surveys and monitoring for breeding birds), B-8b (Conduct biological monitoring), B-9 (Conduct protocol surveys for arroyo toads and implement avoidance measures in occupied areas), B-30 (Conduct pre- and during- construction nest surveys for spotted owl), H-1a (Implement an Erosion Control Plan and demonstrate compliance with water quality permits), and AQ-1a (Implement Construction Fugitive Dust Control Plan). Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are required.

### **Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinances (Criterion BIO6)**

Because of the extensive planning involved in project design, including implementation of APMs BIO 1 through BIO-7, and the mitigation measures described above in Criteria BIO1 through BIO5, Alternative 5 is consistent with the local and regional policies and ordinances protecting biological resources including the Los Angeles County Tree Removal requirements, the Palmdale Municipal Code, and the California Desert Native Plants Act. Therefore, no impact would occur.

### **Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP), or other approved local, regional, or state HCP (Criterion BIO7)**

Through Project design and implementation of APMs BIO-1 through BIO-7 and the mitigation measures described in Criteria BIO1 through BIO5, SCE shall ensure consistency with the conservation goals of the WMPHCP. Therefore, no impact would occur.

## **9.2 Cumulative Effects Analysis**

This section addresses potential cumulative effects that would occur as a result of implementation of Alternative 5 (Partial Underground Alternative). This alternative consists of a 3.5 mile underground re-route of the proposed transmission line. The remainder of this alternative route (north of Segment 8A) would be identical to that of the proposed Project and would, therefore, result in identical impacts as the proposed Project. The re-routed underground portion of the Alternative 5 route follows the same path as the proposed aboveground Project route. As a result, this alternative traverses the same or similar habitat types as the portion of the proposed Project route it is proposed to replace, and additional impacts are limited primarily to barren/developed habitats. Based on the substantial similarity of Alternative 5 to the proposed Project, this alternative's contribution to cumulative impacts would be virtually identical to that of the proposed Project.

### **9.2.1 Geographic Extent**

Alternative 5 only differs from the proposed Project for a short 3.5-mile portion of the proposed route in the City of Chino Hills. This area is still encompassed by the geographic extent of the cumulative analysis defined for Alternative 2 in Section 6.2.1. Therefore, the geographic extent of the cumulative analysis for Alternative 5 is exactly the same as that for Alternative 2 and would include all of the Northern, Central, and Southern Regions.

### **9.2.2 Existing Cumulative Conditions**

The existing cumulative conditions for Alternative 5 are exactly the same as for Alternative 2, as described in Section 6.2.2.

### **9.2.3 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects and Changes**

Reasonably foreseeable future projects and changes to the cumulative scenario for Alternative 5 would be exactly the same as Alternative 2, described in Section 6.2.3.

### **9.2.4 Cumulative Impact Analysis**

As described in Section 6.2.4, impacts associated with Alternative 5 would be cumulatively considerable if they would have the potential to combine with similar impacts of other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects. The underground re-route of the proposed Project transmission line associated with Alternative 5 would not differ from the proposed Project's contribution to cumulative impacts and therefore, cumulative impacts of Alternative 5 would be exactly the same as cumulative impacts for Alternative 2.

### **9.2.5 Mitigation to Reduce the Project's Contribution to Significant Cumulative Effects**

Mitigation measures introduced for Alternative 5 in Section 7.1 (Direct and Indirect Effects Analysis) would help to reduce this alternative's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts. However, no additional mitigation measures have been identified that would reduce cumulative impacts to a less-than-significant level.