

3.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Table 3.2-1 Agriculture and Forestry Resources Checklist

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d. Result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note: In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

3.2.1 Setting

Environmental Setting

Agriculture is the most extensive single land use in Yuba, Butte, and Sutter Counties (Butte County 2007, Yuba County 2008, Sutter County 2008). As shown below in Table 3.2-2 about 55 percent of the total Yuba County area, 63 percent of the total Butte County area, and 88 percent of the total Sutter County area comprises agricultural croplands and pasture. The agricultural industry remains a strong and important component of these counties' economies, and the preservation of agricultural lands is regarded as a high priority for local land use planning agencies in the region, especially in light of encroaching urban development.

Table 3.2-2 Farmland in Project Regional Area

Area	Total Land Area (acres)	Designated ^a Farmland		Other ^b Farmland		Total Farmland Area (% total)	Farmland Converted (acres), 2004 to 2006
		Total	% Total Land Area	Total	% Total Land Area		
Butte County	1.03 million	242,058	24	407,678	40	63	-1,502
Yuba County	412,160	85,384	21	142,729	35	55	-2,299
Sutter County	389,443	292,256	75	51,516	13	88	-288
Totals:	1,831,603	619,698	34	601,923	33	67	-4,089 (-0.7%)

Source: PG&E 2009, Butte County 2007, Yuba County 2008, Sutter County 2008

Notes: a = Includes Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland, per FMMP categories

b = Includes Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land, per FMMP categories

NA = Not Available

Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

State of California

Conservation of agricultural land in California is supported on the state level through the Division of Land Resource Protection (DLRP), and specifically through the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) and the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (commonly referred to as the Williamson Act). For the FMMP, U.S. Department of Agriculture soils surveys and existing land use observations recorded during even-numbered years are used to determine the nature and quality of farmland in 10-acre minimum units across the state. FMMP mapping categories for the most important statewide farmland include Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. Other classifications include Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land. FMMP data are used in elements of some county and city general plans and associated environmental documents as a way of assessing the impacts of development on farmland, and in regional studies for assessing impacts due to agricultural land conversion.

The Williamson Act enables local governments to enter into rolling, 10-year contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. In return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual, farming, and open space uses, as opposed to potential market value.

County and City Plans, Regulations, and Consultation

In locating projects constructed by public utilities subject to the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC's) jurisdiction, the CPUC is required to consult with local agencies regarding land use matters, though the applicant is not subject to local land use regulations (CPUC 1995). "Initial consultations with local planning agencies in Butte County, Yuba County, and Sutter County have not revealed any apparent inconsistencies between the project and existing local plans and regulations addressing agriculture in these jurisdictions" (Boeck 2009, Palmieri 2009, Teitelman 2009, Wilson 2009). The project would not cross over any land within the cities of Oroville or Marysville zoned for agricultural uses (PG&E 2009).

The general plans of Butte, Yuba, and Sutter counties all include strong agriculture preservation policies. Goals and policies for agriculture in these general plans address preserving agricultural land and farming uses; promoting growth and expansion of farmland; ensuring the continuity of areas in agricultural uses; reducing land use or other conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses; restricting non-

agricultural uses in farmland areas; establishing buffers between urban development and agricultural land; and ensuring long-term protection of agricultural production.

Some zoning ordinances for agricultural land in these jurisdictions include requirements that electric transmission facilities be developed under use permits or conditional use permits granted by the local government. The project, however, is exempt from these requirements (CPUC 1995).

3.2.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

In Butte, Yuba, and Sutter counties, the project would traverse land with FMMP designations of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Grazing Land (Figure 3.2-1). The project would traverse several areas in these counties zoned for agricultural uses. The project would not cross or border any Williamson Act parcels in these counties.

a. *Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?*

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. For the purposes of this discussion, and per FMMP categories, “designated farmland” refers to Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. “Other farmland” or “non-designated farmland” refers to Farmland of Local Importance or Grazing Land. As shown below in Table 3.2-3, an estimated 215.79 acres of designated farmland would be temporarily disturbed by the project due to the construction of temporary access roads, grading sites to provide helicopter landing pads, and for use as work areas to remove or replace existing towers and the construction of new towers (PG&E 2009).

Table 3.2-3 Estimated Farmland Disturbed by Project

Area	Acres (%) Temporary Disturbance, Designated ^a Farmland	Acres (%) Permanent Loss, Designated ^a Farmland	Acres (%) Temporary Disturbance, Other ^b Farmland	Acres (%) Permanent Loss, Other ^b Farmland
Butte County	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.3 (62%)	0 (0%)
Yuba County	2.3 (1.07%)	0 (0%)	0.7 (30%)	0 (0%)
Sutter County	213.49 (98.93%)	0 (0%)	0.2 (8%)	0 (0%)
City of Oroville	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Totals:	215.79	0	2.2	0

Source: PG&E 2009

Notes:

^a Includes Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland, per FMMP categories

^b Includes Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land, per FMMP categories

This temporary removal of designated farmland from productive use represents a very small portion (0.04%) of the total designated farmland in the affected jurisdictions of Butte, Yuba, and Sutter counties. Per the applicant’s right-of-way joint use policy, farmers would be fully compensated for the temporary loss of the portion of their land affected by the project; furthermore, any damage to or removal of orchard trees would also be fully compensated (Section 1.8.5.5, Cleanup and Post-Construction Restoration). The total acreage of designated farmland affected by the project would be relatively small, and disturbance would be temporary. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant under this criterion.

b. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

NO IMPACT. The project route would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use and does not cross or border Williamson Act parcels (PG&E 2009); therefore, there would be no impact under this criterion.

c. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

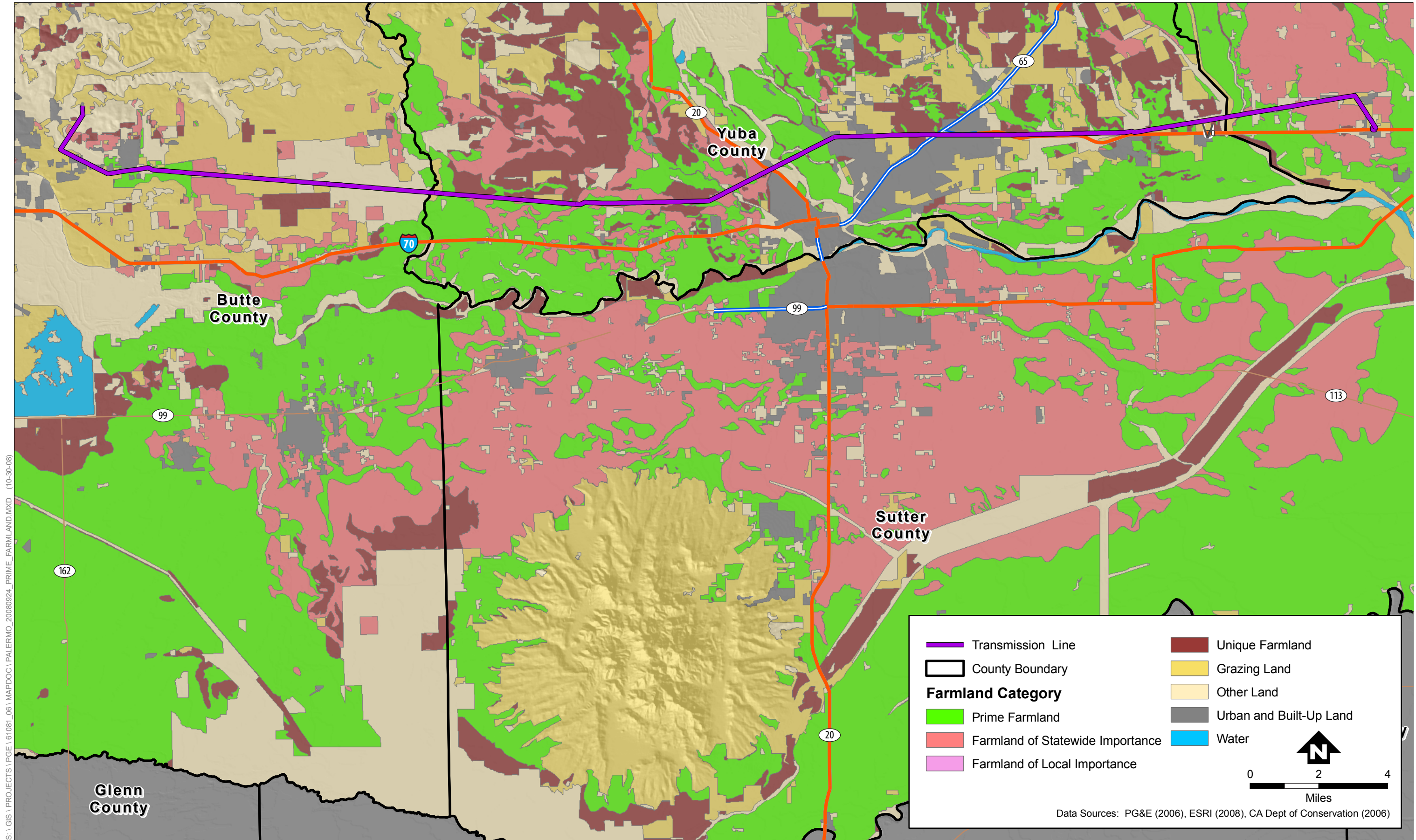
NO IMPACT. The project route would not cross forestland or timberland, and there would be no impact under this criterion.

d. Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

NO IMPACT. The project route would not cross forestland, and there would be no impact under this criterion.

e. Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT. As shown above in Table 3.2-3, the project would temporarily remove about 2.2 acres of non-designated farmland from agricultural production due to the construction of temporary access roads, work areas, and helicopter landing sites (PG&E 2009). This temporary removal of non-designated farmland from productive use represents a very small portion (0.0004%) of the total non-designated farmland in the affected jurisdictions of Butte, Yuba, and Sutter counties. Per the applicant's right-of-way joint use policy, farmers would be fully compensated for the temporary loss of the portion of their land affected by the project; furthermore, any damage to or removal of orchard trees would also be fully compensated (Section 1.8.5.5, Cleanup and Post-Construction Restoration). The total acreage of non-designated farmland affected by the project would be relatively small, and disturbance would be temporary. In addition, the project route would not cross forestland. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant under this criterion.



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Reference: Fig. 4-2-1, Prime Farmland in the Project Vicinity, Proponent's Environmental Assessment, Palermo-East Nicolaus 115 kV Transmission Line Reconstruction Project, ICF Jones & Stokes, February 2009

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PALERMO-EAST NICOLAUS 115-KV TRANSMISSION LINE

Figure 3.2-1
Prime Farmland Along the Project Route

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