

5.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources

5.2.1 Environmental Setting

San Diego County comprises over 2.7 million acres, with just over 9 percent of its land, around 250,000 acres, in agricultural use. The Tecate Divide runs north-south over the Cuyamaca Mountains and topographically separates lands descending to the Pacific Ocean on the west from the high desert to the east. The county is home to 5,732 farms, more than any other county in the United States. The majority of farms are on the western, coastal side of the Tecate Divide and are generally 9 or fewer acres in size. Agriculture is a key contributor to the area's economy. High water and land costs make farming in the region expensive and encourage growers to raise high value products, including nursery, flower, fruit, nut, and vegetable crops. In 2015, roughly a quarter of the county's agricultural land produced 90 percent of the agricultural output, valued in excess of \$1.7 billion (County of San Diego Department of Weights and Measures 2015).

Approximately 1.2 miles of existing utility transmission lines extend across land that the City of San Diego's zoning ordinance designates *Agricultural-Residential* (AR). The existing lines, described in ~~Section~~ Chapter 4.0, "Project Description," include 0.71 miles of the 69-kilovolt (kV) TL666D alignment; 0.51 miles of the TL674A alignment, and 0.1 miles of the 12 kV C738 alignment. None of the underlying land where these utility poles and power lines are located is actively cultivated or used for livestock grazing. Moreover, existing power lines that are part of the proposed project are not located on nor do they currently span any land zoned for forest or timberland use.

5.2.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal

Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 (Public Law 97-98, Title XV, Subtitle I § 1539-1549).

Enacted by the U.S. Congress to protect farmland, this act minimizes federal programs' unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. Projects are subject to the act if they may irreversibly convert farmland to nonagricultural use.

State

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 ("Williamson Act"). This state policy (California Code, Chapter 7 § 51200–51297.4) enables local governments to enter into ongoing contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural or compatible uses for a minimum of 10 years. San Diego County has a 100 acre-minimum for Williamson Act contracts (County of San Diego n.d.). The proposed project would not affect any Williamson Act contract lands.

1 **Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.** Established in 1982 and administered by the California
2 Department of Conservation, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) provides
3 consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and
4 planning for the future of California’s agricultural resources. The FMMP designates use categories, tracks
5 changes to the state’s inventory of agriculture lands, and establishes a minimum mapping unit of 10 acres
6 for application of the FMMP. Agricultural lands are those designated *Prime Farmland*, *Farmland of*
7 *Statewide Importance*, and *Unique Farmland*, as follows:

- 9 • *Prime Farmland* refers to the best combination of physical and chemical features (e.g., soil
10 quality, growing season, and moisture supply) to sustain long-term agricultural production and
11 produce high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time
12 during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- 13 • *Farmland of Statewide Importance* is land similar to *Prime Farmland*, but with minor
14 shortcomings (e.g., greater slopes, less ability to store soil moisture, etc.). Land must have been
15 used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping
16 date.
- 17 • *Unique Farmland* is land that is usually irrigated, consists of lesser quality soils, and is used for
18 the production of the state’s leading agricultural crops that may include non-irrigated orchards or
19 vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some
20 time during the four years prior to the mapping date (DOC 2004).

21
22 The FMMP designates *Urban and Built-Up Land* as land occupied by buildings or other structures at
23 densities equal to or greater than one structure per 1.5 acres where a wide variety and type of uses may be
24 present, including residential, commercial, industrial, construction, public administration, institutional,
25 transportation yards, airports, cemeteries, golf courses, sewage treatment, sanitary landfills, and water
26 control structures. *Other Land Uses* include those with waterbodies smaller than 40 acres; low-density
27 rural developments; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; and brush, timber, wetland, and
28 riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing.

29
30 **Forest Resources.** Forest land is defined by California Code, Public Resources Code, Section 12220(g)
31 as land that can support 10 percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural
32 conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics,
33 fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits.

34 35 **Regional and Local**

36 **California Public Utilities Commission General Order 131-D, Section XIV.B,** states that “local
37 jurisdictions acting pursuant to local authority are preempted from regulating electrical power line
38 projects, distribution lines, substations or electrical facilities constructed by public utilities subject to the
39 Commission’s jurisdiction. However, in locating such projects, the public utilities shall consult with local
40 agencies regarding land use matters.”

41
42 **County of San Diego General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.** The County of San Diego General Plan’s
43 Land Use and Conservation and Open Space Elements seek to minimize land use conflicts, preserve
44 agricultural resources, and support the long-term presence and viability of agricultural industry, important

1 component of the region’s economy and open space linkage (County of San Diego 2011). The proposed
2 project would not conflict with General Plan agricultural policies. The county’s Zoning Ordinance
3 includes two agricultural zoning designations: *Limited Agricultural Use Regulations* (A70) and *General*
4 *Agricultural Use Regulations* (A72) that apply to land on which project infrastructure is located. The
5 project would not conflict with these zoning designations (County of San Diego 2017).

6
7 **City of San Diego General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.** The City of San Diego’s General Plan
8 characterizes agricultural lands as rural, very low-density areas where dairies; horticulture nurseries and
9 greenhouses; raising and harvesting of crops; raising, maintaining and keeping of animals; separately
10 regulated agriculture uses; and single dwelling units may be present. The General Plan does not identify
11 any specific agricultural goals or policies that appear inconsistent with the proposed project (City of San
12 Diego 2008). The AR and *Agricultural-General* (AG) zones in San Diego’s municipal zoning ordinance
13 permit a range of agricultural uses and some limited nonagricultural uses. The AR zone permits
14 agricultural activities in conjunction with limited, low-density residential use (City of San Diego 2017).
15 As discussed in 5.2.1, Environmental Setting, existing power lines that are part of the proposed project are
16 located on AR-zoned land.

17
18 **Community Plan for City of Del Mar and Zoning Ordinance.** The City of Del Mar’s Community Plan
19 and Zoning Ordinance establish a framework of policies, objectives, and land use designations to guide
20 long-term development. The Community Plan does not include any specific goals or policies related to
21 agriculture, nor are any provisions regulating agricultural zones relevant to the proposed project included
22 within Del Mar’s zoning ordinance (City of Del Mar 1976, 2017).

23 24 **5.2.3 Environmental Impacts and Assessment**

25 **Applicant Proposed Measures**

26
27 The applicant has not identified any applicant-proposed measures (APMs) specific to agriculture and
28 forestry resources to minimize or avoid impacts. Implementation of APM BIO-5, discussed under b),
29 below, would further reduce the magnitude of less-than-significant construction effects by minimizing
30 potential conflicts with land zoned for agricultural use.

31 **Significance Criteria**

32
33 Table 5.2-1 presents the significance criteria from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines used to evaluate
34 potential impacts related to agriculture and forest resources. Project construction and
35 maintenance/operations phases are considered in the analyses, with the level of analytical detail
36 commensurate with the project’s potential to result in adverse physical changes to the environment. No
37 agricultural forest land exists along project alignments. Thus, criteria (c) and (d) are not discussed further.

Table 5.2-1 Agriculture and Forest 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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)) or timberland (as defined in 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 forest land or conversion of forest land 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 forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

1 **a. Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide**
2 **Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and**
3 **Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?**
4

5 The proposed project would not convert *Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide*
6 *Importance* to non-farmland use; therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion.

7
8 **Significance: No Impact.**
9

10 **b. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?**
11

12 The proposed project would result in modification and removal of utility infrastructure along the existing
13 69-kV TL666D and TL674A alignments, as well as a portion of the 12-kV C738 alignment. Construction
14 activities would entail removal of utility poles, topping of existing poles, trenching and undergrounding
15 segments of these power lines, as well as decommissioning service on TL666D upon project completion.
16 Most construction would be carried out within SDG&E’s existing rights-of-way or within the franchise
17 portion (i.e., spaces not subject to zoning) of the city of Del Mar and city of San Diego streets.
18

19 Where project activities would occur on land zoned AR, the project would not to conflict with or preclude
20 agricultural uses on AR zoned land. It is noted that, while AR zone expressly permits farming, no
21 cultivation or grazing currently occurs on the 1.2 miles of land with this zoning designation in the project

1 area, nor would implementation of the proposed project preclude farming uses on these lands in the
2 future.

3
4 Per **APM BIO-5**, all areas disturbed as a result of project construction would be re-contoured and
5 restored to original conditions. Operation and maintenance of the circuitry would not convert Farmland to
6 non-agricultural or forest land to non-forest use. Finally, the proposed project would not affect any
7 Williamson Act contract lands and, no impacts to agriculture and forest resources would occur.

8
9 **Significance: No Impact.**

10
11 *c. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in*
12 *Public Resources Code section 12220(g)) or timberland (as defined in Public Resources Code*
13 *section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code*
14 *section 51104(g))?*

15
16 Construction and operation of the proposed project would not conflict with any land designated for
17 forestry or timberland use; therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion.

18
19 **Significance: No Impact.**

20
21 *d. Would the project result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?*

22
23 Construction and operation of the proposed project would not conflict with any land designated for
24 forestry or timberland use; therefore, no impact would occur under this criterion.

25
26 **Significance: No Impact.**

27
28 *e. Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or*
29 *nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land*
30 *to non-forest use?*

31
32 For reasons stated in responses a) and b) above, the proposed project's construction, operation, and
33 maintenance would result in no impacts to farmland or timberland.

34
35 **Significance: No Impact.**

36
37 **References**

38 California Department of Conservation (DOC). 2004. A Guide to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring
39 Program. 2004 Edition. Sacramento, CA. Prepared by the Division of Land Resource Protection,
40 Sacramento, CA. http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp/Documents/fmmp_guide_2004.pdf.
41 Accessed January 16, 2018.

42
43 City of Del Mar. 2017. City of Del Mar Municipal Code.
44 https://library.municode.com/ca/del_mar/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT30ZO. Accessed
45 January 16, 2018.

46
47 _____ . 1976. The Community Plan for the City of Del Mar, California.
48 <https://www.delmar.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/250>. Accessed January 16, 2018.

- 1 City of San Diego. 2008. City of San Diego General Plan.
2 <https://www.sandiego.gov/planning/genplan/genplan>. Accessed January 16, 2018.
3
4 _____ . 2017. City of San Diego Municipal Code. [https://www.sandiego.gov/city-](https://www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/legisdocs/muni)
5 [clerk/officialdocs/legisdocs/muni](https://www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/legisdocs/muni). Accessed January 16, 2018.
6
7 County of San Diego. 2011. County of San Diego General Plan.
8 <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/pds/generalplan.html>. Accessed January 16, 2018.
9
10 _____ . 2017. San Diego Zoning Ordinance.
11 <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/zoning.html>. Accessed January 16, 2018.
12
13 _____ . Not dated. Policy Number I-38: Agricultural Preserves.
14 <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/cob/docs/policy/I-38.pdf>. Accessed January 16, 2018.
15
16 County of San Diego Department of Weights and Measures. 2015. 2015 County of San Diego Crop
17 Statistics and Annual Report.
18 <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/awm/docs/2015%20Crop%20Report%20.pdf> .
19 Accessed February 22, 2019.