

D.14 Agriculture

D.14.1 Environmental Setting

The California Department of Conservation established the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) in 1982 to assess the location, quantity, and quality of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands to other uses. FMMP data are used in elements of some county and city general plans and associated environmental documents as a way of assessing project impacts on Prime Farmland and in regional studies for assessing impacts due to agricultural land conversion.

The Division of Land Resource Protection of the California Department of Conservation classifies the most important statewide farmland categories as follows:

- Prime Farmland (**P**): Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Namely the lands so classified have the soils qualities, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. In addition, in order to receive a **P** designation the land must have been irrigated at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date
- Farmland of Statewide Importance (**S**): Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. **S** land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date
- Unique Farmland (**U**): Farmland of lesser quality soils that must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. **U** land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards

Collectively, these important farmland categories are monitored in 10 acre minimum units by the FMMP statewide utilizing combinations of modern United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) soils surveys and existing land use observations recorded during even numbered years.

In addition to the three most important statewide farmland categories, the following classifications are also utilized by the California Department of Conservation:

- Farmland of Local Importance
- Grazing Land
- Urban and Built-up Land
- Other Lands

D.14.1.1 Valley-Ivyglen 115 kV Subtransmission Line

The project area and surrounding region (Figure D.14-1) includes farm and grazing lands. The proposed subtransmission line runs primarily through Grazing Land and other Urban or undesignated lands and also crosses 1.1 miles of Prime or Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The route crosses small areas of land designated Farmland of Local Importance and one short segment of Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Valley and Ivyglen substations are not located on agricultural land.

D.14.1.2 Telecommunications System

The telecommunications system infrastructure would follow the proposed subtransmission line route with the exception of portions of the line that would be installed in underground conduits near the Valley, Ivyglen, and proposed Fogarty Substations. Therefore, the environmental setting for the telecommunications system mirrors that of the proposed subtransmission line with respect to Agriculture.

D.14.1.3 Fogarty Substation

The Project site does not contain Prime or Unique Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance as recorded by FMMP survey mapping of the area last concluded in 2004. The closest ranked important farmland category (Unique Farmland) to the site lies approximately 250 feet east of the site. It coincides with local tributary valley-bottom terrain that is connected with the nearly level terrain of the un-named intermittent southeasterly blue-line stream course that drains Walker Canyon.

The United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute Elsinore, California topographic map sheet (1953 edition) showed that the site was covered with scrub and that water resources improvements consisting of a windmill, a water reservoir, and a channeled drainage course in Walker Canyon were located 4,000 feet easterly of the Project site. The 1988 aerial photograph-revised 7.5-minute Elsinore map sheet showed that the project site had been cleared of scrub vegetation, and a second water reservoir had been added in the Walker Canyon area approximately 3,500 feet easterly of the site.

The USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS, formerly the Soil Conservation Service (SCS)) and other State agencies have mapped soils within Western Riverside County (soil types are discussed in Section D.6 Geology, Soils, and Paleontology based on soils associations and series mapped by the USDA, SCS, 1971, in cooperation with the University of California Agricultural Experiment Station). In general, the soils associations mapped in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Fogarty Substation in western Riverside County are comprised of the Hanford-Tujunga-Greenfield and Cajalco-Temesca-Las Posas associations. More specifically, the soils units mapped on the project site and the project area consist of Placentia fine sandy loams (P1D) and Altamont cobbly clays (AbF).

The western and northern sides of the project site are fringed with P1D soils that transition onsite to AbF soils in the middle and western portions of the site. P1D (Placentia) soils occupy 2-15% slopes and are characteristically underlain by clay subsoils at depths of 10 inches. As a consequence soil permeability is rated as slow to very slow such that runoff may pose an erosion hazard. The soil type carries a Capability Classification of IVE-3 when irrigated. Because of clay layers at shallow depths, the suitability of the potential range of crops that can be productively grown on them is limited. Poor soil permeability hinders the use of the soil for avocados and other tree crops. Suitable dry-farmed crops include small grains and forage crops. AbF soils consist of moderately deep to very deep well-drained clays. The soil type also carries a Capability Classification of IVE-5 when irrigated. The better-drained AbF soils are typically used for dry-farmed grain, annual pasture, and citrus, and for irrigated alfalfa within the areas containing the soil type. Under the NRCS soils Capability Classification, both the above soils types possess a lower intermediate (IVE) Capability Classification, even when irrigated.

Insert 1 of 2

Figure D.14-1 Agricultural Resources

**CLICK HERE TO
VIEW FIGURE**

Insert 2 of 2

Figure D.14-1 Agricultural Resources

D.14.1.4 Valley-Ivyglen Substation Improvements

The Valley and Ivyglen Substations are not located on agricultural land, but there are two agricultural preserves,¹ also known as Williamson Act lands, near the Valley Substation and the Ivyglen Substation.

- Perris Valley #6 (Figure D.14-1)
- Glen Ivy #1 (Figure D.14-1)

The Perris Valley #6 preserve is in the area of the Valley Substation but is more than 0.75 miles north of the proposed subtransmission line. The Glen Ivy #1 preserve includes the entirety of the Glen Ivy community that lies immediately southeast of the Ivyglen Substation and the termination of the proposed subtransmission line (County of Riverside 2006). Site visits have revealed that none of the lands in the surrounding area are currently cultivated for active farming and that the primary use of these non-urbanized lands is grazing.

D.14.2 Applicable Regulations, Plans, and Standards

D.14.2.1 Federal

There are no Federal regulations applicable to the Project with respect to agriculture.

D.14.2.2 State

Regulations for the protection of important farmland are primarily implemented at the county and city levels, including the Williamson Act, the State's principal agricultural land protection program. The objectives of the Agricultural Preserve Program, as provided by the California Land Conservation Act of 1965 or the Williamson Act, is to protect agricultural lands for continued production of food by allowing landowners to voluntarily contract their land for agricultural production for ten to twenty year periods. There are no Williamson Act lands affected by the Project.

D.14.2.3 Regional and Local

The Applicant intends to develop facility designs that are compatible with local zoning; however, the Project is exempt from local land use and zoning regulations and permitting.

County of Riverside

The following policies apply to properties designated as agriculture on the General Plan and area plan land use maps.

LU 16.4: Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural lands for high-value crop production.

LU 16.5: Continue to participate in the California Land Conservation Act (the Williamson Act) of 1965.

¹ An agricultural preserve is established by landowner request. The objective is the long term use of the land for agricultural purposes. The primary incentive for the landowner is to reduce current and/or future property taxes since the land will be reassessed on the basis of the agricultural income producing capability when a landowner enters into a contract with the county. This assures the landowner that property valuations and taxes will remain at generally low levels.

LU 16.6: Require consideration of State agricultural land classification specifications when a 2-year Agriculture Foundation amendment to the General Plan is reviewed that would result in a shift from an agricultural to a non-agricultural use.

Chapter 12.16 of the Riverside County Zoning Code provides the regulatory framework for agricultural preserves. In Section 12.16.030(A) a list of compatible uses is provided and includes:

Gas, electric, water and communication utility facilities, and public service facilities of like nature operated by a public agency or mutual water company

City of Lake Elsinore

The City of Lake Elsinore General Plan contains objectives and policies in the Open Space/Conservation Element to encourage the conservation of agricultural lands, but no specific implementation measures are listed to identify as applicable regulations, plans, or standards. The Project does not cross or border any agricultural preserve land within the City of Lake Elsinore.

City of Perris

The City of Perris Zoning Ordinance Chapter 19.74 contains policies for the designation of appropriate lands as Agricultural Preserves, pursuant to the Williamson Act. No Williamson Act lands are affected by the Project. The City of Perris General Plan Land Use Element does not contain any applicable plans or standards encouraging the conservation of agriculture, so the zoning ordinance cited above is the most relevant to the Project, although not applicable. The Project would not cross or border any agricultural preserve land within the City of Perris.

D.14.3 Project Impacts and Mitigation

D.14.3.1 Significance Criteria

For the purposes of the following evaluation, the project would cause a significant impact on agriculture if it would:

According to CEQA significance criteria, the project would result in a significant impact if it would:

- Convert prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance, to nonagricultural use
- Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract
- Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use

Potential impacts are discussed according to the significance criteria above. Each impact is categorized according to the following classifications:

Class III – Less than significant impact without mitigation measures

Class II – Less than significant impact after mitigation measures are implemented

Class I – Significant impact and no feasible mitigation measures are available

D.14.3.2 Applicant-Proposed Measures

AG-SCE-1: The Applicant will coordinate construction schedules with landowners to ensure that construction and maintenance do not interfere with grazing operations on agricultural lands.

D.14.3.3 Impact Analysis in order of Significance Criteria

Figure D.14-1 illustrates the project route and surrounding Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Farmland of Local importance. Refer to D.14.1, Environmental Setting, for definitions of these agricultural lands.

Impact AG-1: Designated Farmland

The proposed subtransmission line and associated telecommunications system would cross approximately one mile of land designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Approximately 3 acres of designated agricultural lands would be disturbed due to the installation of new poles as identified below Table D.14-1. In addition, about 12 acres of agricultural lands would be developed for access roads to these poles. Therefore, the Project would impact a total of 15 acres of designated agriculture. The new roads are not expected to have a significant impact because the total number of acres that would be developed only represent approximately 0.03% of the 180,178 acres of lands designated agricultural in Riverside County. Therefore, there would be no significant impact on state-designated farmlands (Class III).

Table D.14-1 Estimated Disturbed Farmland (As designated by California Department of Conservation)

	Subtransmission Line Segment	Length of Line (feet)	Number of Poles	Area Disturbed by Poles (acres)
Prime Farmland	E-1	259	1	0.01
Unique Farmland	W-1, W-4	1,851	8	0.10
Farmland of Statewide Importance	E-1	3,695	18	0.23
Farmland of Local Importance	E-1, C-1, C-3, C-4, C-6, W-1, W-4, W-10	37,321	183	2.38
Total Farmland Disturbed		43,126	210	2.72

Source: MHA 2006

Fogarty Substation and Valley-Ivyglen Substation Improvements

Construction of the Fogarty Substation and Valley and Ivyglen Substation improvements would not convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide and Local Importance to nonagricultural use and therefore would have no impact (Class III).

Impact AG-2: Williamson Act Lands

The project would not cross any agricultural lands currently under Williamson Act contract (Department of Conservation 2002). Although the Valley and Ivyglen Substations are near Williamson Act lands as described above, they are far enough away to have no impact whatsoever on the continued use and productivity of those lands. Therefore, there would be no impact related to existing zoning and Williamson Act lands (Class III).

Impact AG-3: Other Farmland Considerations

The proposed subtransmission line route was examined to determine if the Project could result in the division of farmland, such that the future viability of that land for agricultural activities could be jeopardized. The farmlands over which the proposed subtransmission line would be constructed are limited to grazing lands. A minor amount of land would be disturbed by the proposed subtransmission line, primarily for new access roads. The ability to successfully use the land for its current function for grazing would not be impeded or diminished because there would be no physical barrier to limit the free movement of cattle and other livestock from one side of the proposed subtransmission line to the other. Further, there would be no impediments to the movement of farm equipment from one side of the proposed subtransmission line to the other. Therefore, there would be no impact related to conflicts with existing farmland (Class III).

D.14.4 Cumulative

There is currently 180,178 acres of farmland within Riverside County. The County is experiencing rapid urban growth and as a result the number of acres of farmland is shrinking. The Project would only impact 2.72 acres of prime agricultural lands. However, given the rapid loss of agricultural lands in the County due to general urban growth and the County's policy to preserve prime agricultural lands, the Project is considered to have a significant contribution to cumulative agricultural impacts in the County.