

## 4.2 Agriculture and Forestry Resources

This section describes the environmental and regulatory settings and discusses potential impacts associated with construction and operation of the the proposed Valley-Ivyglen 115-kilovolt (kV) Subtransmission Line Project (proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project) and the proposed Alberhill System Project (proposed Alberhill Project) with respect to agriculture and forestry resources. During scoping, commenters expressed concern that the proposed projects could conflict with land use and zoning designations that support agricultural uses. The impact on agricultural land use is addressed in this section. These projects are currently being proposed by Southern California Edison (SCE, or the applicant).

A total of three microwave antennas would be installed on existing structures at the Santiago Peak Communication Site in the US Forest Service Cleveland National Forest as well as at the Serrano Substation in the City of Orange as part of the proposed Alberhill Project. The Santiago Peak Communication Site and Serrano Substation are not designated or zoned for agricultural or forestry use and would have no impact on agriculture or forestry. Therefore, these components of the proposed Alberhill Project are not discussed further in this section.

No components of the proposed projects would be constructed or operated on land zoned for or defined as forest land or timberland or within a Timberland Production Zone (City of Perris 2005; City of Orange 2010; City of Lake Elsinore 2011; City of Menifee 2013; County of Riverside 2014a, 2014b; Google Earth 2014). Therefore, impacts to forest land, timberland, and Timberland Production Zones are not discussed further.

### 4.2.1 Environmental Setting

#### 4.2.1.1 Definitions

The California Department of Conservation (CDC) maintains the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which monitors and rates agricultural resources. The FMMP categorizes *agricultural land* into one of the following five classifications (CDC 2015):

- *Prime Farmland* has the ideal physical and chemical composition for crop production. It has been used for irrigated production in the four years prior to classification and is capable of producing sustained yields.
- *Farmland of Statewide Importance* has also been used for irrigated production in the four years prior to classification and is only slightly poorer quality than Prime Farmland.
- *Unique Farmland* has been cropped in the four years prior to classification and does not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance but has produced specific crops with high economic value.
- *Farmland of Local Importance* encompasses farmland that does not meet the criteria for the previous three categories. These may lack irrigation, produce major crops, be zoned as agricultural, and/or support dairy.
- *Grazing Land* has vegetation that is suitable for grazing livestock.

1 For the purpose of CEQA, *Farmland* includes land classified by the FMMP as Prime Farmland,  
2 Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland. FMMP classifications are based on soil  
3 quality and irrigation status and are used as part of its neutral reporting program that classifies land based  
4 on its suitability for agriculture (CDC 2015). Riverside County contains 539,830 acres of *agricultural*  
5 *land* and 196,568 acres of Farmland (CDC 2010, 2012a).

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7 The FMMP uses three additional categories to track changes in land use over time: “urban and built-up  
8 land,” “other land,” and “land committed to nonagricultural use.” (CDC 2015)

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10 FMMP classifications differ from general plan and zoning designations in that they are used to evaluate  
11 farmland by type and acreage, rather than to designate appropriate sites for particular land uses and  
12 regulate use and development.

#### 13 14 **4.2.1.2 Setting**

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16 In 2013, about 220,109 acres of Riverside County were planted for agricultural production, which  
17 included citrus, trees, vines, vegetables, melons, field and seed, nursery, and miscellaneous crops.  
18 Riverside County ranked thirteenth in the state of California for total value of agricultural production  
19 (Riverside County Farm Bureau 2013). There are approximately 196,568 acres of designated Farmland in  
20 Riverside County (CDC 2012a).

### 21 22 **4.2.2 Regulatory Setting**

#### 23 24 **4.2.2.1 Federal**

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26 No federal regulations or polices regarding agriculture and forestry are applicable to the proposed  
27 projects.

#### 28 29 **4.2.2.2 State**

##### 30 31 ***California Land Conservation Act of 1965***

32 The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the “Williamson Act,” enables  
33 local governments to enter into ongoing, minimum 10-year contracts with private landowners for the  
34 purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or compatible uses. In return, restricted  
35 parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual uses, farming uses, and  
36 open space uses, as opposed to potential market value.

#### 37 38 **4.2.2.3 Regional and Local**

##### 39 40 ***Riverside County***

41 The following policies apply to properties designated for agriculture use in the Riverside County General  
42 Plan land use maps (County of Riverside 2014a):

- 43  
44 • ***LU 16.1:*** *Encourage retaining agriculturally designated lands where agricultural activity can be*  
45 *sustained at an operational scale, where it accommodates lifestyle choice, and in locations*  
46 *where impacts to and from potentially incompatible uses, such as residential uses, are*  
47 *minimized, through incentives such as tax credits.*

- 1 • **LU 16.2:** *Protect agricultural uses, including those with industrial characteristics (dairies,*  
2 *poultry, hog farms, etc.) by discouraging inappropriate land division in the immediate proximity*  
3 *and allowing only uses and intensities that are compatible with agricultural uses. (AI 3)*
- 4 • **LU 16.4:** *Encourage conservation of productive agricultural lands. Preserve prime agricultural*  
5 *lands for high-value crop production.*
- 6 • **LU 16.5:** *Continue to participate in the California Land Conservation Act (the Williamson Act)*  
7 *of 1965.*

### 8 **City of Lake Elsinore**

9 The City of Lake Elsinore General Plan identifies agricultural land as a biological resource but provides  
10 no regulations, plans, or standards for their governance (City of Lake Elsinore 2011).

### 11 **City of Perris**

12 City of Perris Zoning Ordinance Chapter 19.74 establishes policies for the designation of land as  
13 Agricultural Preserves, pursuant to the Williamson Act (City of Perris 1997). The City of Perris General  
14 Plan Land Use Element does not contain applicable plans or standards encouraging the conservation of  
15 agriculture, it only mentions that conversion to other uses could enhance the local economy (City of  
16 Perris 2005).

### 17 **City of Menifee**

18 City of Menifee General Plan Open Space Conservation goal OSC-6 states that the city will protect  
19 existing agricultural land to maintain the presence of long-term production in the city (City of Menifee  
20 2013).

### 21 **City of Wildomar**

22 At the time of preparation of this document, the City of Wildomar had not adopted a general plan.  
23 Wildomar was incorporated in 2008 and adopted all County of Riverside ordinances at that time. County  
24 ordinances remain in effect until the city enacts ordinances to supersede them. Policies listed above under  
25 the Riverside County General Plan as applicable to the proposed Alberhill Project also apply to the City  
26 of Wildomar. No components of the Valley-Ivyglen Project are located within the City of Wildomar.

## 27 **4.2.3 Methodology and Significance Criteria**

28 The environmental impacts analysis presented in this section consider whether the proposed projects  
29 would result in impacts, in terms of acres temporarily or permanently disturbed, on Prime Farmland,  
30 Unique Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or forest or timberlands. GIS software was used to  
31 identify where areas of proposed project disturbance would occur on Farmland. Potential impacts were  
32 evaluated according to the following significance criteria based on the checklist items presented in  
33 Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. The proposed projects  
34 would cause a significant impact on agricultural or forest resources if they would:

- 35 a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as  
36 shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to non-  
37 agricultural use;

- 1 b) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could  
2 result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-  
3 forest use.  
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5 Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines also includes the following checklist items:  
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- 7 • Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract; or  
8 • Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public  
9 Resources Code section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section  
10 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section  
11 51104[g]); or  
12 • Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.  
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14 As previously discussed, the proposed projects would not traverse any lands zoned for agricultural use or  
15 that are under a Williamson Act contract, and no components of the proposed projects would be  
16 constructed or operated on land zoned for or defined as forest land or timberland or within a Timberland  
17 Production Zone. Therefore, these CEQA checklist items are not applied as criteria in the analysis of  
18 environmental impacts presented in the following section.  
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#### 20 **4.2.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures (Valley-Ivyglen Project)**

##### 21 **4.2.4.1 Project Commitments (Valley-Ivyglen Project)**

22 The applicant has committed to the following as part of the design of the proposed projects. See Section  
23 2.6, "Project Commitments," for a complete description of each project commitment.  
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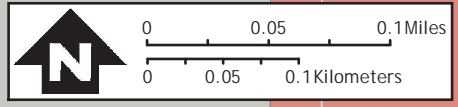
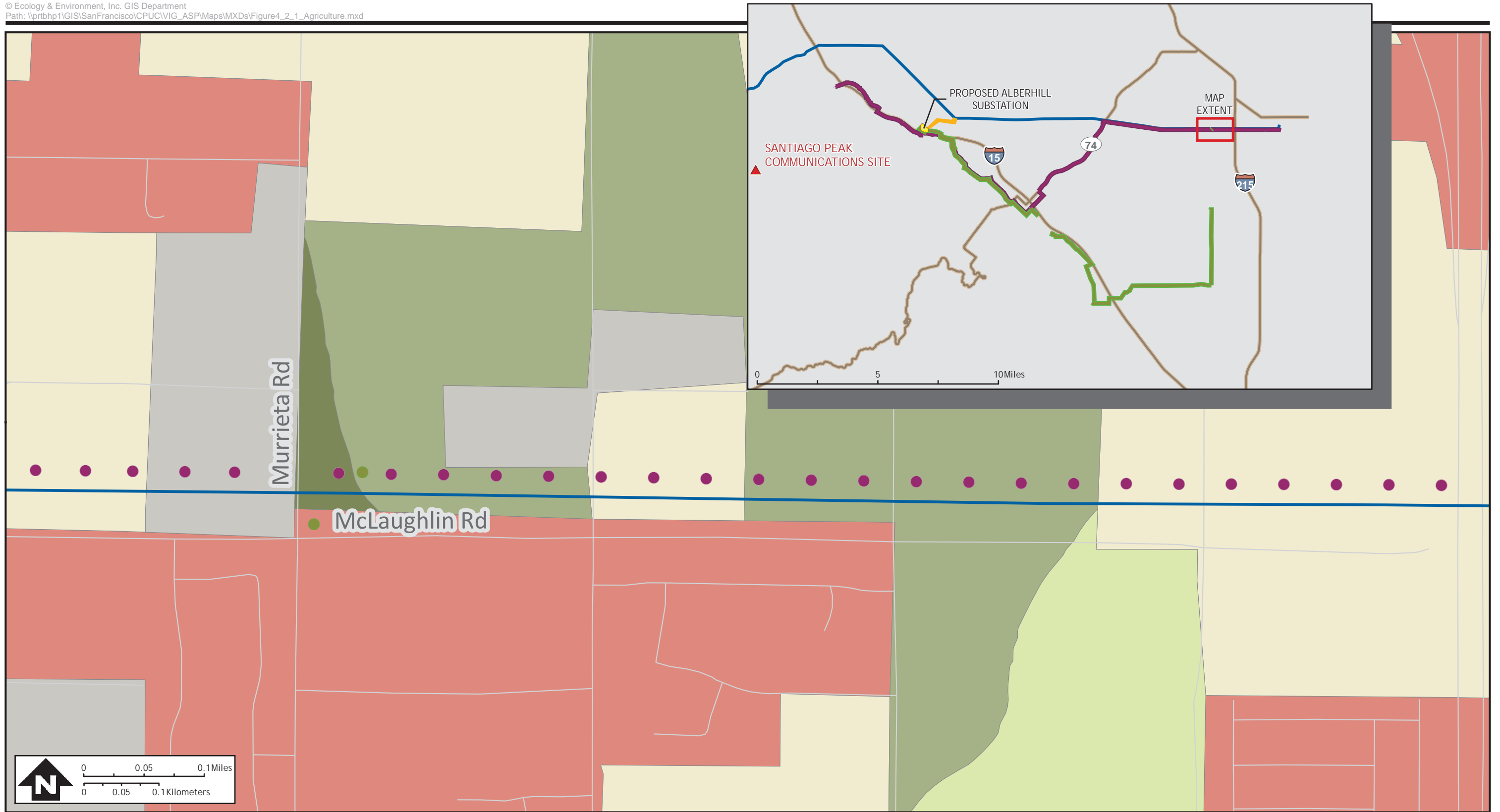
- 25 • **Project Commitment I: Agricultural Uses:** Existing agricultural and grazing uses within the  
26 existing and proposed ROW areas shall be allowed to continue during operation of the proposed  
27 projects. In addition, the applicant shall coordinate construction and maintenance activities with  
28 agricultural landowners to avoid interference with grazing and agricultural activities unless such  
29 coordination is not possible due to emergency circumstances.  
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##### 32 **4.2.4.2 Impacts Analysis (Valley-Ivyglen Project)**

33 **Impact AG-1 (VIG): Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide**  
34 **Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the**  
35 **FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.**  
36 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*  
37

##### 38 **Construction**

39 Construction activities would temporarily impact about 2.40 acres of Farmland, as shown in Figure 4.2-1  
40 and detailed in Table 4.2-1. The temporary disturbance of Farmland would not occur all at once, would  
41 not occur during the entire construction period, and would not result in permanent conversion of  
42 Farmland to non-agricultural use. Impacts would be less than significant.  
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Source: California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program 2012, ESRI 2010, SCE 2011, 2013

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|---------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|
| ● Valley-Ivyglen Poles          | — Proposed 500-kV transmission lines      | California Farmland Mapping & Monitoring Program Designation | ■ Unique Farmland              |
| ● Alberhill Poles               | — 500-kV Serrano Valley Transmission Line | ■ Prime Farmland   | ■ Farmland of Local Importance |
| ■ Proposed Alberhill Substation |   | ■ Farmland of Statewide Importance                           | ■ Urban and Built-Up Land      |
|                                 |   |  | ■ Other Land                   |

Figure 4.2-1  
 Farmland Impacted by  
 the Proposed Projects  
 Alberhill and Valley-Ivyglen Projects  
 Riverside County, California

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**Table 4.2-1 Estimated Valley-Ivyglen Farmland Disturbance**

Farmland Type	New 115-kV Structures	Temporary Valley-Ivyglen Disturbance Area <sup>1</sup>	Permanent Area Disturbed by New Structures <sup>2</sup>
Prime Farmland	1 structure	0.20 acres	0.05 acres
Farmland of Statewide Importance	11 structures	2.20 acres	0.55 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 structures</b>	<b>2.40 acres</b>	<b>0.60 acres</b>

Sources: CDC 2012b; CPUC 2009; SCE 2013, 2014

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Temporary disturbance area was estimated based on the Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV Disturbance Area (refer to disturbance areas in Table 2-5). GIS software was used to compute where this would overlap with Farmland as specified by Riverside County FMMP data (CDC 2012b); the permanent area disturbed by new structures within the Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV General Disturbance Area was excluded from this acreage.
- <sup>2</sup> Permanent disturbance area was estimated based on the permanent disturbance areas described in the Project Description (Table 2-5). To be conservative, it was assumed all poles would be TSPs and that their entire permanent disturbance area would be located within Farmland. It is likely that impacts would be less than that listed in this table. GIS software was used to compute where the proposed 115-kV structures would overlap with Farmland as specified by Riverside County FMMP data (CDC 2012b).

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### **Operation and Maintenance**

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The proposed Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV subtransmission line structures would permanently disturb a combined total of about 0.60 acres of Farmland (Figure 4.2-1 and Table 4.2-1). This area would be negligible (0.000003 percent) compared to the total amount of Farmland in Riverside County (196,568 acres). Impacts under this criterion would be less than significant. Additionally, the applicant would allow existing agricultural uses to continue during operation of the proposed Valley-Ivyglen Project and coordinate maintenance with agricultural landowners (Project Commitment I). Impacts under this criterion during operation and maintenance would remain less than significant.

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**Impact AG-2 (VIG): 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.**

*NO IMPACT*

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Removal of the ability to access or irrigate crops and orchards could effectively render formerly productive farmland unusable, resulting in the conversion of farmland to a non-agricultural use. There are no long-term restrictions to land access planned during construction or operation. There would be no impact.

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As stated above, there is no overlap between the proposed project area and land defined as Forest Land.

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## **4.2.5 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures (Alberhill Project)**

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### **4.2.5.1 Project Commitments (Alberhill Project)**

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The applicant has committed to the following as part of the design of the proposed projects. See Section 2.6, "Project Commitments," for a complete description of each project commitment.

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- **Project Commitment I: Agricultural Uses:** Existing agricultural and grazing uses within the existing and proposed ROW areas shall be allowed to continue during operation of the proposed projects. In addition, the applicant shall coordinate construction and maintenance activities with

1 agricultural landowners to avoid interference with grazing and agricultural activities unless such  
2 coordination is not possible due to emergency circumstances.

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4 **4.2.5.2 Impacts Analysis (Alberhill Project)**

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6 **Impact AG-1 (ASP): Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide**  
7 **Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the**  
8 **FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.**  
9 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*

10 **Construction**

11 Construction activities would temporarily impact about 0.69 acres of Farmland, as shown in Figure 4.2-1  
12 and detailed in Table 4.2-2. The temporary disturbance of Farmland would not occur all at once, would  
13 not occur during the entire construction period, and would not result in permanent conversion of  
14 Farmland to non-agricultural use. Impacts would be less than significant. Additionally, as detailed in  
15 Project Commitment I, the applicant would coordinate construction with agricultural landowners to avoid  
16 interference with grazing and agricultural activities, which would further reduce impacts. Therefore,  
17 impacts from construction of the proposed Alberhill Project would remain less than significant.  
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**Table 4.2-2 Estimated Alberhill Project Farmland Disturbance**

Farmland Type	New 115-kV Structures	Temporary Alberhill Project Disturbance Area <sup>1</sup>	Permanent Area Disturbed by New Structures <sup>2</sup>
Farmland of Statewide Importance	1 structure	0.69 acres	0.05 acres
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 structure</b>	<b>0.69 acres</b>	<b>0.05 acres</b>

Sources: CDC 2012b; SCE 2013, 2014

Notes:

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- 1 <sup>1</sup> Temporary disturbance area was estimated based on the Alberhill System Project Disturbance Area (refer to disturbance areas in Table 2-5). GIS software was used to compute where this would overlap with Farmland as specified by Riverside County FMMP data (CDC 2012b); the permanent area disturbed by new structures within the Valley-Ivyglen 115-kV General Disturbance Area was excluded from this acreage.
  - 2 <sup>2</sup> Permanent disturbance area was estimated based on the permanent disturbance areas described in the Project Description (Table 2-5). To be conservative, it was assumed the poles would be a TSP and that its entire permanent disturbance area would be located within Farmland. It is likely that impacts would be less than that listed in this table. GIS software was used to compute where the proposed 115-kV structures would overlap with Farmland as specified by Riverside County FMMP data (CDC 2012b).

21 **Operation and Maintenance**

22 One proposed Alberhill Project structure would permanently disturb a combined total of about 0.05 acres  
23 of Farmland (Figure 4.2-1 and Table 4.2-2). This small area would be negligible (0.0000003 percent)  
24 compared to the total amount of Farmland in Riverside County (196,568 acres). Impacts under this  
25 criterion would be less than significant. Additionally, the applicant would allow existing agricultural uses  
26 to continue during operation of the proposed Alberhill Project and coordinate maintenance with  
27 agricultural landowners (Project Commitment I). Impacts under this criterion during operation and  
28 maintenance would remain less than significant.

1 **Impact AG-2 (ASP): Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their**  
2 **location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-**  
3 **agricultural use or conversion of Forest Land to non-forest use.**  
4 *LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT*  
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6 Removal of the ability to access or irrigate crops and orchards could effectively render formerly  
7 productive farmland unusable, resulting in the conversion of farmland to a non-agricultural use. An  
8 agricultural water pipeline, owned and operated by the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, crosses  
9 the proposed Alberhill Substation site. Currently, the water line is not in use. If needed, it is available for  
10 local agricultural and industrial uses. The pipeline would be relocated to the perimeter of the proposed  
11 substation site prior to construction of the substation. The Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District  
12 anticipates that the line would be out of service for one workday, approximately eight hours, and no more  
13 than two days (Baiyasi 2011). Even if the line is in use during its relocation, a temporary two-day  
14 interruption of service would not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. There are  
15 no other planned long-term restrictions to land access planned during construction or operation. There  
16 would be no impact.  
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18 As stated above, there is no overlap between the proposed project area and land defined as Forest Land.  
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22 information.

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