

## 5.2 Agriculture and Forest Resources

### 5.2.1 Environmental Setting

Agricultural uses are the predominant land use in the vicinity of the proposed project area, with low density residential and commercial uses dispersed throughout. Public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lies near the western portion of the proposed project area. Agricultural land uses contribute to the rural character of Shasta County and are considered a major component of the County's resource base (Shasta County 2004). Within the proposed project area, agricultural uses are primarily small scale and include orchards, pastures, and grazing lands. The proposed project would traverse adjacent to agricultural areas that are classified as Grazing Land, Farmland of Local Importance, Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland (CDC 2016). There is no zoned forest land in the proposed project area.

### 5.2.2 Regulatory Setting

#### Federal

**Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981.** Enacted by Congress to protect farmland, this act (Public Law 97-98, Title XV, Subtitle I § 1539-1549) is intended to minimize unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses by federal programs. Projects are subject to the Farmland Protection Policy Act if they may irreversibly convert farmland to nonagricultural use. The Farmland Protection Policy Act is not applicable to the proposed project since the proposed project would not result in the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses.

#### State

**California Land Conservation Act of 1965.** Commonly referred to as the "Williamson Act," this state policy (California Code, Chapter 7 § 51200-51297.4) enables local governments to enter into ongoing, minimum 10-year contracts with private landowners to restrict specific parcels of land to agricultural or compatible uses. Shasta County regulations require a minimum of 100 acres for Williamson Act contracts (Shasta County 2004). The Williamson Act is not applicable to the proposed project since the proposed project would not convert agricultural or open space lands to urban uses; furthermore, the proposed project area is not located within areas eligible for Williamson Act contracts.

**Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program.** Established in 1982 and administered by the California Department of Conservation, the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) provides consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California's agricultural resources. The data provided by the FMMP are intended to inform the land use planning process by providing impartial analysis of agricultural land use and change in California. The following Important Farmland Map Categories are applicable to the proposed project area:

- **Prime Farmland:** Land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production, including the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance:** Land similar to Prime Farmland, but with minor shortcomings (e.g., greater slopes, less ability to store soil moisture, etc.). Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

- Unique Farmland: Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date. (CDC 2004)

## Local

**Shasta County General Plan.** The Agricultural Lands element of the Shasta County General Plan describes contributions of agricultural lands to the County; characteristics of farms; farm operators, agricultural areas, and commodities; potential conflicts between agricultural and rural residential uses; and a framework for minimum agricultural parcel sizes. The General Plan outlines the following objectives, which are applicable to the proposed project because there is land zoned light agricultural in the proposed project area.

- *AG-1 Preservation of agricultural lands at a size capable of supporting full-time agricultural operations to allow the continuation of such uses and to provide opportunities for the future expansion or establishment of such uses.*
- *AG-2 Preservation of agricultural lands at a size capable of supporting part-time or second income, but not full-time, agricultural operations to allow the continuation of such uses and to provide opportunities for the future expansion or establishment of such uses.*
- *AG-3 Recognition by Shasta County residents that the preservation lands for agricultural uses, both large and small scale, is in the public interest because it preserves local and regional food supplies and is an important contributing industry to the Shasta County economy.*
- *AG-4 Recognition by Shasta County residents that preservation of agricultural lands, both large- and small-scale, provides privately maintained open-space, facilitates a rural lifestyle, and requires Countywide understanding of the problems facing ranchers and farmers.*
- *AG-5 Protection of agricultural lands from development pressures or uses which will adversely impact or hinder existing or future agricultural operations.*
- *AG-6 Protection of water resources and supply systems vital for the continuation of agriculture.* (Shasta County 2004)

### 5.2.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The impact analysis below identifies and describes the proposed project’s potential impacts on agriculture and forest resources within the proposed project area. Potential impacts were evaluated according to significance criterion based on the checklist items presented in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and listed at the start of each impact analysis section below. Both the construction and maintenance/operations phases were considered; however, because the construction phase could result in physical changes to the environment, analysis of construction phase effects warranted a more detailed evaluation. There is no zoned forested land in the proposed project area. There would be no impact under criteria (c) or (d), and a detailed discussion is therefore not provided.

#### Applicant Proposed Measures

The applicant has not incorporated APMs into the proposed project to specifically minimize or avoid impacts on agriculture and forest resources; however, APMs proposed from other resource sections, as further described below to further lessen potential impacts. A list of all project APMs is included in Table 4-2 in Chapter 4.

1 **Significance Criteria**

2 Table 5.2-1 describes the significance criteria from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines' agriculture and  
3 forest resources section, which the California Public Utilities Commission used to evaluate the  
4 environmental impacts of the proposed project.  
5

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 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)) 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"/>

6  
7 **a. *Would the project convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide***  
8 ***Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and***  
9 ***Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?***  
10

11 The proposed project area would be located immediately adjacent to Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland,  
12 and Farmland of Statewide Importance. As described in Chapter 4, Project Description, proposed project  
13 components would be installed within the Shasta County ROW and within existing private roadway  
14 easements via directional boring and plowing and trenching. No new staging areas would be required;  
15 staging would occur on existing telecommunications central office properties or at contractors' off-site  
16 yards. Construction would have a small disturbance area associated with each DLC site, but would remain  
17 within the existing ROW. The anticipated surface restoration that would restore disturbed areas along  
18 roadways to their former uses after installation is complete.  
19

20 Ongoing operation and maintenance associated with the new telecommunications network would be  
21 minimal and consist of occasional visits by TDS technicians to the DLC sites. The maintenance  
22 performed during these site visits would not alter the proposed project area. Since the areas disturbed  
23 during construction are within the ROW and would be restored to their former uses after installation is  
24 complete. As a result, the proposed project would not convert agricultural lands to non-agricultural use  
25 and the impact would be less than significant. Implementation of **APM BIO-5**, would further avoid any

1 potential impact because it would require that the applicant avoid any orchards adjacent to the project  
2 alignment during construction.

3  
4 **Significance: Less than significant.**

5  
6 *b. Would the project conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?*  
7

8 The proposed project area is not within areas eligible for Williamson Act contracts. Regardless, there  
9 would be no conflicts with existing zoning regulations for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract  
10 because installations associated with the proposed project would occur within existing road ROWs and  
11 would require encroachment permits from the County. For these reasons, project construction would not  
12 conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract.

13  
14 Operation and maintenance associated with the new telecommunications network would be minimal and  
15 would consist of occasional visits by TDS technicians to the DLC sites. The proposed project would be  
16 located within existing County and private road ROWs. Areas disturbed during construction would be  
17 restored to their former uses and therefore would not conflict with the Shasta County General Plan (see  
18 Section 5.10). As a result, there would be no impact. Implementation of **APM BIO-5**, would further  
19 avoid any potential impact because it would require that the applicant avoid any orchards adjacent to the  
20 project alignment during construction.

21  
22 **Significance: No impact.**

23  
24 *e. Would the project involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or*  
25 *nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land*  
26 *to non-forest use?*  
27

28 The proposed project would not involve other changes in the existing environment that, due to their  
29 location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use. In addition, there is no  
30 zoned forested land in the proposed project area. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any  
31 impacts for conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use  
32 during construction nor operation and maintenance.

33  
34 **Significance: No impact.**

### 35 36 **Mitigation Measures**

37 Because all impacts on agriculture and forest resources for the proposed project would be less than  
38 significant or nonexistent, no mitigation measures are required.  
39