

5. Alternative 1 (No Project/Action): Impacts

As described in Section 1.2.1 (Alternative 1: No Project/Action Alternative), selection of the No Project/Action Alternative would mean that the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project, as proposed, would not be implemented. As such, none of its associated construction or operational activities would occur, and the environmental impacts associated specifically with the proposed Project would not occur. For example, SCE's existing Antelope-Vincent 220-kV line would remain in place in Landscape Unit 3, and the existing Antelope-Mesa 220-kV line would remain in place in Landscape Units 5 through 12, as removal of these lines is specifically linked to construction of the proposed Project. As such, the environmental impacts associated with the proposed Project, as described in Section 6, below, would not occur.

In the short term, existing environmental conditions for visual resources would continue into the future, and existing landscapes would continue to appear as they are represented in Section 2.3 of this Specialist Report (also please refer to existing condition photographs in Appendix A). However, environmental conditions in the Study Area would continue to naturally evolve and/or change over time; therefore, under the No Project/Action Alternative, the regional setting and baseline conditions of the Study Area, which are discussed in Section 2.2 (Regional Setting), would not remain static. The following section describes how visual resources in the Study Area would be expected to change from current conditions under the No Project/Action Alternative.

North Area

Under the No Project/Action Alternative, visual impacts in the North Area would be avoided that otherwise would be created by new transmission lines in new corridors, new, taller transmission line structures, and substation upgrades. Because construction of new wind farms in the Tehachapi Wind Resource Area (TWRA) are dependent upon construction and operation of the proposed Project, these new wind farms would not be built, or would only be built at a date further in the future, after other transmission capacity is realized. This would delay projects such as the PdV/Manzana Wind Energy Project, Alta Wind Energy Center, and/or Pine Tree Wind Development Project, and visual impacts associated with these wind projects would not occur in the landscapes of TWRA.

As described in Section 2.2 (Regional Setting), the PCT crosses through the North Area and would be traversed by the proposed Project (Alternative 2). Under the No Project/Action Alternative, this crossing of the PCT by new transmission lines would be avoided. The Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA), which works jointly with State and Federal agencies to protect the PCTA (as described in Section 2.2), is currently working to re-route a portion of the PCT within the North Area through Tejon Ranch, in order to maintain the length of the PCT along ridgelines. It is expected that this re-route would succeed under any of the Project alternatives, including the No Project/Action Alternative. It is further expected that the PCT would continue to be managed and maintained in the future to protect scenic and visual resources.

Also as described in Section 2.2, there are currently planned residential developments in the North Area which include proposals for intensive housing developments that would modify the existing landscape, including major residential developments of Anaverde, Ritter Ridge, and Quail Valley. It is reasonably foreseeable that these developments would be constructed and that in the future, further development surrounding and expanding the boundaries of the Cities of Lancaster and Palmdale also would modify existing landscape

conditions. Such developments would be similar to the developed residential areas found in Palmdale and Lancaster, and in the South Area, which is highly urbanized.

In general, the extent and variety of urban/suburban development in the North Area are expected to increase in the future. However, this increase is not dependant upon selection of the No Project/Action Alternative and likely would occur independently of the proposed Project or an alternative to the proposed Project.

Center Area

Under the No Project/Action Alternative, visual impacts in the Center Area that would be created by new transmission line structures and upgrades to existing access and spur roads of TRTP would be avoided.

National Forest System lands would continue to be managed by the Forest Service in the future, regardless of the potential implementation of the proposed Project or an alternative to the proposed Project, including the No Project/Action Alternative. As such, existing landscape character and scenic integrity conditions would remain protected in the short term. However, it can be presumed that with increased population in the North and South Areas, it is reasonably foreseeable that additional new transmission lines will be needed in the future. Unless a route(s) is developed to extend outside of the Forest boundary, existing 220-kV single circuit transmission lines can be expected to be reconstructed to 500-kV single or double circuit capacities in the future. Construction of additional transmission lines by SCE and/or LADWP is reasonably foreseeable in the Center Area. With either scenario, visual resources within the Center Area would continue to exist under the management of the Forest Service for the purpose of multiple use, public recreation and enjoyment of scenic quality.

ANF projects currently underway or in the planning stages (fuel treatments, road maintenance, OHV usage, recreation site maintenance, interpretive services, etc.) would continue into the future. Some of these Forest Service activities have the potential to impact visual resources (fuel treatments, road maintenance, or OHV usage) but they are independent of the proposed Project or an alternative to the proposed Project.

South Area

Under the No Project/Action Alternative, visual impacts associated with the proposed Project would be avoided in the South Area because new, taller transmission line structures, new 500-kV conductors, and substation upgrades would not occur. With increased population in the North and South Areas, it is reasonably foreseeable that additional new transmission lines will be needed in the future, with similar pressure to increase electric transmission for increased population. Existing 220-kV single circuit transmission lines can be expected to be reconstructed to 500-kV single or double circuit capacities in the South Area in the future. Construction of additional transmission lines by SCE and/or LADWP is a reasonably foreseeable action.

As previously described, the South Area is highly urbanized and includes a wide variety of developed urban and suburban landscapes with many different visual attributes. In the viewshed of the proposed Project, much of the landscape has already been developed for urban and suburban uses (unlike the North Area where rapid development of new subdivisions and planned developments is occurring). Therefore, only a few undeveloped parcels of land remain near the proposed Project ROW, and only a few of these are currently undergoing development, causing visual changes to the landscape. These new developments are described in Section 2.9 (Cumulative Projects) of the EIR/EIS.