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4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

Would the project:		Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless APMs Incorporated	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)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined 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"/>

4.2.1 Introduction

This section of the PEA describes the existing conditions and potential project-related impacts to agricultural and forestry resources in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. In addition, this section evaluates the consistency of the Proposed Project with the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) and the Williamson Act, otherwise known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965. The Proposed Project would not convert or otherwise adversely affect any agricultural or forestry resources and therefore no impacts would result.

4.2.2 Methodology

The agriculture and forestry resources analysis within this section involved a review of various documents including aerial photographs of the Proposed Project area, the general plans for the cities of San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente and the County of Orange, and online information sources. California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection farmland maps was reviewed in order to determine if, and where, Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance were located within the Proposed Project area. The *Orange County General Plan – Resources Element* was reviewed in order to locate any existing Williamson Act contracts within the Proposed Project area. The *Orange County General Plan Agricultural Preserve Map* was also reviewed in order to determine if any County designated agricultural preserves are present within the Proposed Project area. In

addition, information from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment Project, were also reviewed.

4.2.3 Existing Conditions

4.2.3.1 Regulatory Setting

State

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The goal of the FMMP, administered by the California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, is to provide consistent and impartial data to decision makers for use in assessing present status, reviewing trends, and planning for the future of California’s agricultural land resources. The basis of the mapping program is an agricultural land classification system that combines technical soil ratings based on soil classifications and current land use. The survey defines eight agricultural land categories:

- Prime Farmland: has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. Prime Farmland must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance: is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Farmland of Statewide Importance must have been used for the production of irrigated crops at some time during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Unique Farmland: includes areas of lower quality soils that do not meet the criteria for Prime Farmland or Farmland of Statewide Importance, but that have been used for the production of specific high economic value crops during the two update cycles prior to the mapping date.
- Farmland of Local Importance: includes areas other than Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland that is either currently producing crops, has the capability of such production, or is used for the production of confined livestock. Farmland of Local Importance may be important to local economies due to its productivity or value, defined by each county’s local advisory committee, and adopted by its Board of Supervisors.
- Grazing Land: is land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock and includes, at a minimum, 40 acres.
- Urban and Built-up Land: is occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. Such lands include residential, industrial, commercial, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, and water control structures.

- **Other Land:** land not included in any other mapping category, such as low density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities; strip mines and borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and non-agricultural land greater than 40 acres and surrounded on all sides by urban development is also mapped as Other Land.
- **Water:** includes perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

The California Department of Conservation prepares, updates, and maintains maps and data used for categorizing agricultural potential (as described above) and assessing the location, quality, and quantity of agricultural lands and conversion of these lands over time. The maps are updated every two years based on aerial photograph review, computer mapping analysis, public input, and field reconnaissance. Coverage includes 47.9 million acres (96 percent of the state's private lands) and is based on the extent of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil surveys. Most large government land holdings, including national parks, forests, and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, are not included in FMMP's survey area.

The Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, has been the state's primary agricultural land protection program since its enactment in 1965. More than 16 million of the state's 30 million acres of farm and ranch land are currently protected under the Williamson Act. The Williamson Act creates an arrangement, whereby private landowners agree with counties and cities to voluntarily restrict land to agricultural and open-space uses. In return, the landowner receives property tax assessments that are lower than normal because the assessments are based on farming and/or open space uses rather than full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971. Williamson Act contracts automatically renew each year for a new 10-year period, unless either party files a "notice of non-renewal" to terminate the contract before the end of the current 10-year period. During the ensuing 10-year cancellation period following a "notice of non-renewal," property taxes are gradually raised to the applicable level for developable land.

The Williamson Act also authorizes cities and counties to establish Agricultural Preserves, referred to as Farmland Security Zones. Agricultural Preserves must include at least 100 acres, and generally are intended to avoid areas where public utility improvements and related land acquisitions may be required. Farmland Security Zone contracts require a minimum initial term of 20 years and they renew annually unless either party files a "notice of nonrenewal," similar to a Williamson Act contract. To be eligible for a Farmland Security Zone contract, the subject land must be designated on the Important Farmland Series maps as predominantly prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, unique farmland, or farmland of local importance.

Local

City of San Juan Capistrano

The *City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan* acknowledges that the area has historically been an agricultural community; however, the majority of the land traditionally utilized for agriculture

has been developed with urban uses with only a few remaining private parcels that continue in agricultural production. As described in Section 4.2.3.2, Agricultural and Forestry Setting, Existing Conditions, below, the existing transmission lines extend over area in San Juan Capistrano that is designated Important Farmland but is currently developed with residential and commercial uses. The *City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan* includes two policies relevant to the preservation of agricultural activity.

Policy 3.1: Implement economic programs that promote the long-term viability of designated agricultural parcels within the City.

Policy 3.2: Reduce the negative impacts resulting from urban uses and neighboring agricultural uses in close proximity.

The city of San Juan Capistrano has zoning designations for Agri-Business, Farm Market, and Residential/Agriculture. A small portion of the transmission line route is located within land zoned as Residential/Agriculture by the city of San Juan Capistrano. Virtually the entire transmission line route, including the land zoned as Residential/Agriculture by the city of San Juan Capistrano, includes existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses.

There are no policies within the *City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan* or designations within the city of San Juan Capistrano’s Municipal Code regarding forestry.

City of San Clemente

The *City of Clemente General Plan* does not address agricultural uses and therefore, there are no applicable policies in this regard. In addition, the city of San Clemente does not include a zoning designation for agricultural uses, and within the city of San Clemente there is no land in the study area for the Proposed Project that is in active agricultural use.

There are no policies within the *City of San Clemente General Plan* or designations within the city of San Clemente’s Municipal Code regarding forestry.

County of Orange

The *County of Orange General Plan* discusses how the County’s continued growth has led to pressure on local resources including agricultural resources, which was the County’s original major economic industry. The *County of Orange General Plan* includes Goal 3, which is to, “Manage and utilize wisely the County’s landform resources.” In support of that goal, the *County of Orange General Plan* includes a policy relevant to the protection of agricultural resources.

Policy 2: To encourage to the extent feasible the preservation and utilization of agricultural resources as a natural resource and economic asset.

The Orange County Zoning Code includes Agricultural Residential (AR) and General Agriculture (A1) zoning designations. A small portion of the Proposed Project is located on land zoned as General Agriculture, near the Prima Deshecha Landfill site (See Section 4.2.3.2 below). Virtually the entire transmission line route, including the land zoned as General Agriculture, includes existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses.

4.2.3.2 Agricultural and Forestry Setting

Designated Farmland

The Proposed Project area does not include any land under a Williamson Act contract. The land surrounding Pole No. 6 (refer to Figure 3.7-1, Sheet 1) was designated as unique farmland by the FMMP on the 2008 Orange County Important Farmland map. However, 2010 data from the FMMP shows this area designated as Other Land. The vast majority of this historical agricultural site is now occupied by commercial and residential development and includes existing electric transmission and distribution uses.

Agricultural Zoning Designations

The County of Orange has zoned a small portion of the Proposed Project 230kV transmission line ROW as General Agriculture (see Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning) near Pole Nos. 22 through 25. However, this area is not currently used for agricultural purposes and is part of the Prima Deshecha Landfill site.

Another small portion of the 230kV transmission line route near Pole Nos. 12 and 13 is zoned Residential/Agriculture by the city of San Juan Capistrano. The Residential/Agriculture zoning designation is considered by the San Juan Capistrano Zoning Code to be a residential district (whereas the Agri-Business and Farm Market zones are considered to be agricultural districts) and the property is currently undeveloped.

Designated Forest Land

There is no land designated for forestry purposes within the Proposed Project area.

4.2.4 Potential Impacts

4.2.4.1 Significance Criteria

Standards of impact significance were derived from Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Under these guidelines, the Proposed Project could have a potentially significant impact to agricultural resources if it would:

- a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use;
- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract;
- c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g));
- d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use; or

- 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.

4.2.4.2 Question 2a - Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

Construction – No Impact

The area surrounding Pole No. 6 was historically designated as Important Farmland; however, the area has been recently developed, and all of the farmland in the immediate vicinity has been converted to residential and commercial land uses. The current FMMP mapping data now designates this area as Other Land. The current state of development at this site dictates that there is no longer a viable agricultural resource on this site even though it recently was designated as Important Farmland. The site does not currently include agricultural uses, and in any event construction uses would be temporary. Therefore, despite the 2008 Important Farmland designation, no impact to Important Farmland would result from construction of the Proposed Project.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

Virtually the entire Proposed Project site contains existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses, which would be replaced and upgraded. Because operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would occur in the same or essentially the same locations as they occur today under baseline, existing conditions, there would not be any new impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impacts from the Proposed Project’s operations and maintenance would occur.

4.2.4.3 Question 2b - Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

Construction – No Impact

The small portion of the Prima Deshecha Landfill that is zoned as General Agriculture by the County of Orange is not currently utilized for agriculture, and the land surrounding the existing utility ROW in this area is controlled by the landfill, so future agricultural utilization of this land is unlikely—especially during the relatively short time during which construction for the Proposed Project would occur. The area surrounding Pole Nos. 22 through 25 (which is zoned for General Agriculture by the County of Orange) is not currently viable for agricultural use because it is in use as a landfill that is not expected to close until well after the Proposed Project is complete. Additionally, the Proposed Project is not located in any areas under a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, there would be no conflicts with agricultural zoning or Williamson Act contracts, and no impact would occur.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

Virtually the entire Proposed Project site contains existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses, which would be replaced and upgraded. Because operation and maintenance of

the Proposed Project would occur in the same or essentially the same locations as they occur today under baseline, existing conditions, there would not be any new impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impacts from the Proposed Project's operations and maintenance would occur.

4.2.4.4 Question 2c - Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g))?

Construction– No Impact

The Proposed Project impact area is not zoned as forest land or timberland, and there are no forests or timber harvest areas in the vicinity of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impact on forest land or timberland would occur as a result of the construction of the Proposed Project.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

Virtually the entire Proposed Project site contains existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses, which would be replaced and upgraded. Because operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would occur in the same or essentially the same locations as they occur today under baseline, existing conditions, there would not be any new impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project.

4.2.4.5 Question 2d - Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

Construction– No Impact

There are no forests or similar areas in the vicinity of the Proposed Project and therefore no conversion of forest land to other uses would occur as a result of the construction of proposed facilities and improvements under the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impact on existing forest land or timberland would occur.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

Because operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would occur in the same or essentially the same locations as they occur today under baseline, existing conditions, there would not be any new impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project.

4.2.4.6 Question 2e - 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?

Construction – No Impact

There is currently no utilized farmland within the Proposed Project impact area. Also, there are no forest lands or similar areas on or near the Proposed Project's physical footprint. Therefore,

the Proposed Project would not result in 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. There would be no impacts in this regard.

Operation & Maintenance – No Impact

Virtually the entire Proposed Project site contains existing electric transmission, distribution and substation uses, which would be replaced and upgraded. Because operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project would occur in the same or essentially the same locations as they occur today under baseline, existing conditions, there would not be any new impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Proposed Project

4.2.5 Applicant Proposed Measures

There would be no impacts to agricultural resources as a result of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no Applicant Proposed Measures are required.

4.2.6 References

California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection. 2008 & 2010. *Orange County Important Farmland 2008 & 2010.*

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. June 18, 2010. *California's Forests and Rangelands: 2010 Assessment.*

City of San Clemente. 1993. *General Plan.* As amended through May 6, 2003.

City of San Juan Capistrano. December 14, 1999. *General Plan.* As amended through May 7, 2002.

City of San Clemente. 2011. San Clemente Community View by Digital Maps Products. Online: http://maps.digitalmapcentral.com/CommView/SanClemente_cv/index.html. Site visited December 28, 2011.

City of San Juan Capistrano. San Juan Capistrano Community View by Digital Maps Products. Online: http://maps.digitalmapcentral.com/CommView/sjc_cv5/index.html. Site visited December 28, 2011.

County of Orange. 2005. *General Plan.*