4.4 Biological Resources

This section of the PEA focuses on the biological resources that occur or have the potential to occur on the Proposed Project site based on a review of available literature and database sources and field surveys of the site. This section also discusses the methods used to collect information regarding biological resources, the regulatory framework governing biological resources, potential impacts to biological resources, and actions that would mitigate these impacts. The implementation of the Proposed Project could result in significant impacts to biological resources; however, these impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by utilizing the mitigation measures and Applicant Proposed Measures (APMs) provided in this document.

Project components that do not have the potential to impact biological resources were not assessed. These components include installation of upgraded relay systems and equipment at the Newhall, Chatsworth, and San Fernando Substations and related support activities.

4.4.1 Existing Biological Setting

This section discusses the physical and biological conditions currently present in the Proposed Project area on a local and regional level, as well as the regulatory framework that may bear on the planning and implementation of the Proposed Project.

4.4.1.1 Regional Setting

The region in which the Proposed Project lies is within the Transverse Ranges of southern California, so named because they lie on an east-west axis. Due to this geographic orientation, the Transverse Ranges are ecologically unique. Though the south slopes of these ranges receive the majority of the yearly precipitation, they also receive extended periods of direct sunlight throughout the day and are therefore vegetated by drought-tolerant scrub vegetation. This phenomenon, known as ‘slope effect’, is accentuated by the long, hot summers associated with southern California’s Mediterranean climate. Though the north slopes of the Transverse Ranges see less precipitation because they are in the rain shadow, they are the moister side of the mountains due to lower evaporation rates and slower snow melt.

The Proposed Project is situated in two geographically distinct areas. The proposed modification to SCE’s 66 kV sub-transmission lines begin at the Newhall Substation located in the City of Santa Clarita in the Santa Clarita Valley. The line travels south through the Valley, ultimately veering southwest through the lower foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains to SoCalGas’s Storage Field, inside which the remainder of the Proposed Project components, discussed below, are situated. Therefore, components of the Proposed Project occur in both the Santa Clara River watershed and the Los Angeles River (San Fernando Valley) watershed, which are separated by the Santa Susana Mountains.

The Santa Clarita Valley drains the Upper Santa Clara River, an approximately 680 square mile watershed area. It is separated from the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles Basin by the Santa Susana and San Gabriel Mountain ranges to the south, east, and west, and is bound to the north by the Sierra Pelona Mountains. The Proposed Project components within the Storage Field are situated inside

Limekiln Canyon, whose primary drainage feature, Limekiln Canyon Wash, drains an area of 1,061 acres (1.66 square miles).

Due to the physiographic features noted above and its general proximity to coastal and desert influences, the area in which the Proposed Project occurs is in a transitional microclimatic zone subject to both coastal and high desert climatic influences. As it is located far enough from the coast to generally escape damp air and fog, summers generally are hot and winters mild. Annual precipitation in the area is around 14 to 16 inches, most of which occurs between October and early April.

It is important to note that approximately one mile of SCE's existing two 66 kV sub-transmission lines immediately southeast of the Sunshine Canyon Landfill passes through a SEA as designated by Los Angeles County. There are no other project components that pass through or are located within a designated SEA. The County defines SEAs as "ecologically important land and water systems that are valuable as plant and/or animal communities, often integral to the preservation of threatened or endangered species and the conservation of biological diversity in the County."[1] A number of SEAs have been identified throughout the County based on factors such as the presence of sensitive plant and animal species; locally and/or regionally limited habitats; migration, breeding, and feeding grounds; and undisturbed habitat. This designation serves as the County's primary means of recognition, management, and conservation of its biological resources.

The two existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines traverse what is currently known as the Santa Susana Mountains SEA (SEA #20), though a study conducted by the County in 2000 has recommended the expansion of this SEA based on factors required to sustain the plant and wildlife populations in these areas. The proposed designation for this new SEA would be the Santa Monica Mountains/Simi Hills SEA, or SEA #27. There are no other project components that would pass through or be located within a designated SEA.

4.4.1.2 Existing and Proposed Facilities

Proposed Central Compressor Station, Proposed Office Trailer, Guard House Relocation, and Construction Staging Areas

Inside the Storage Field, the TDC station, office trailer, and guard house facilities are proposed to be dismantled and replaced. The TDC station will remain on-site for one to two field cycles of reliable service using the new VFD motor-driven compressors. Suction, blowdown, and electrical components of the TDC station will be reconfigured to support the proposed Central Compressor Station. The Plant Station, currently located in the southwestern portion of the facility between Limekiln and Aliso Canyons, will be reconfigured with the relocation of existing office trailers, and construction of a proposed Central Compressor Station within the area currently occupied by the existing facilities. In support of the construction effort, three staging areas in which equipment will be stored are proposed near the Plant Station. These are the Porter Fee Road Staging Area, the Porter 37 Staging Area, and the Porter 42 Staging Area. The boundaries of each of these work areas are depicted in Figure 4.4-1. Though much of

[1] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, *Draft General Plan*, Conservation and Open Space Element. 2008.

the area where the Plant Station is located is developed or otherwise disturbed, areas of native habitat occur adjacent to this disturbance throughout the facility. Surrounding the Plant Station, plant communities include coastal sage and chaparral scrub, oak woodland, and the riparian corridor of Limekiln Canyon Wash. Vegetation communities are discussed in further detail in Section 4.4.3.1, below. The proposed guard house relocation is in a previously disturbed area within the Storage Field property boundary, within the City of Los Angeles.

Electricity is currently supplied to the Storage Field via the SCE 16 kV Gavin circuit from the Newhall Substation through the Ward Substation at the northeast corner of the facility. This infrastructure will remain unchanged; the Proposed Project plans to supply the new VFD motor-driven compressors within the proposed Central Compressor Station with electricity via the proposed SCE Natural Substation and proposed PPL. The proposed SCE Natural Substation will be fed by the proposed modification of two SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines, which also originate at the Newhall Substation. The proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications are discussed in further detail below.

Proposed SCE Natural Substation and Proposed PPL

The proposed SCE Natural Substation will be interconnected to two SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines proposed for modification. The proposed PPL will be constructed to deliver electricity from the proposed SCE Natural Substation to the proposed Central Compressor Station. The location for the proposed SCE Natural Substation is between the two existing 66 kV line support structures on the ridge approximately 1800 feet to the west of the site of the proposed Central Compressor Station. Much of the habitat in this area is heavily disturbed, with non-native annual grasses comprising the majority of the vegetation. There is, however, some burned native scrub scattered in the vicinity of the proposed construction site. Figure 4.4-1 depicts the location of the proposed SCE Natural Substation.

66 kV Sub-transmission System

The existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission system supports two source lines, both of which originate at the Newhall Substation. The proposed modification of two SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines originates at SCE's Newhall Substation at the corner of Lyons Avenue and Wiley Canyon Road in the city of Santa Clarita and travels towards the southeast to a point just northwest of the junction of the 5 and 14 Freeways. At that point, the alignment turns southwest towards the Storage Field, crossing to the west of the Plant Station. The support structures along this portion of the line, including H-frame wood poles and LSTs, will be replaced with TSPs. TSPs are required to support the additional weight of the new conductors for both lines on the existing system.

Along the existing transmission corridor, the SCE 66 kV sub-transmission alignment traverses a diverse range of terrain and land uses, including urban development through the city of Santa Clarita and open space through the foothills of the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains. Vegetation communities encountered along the transmission corridor range from disturbed non-native grassland to pockets of oak woodlands and are described in further detail in the Plant Communities subsection, below.

Other Substations

SCE proposes to upgrade/modify the existing relay systems within the Newhall, Chatsworth, and San Fernando Substations, to provide additional protection from energy surges. Installation of electrical relay systems will be limited to the replacement of existing equipment and/or the installation of new equipment within the substation MEER, which would not result in ground disturbance outside the existing disturbed areas or other impacts to biological resources.

SCE proposes to modify the San Fernando Substation with the removal of four existing LSTs and installation of four TSPs, three of which may occur outside of the substation boundary. This substation and the towers in the immediate vicinity, including those that will be replaced, are located in a developed or landscaped urban area devoid of native vegetation.

4.4.1.3 Methodology for Biological Assessment

AECOM biologists conducted surveys of the Proposed Project areas to inventory biological resources and determine the potential for special-status plants and wildlife to occur in those areas or in the immediate vicinity. The methodology and results of those surveys are described below.

Literature and Data Review

Prior to visiting the site, queries were processed of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB)[2] and California Native Plant Society (CNPS)[3] databases to identify special-status plant or animal species previously recorded in the project vicinity. The CNDDB lists historical and recently recorded occurrences of both special-status plant and animal species and sensitive habitats; whereas the CNPS database lists historical and recent occurrences of special-status plant species only. The areas searched include the USGS 1969 7.5-minute Oat Mountain quadrangle (in which the Proposed Project resides), as well as the surrounding eight USGS quadrangles: from northwest to southeast; Val Verde, Newhall, Mint Canyon, Simi, San Fernando, Calabasas, Canoga Park, and Van Nuys.

Other data reviewed included, but was not limited to, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) online critical habitat portal's[4] mapping function to determine the locations of critical habitat in the vicinity of the project, the US Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey[5] to determine soil characteristics within the survey areas, aerial photographs, and topographic maps.

[2] California Department of Fish and Game. 2003. *Natural Diversity Database*. Version 3.1.0, Updated April 2009.
[3] California Native Plant Society. 2001. *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants* (online edition, v7-09b). Sacramento, CA. Accessed online: http://www.cnps.org/inventory, April 2009.
[4] United States Fish and Wildlife Service. *Critical Habitat Portal*. Accessed online: http://crithab.fws.gov/, April 2009
[5] Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Web Soil Survey. Accessed online: http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx, April 2009.

Biological Habitat Assessment

AECOM biologists conducted field surveys of the areas encompassed by the Proposed Project on April 20 through 23, April 27 through 30, and June 8 and 9, 2009. The Proposed Project areas on which reconnaissance-level field studies were performed included the electrical line support structures along the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification between the SCE Newhall Substation to the ridge top just southwest of the Storage Field; four support towers within the boundary and in the vicinity of SCE's San Fernando Substation; and, within the Storage Field property, the location of the existing compressor station and office facilities, the site of the proposed Central Compressor Station and office relocation, the site of the proposed guard house relocation, construction staging areas, and a soils mixing area. The study area included each of these locations as well as the surrounding 25 meter radius (hereto referred to as the "study areas"). Figure 4.4-1 depicts each of the areas that were surveyed. The assessment consisted of the identification and mapping of vegetation types, the general characterization of jurisdictional resources such as wetlands and/or drainages, and the determination of the potential for the presence of special-status plant and wildlife species in the Proposed Project area. Biologists recorded general habitat conditions in field notes or on aerial photographs and delineated vegetation on aerial photographs, which was later transposed into polygons in Google Earth™ and eventually into a Global Information System (GIS) mapping program. Photographs and/or Global Positioning System (GPS) points were taken of representative site conditions and of biological resources of note.

The determination of the potential for special-status species to occur on the project site is based on the proximity of previously recorded occurrences in the CNDDB and CNPS databases to the Proposed Project site, on-site vegetation and habitat quality, topography, elevation, soils, surrounding land uses, habitat preferences, and geographic ranges of special-status plant and wildlife species recorded to occur in the region. A detailed discussion of the potential for the presence of special-status wildlife species is provided in the Special-Status Wildlife Species subsection, below, and summarized in Table 4.4-2. No protocol-level surveys were conducted for special-status wildlife species. The results of focused surveys for special-status plants are discussed below in the Special-Status Plant Species subsection.

Rare Plant Survey

A focused rare plant survey was conducted concurrently with the reconnaissance-level habitat assessment. Methods of this survey are detailed in the *Draft Special-Status Plant Species Report – Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project*, included as Appendix B.2. This document also provides a list of the plant species observed in the study area during the assessment and a discussion of the potential occurrence of other special-status plants based on their geographic and elevation range and the presence of suitable habitat and soil conditions.

4.4.1.4 Existing Biological Conditions

This section describes the results of the biological surveys conducted within the study areas, including discussions of vegetative communities, wildlife, sensitive species, jurisdictional resources, and protected trees.

Plant Communities

This section discusses the various types of habitats encountered during the April 2009 field survey of the existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission alignment/tower locations. The plant communities described below were generally classified using the nomenclature described in Robert F. Holland's *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California.*[6] However, due to the above-mentioned geographic and climatic transitional nature of the Santa Clarita area, habitats in the area can likewise be transitional with many subtle intergradations between plant communities. Where applicable, the communities observed in the field were named to their closest counterpart in the Holland classification system and, where intergrades of habitat types were encountered, the nomenclature was modified to accurately describe the field observations. Figure 4.4-1 provides maps of the habitats in the Proposed Project study area. The vegetation communities described below are reflected in this figure. Acreages for each study area and surrounding areas outside the 25-meter structure buffers but within the SCE 66 kV transmission line right-of-way have been calculated and are listed in Table 4.4-1.

It is important to note that many of the areas surveyed were affected by several brush fires that have burned through the region in recent years. Most of these areas are currently undergoing the successional regrowth and stump sprouting to which these communities are adapted, but many have also been colonized by non-native grasses and forbs, resulting in a disturbed regime that is not indicative of recent conditions. Recently burned communities have been depicted in the vegetation map.

Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub. Approximately 9.4 acres of the Proposed Project study area is comprised of this plant community, making it the dominant habitat along the length of the 66 kV sub-transmission alignment. This vegetation type comprises low, mostly soft-woody, drought deciduous shrubs between 1.5 feet to 6 feet tall and occurs generally in dry areas with shallow soil. Cover can vary in density, but the understory vegetation is usually sparse and may consist solely of non-native annual grasses. Along the transmission line route, the quality of this type of habitat varied widely, from undisturbed areas vegetated with dense stands of native shrubs to areas disturbed by fire and/or human interaction in which non-native grasses and forbs dominated, sparsely interspersed with sage scrub species.

California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) is universal as a co-dominant species in this habitat with other prominent components varying based on location. These co-dominants included purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), black sage (*S. mellifera*), white sage (*S. apiana*), bush monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Sub dominants also varied based on each location and included chaparral yucca (*Yucca whipplei*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), and larger shrubs/trees such as toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), sugarbush (*Rhus ovata*), and blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*). While these stands are generally dense with little herbaceous understory, annuals such as blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), morning glory (*Calystegia* sp.), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpus*), gallium (*Gallium* spp.) and Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.) can be found in openings in the scrub and at the margins of disturbed areas.

[6] Holland, R. 1986. Preliminary List of Terrestrial Natural Communities of California. Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California.

Chamise Chaparral. This plant community also featured prominently within the Proposed Project site, making up ~ 4.32 acres throughout the study area. This habitat is overwhelmingly dominated by chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and is interspersed with other scrub species such as California sagebrush, thick-leaved yerba santa (*Eriodictyon crassifolium*), and black sage, and larger, sometimes arborescent shrubs including toyon, sugarbush, ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.) and blue elderberry. This vegetation type is typically found in dry, exposed areas and is adapted to a regular fire regime by stump sprouting. This community is usually very dense with little understory or litter below the shrub layer, which ranges from 3 feet to 10 feet in height.

Ceanothus Chaparral. A small (~ 0.02-acre) area of chaparral dominated by arborescent hairy-leaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus oliganthus*) occurs between Towers 5-4 and 5-5. Other components of this plant community include chamise, thick-leaved yerba santa, California sagebrush, and white, black, and purple sages.

Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub. Frequently, there are areas within the Proposed Project boundary in which chaparral and sage scrub communities intermingle resulting in this habitat type containing components of both. A total of ~ 7.7 acres of Coastal Sage – Chaparral Scrub occur within the study area. The dominant species here include chamise and California sagebrush, with sub-dominants such as purple sage and bush mallow filling in. Also interspersed are larger shrubs and small trees such as sugarbush and blue elderberry.

Poison Oak Chaparral. Two small areas, one north of Tower 5-5, the other west of Tower 6-5, totaling 0.05-acre were occupied by this plant community, dominated solely by poison oak.

Coast Live Oak Woodland. The most prominent woodland community, comprising ~ 6.98 acres of the study area, is coast live oak woodland, which typically occurs on north facing slopes and shaded ravines. This habitat is dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) varying in height from 30 feet to 75 feet, though valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) and California walnut (*Juglans californica*) may also be present as a smaller component. A developed shrub layer is generally lacking in this plant community except at its margins where it may intergrade with scrub habitat. In these areas, shrubs may consist of toyon, sugarbush, and blue elderberry. An herbaceous understory is likewise usually sparse due to the heavy accumulation of leaf litter from the dense oak overstory, but is generally limited to non-native grasses such as ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and wild oat (*Avena fatua*).

Several regulatory and conservation agencies, including the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), consider this community to be a sensitive biological resource. Sensitive habitats are natural communities that support concentrations of sensitive plant or wildlife species, are of relatively limited distribution, or are of particular value to wildlife (CNDDB, 2009). Sensitive habitats are not afforded legal protection unless they support protected species, except for wetland habitats, which cannot be filled without authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and CDFG.

California Walnut Woodland. Small areas of this plant community, dominated by California walnut, were observed intergrading with the coast live oak woodland in the vicinity of Towers 14-3 (~ 0.04-acre) and 14-4 (~ 0.03-acre). Burned pockets of this habitat also occur in the lower reaches of Limekiln Canyon Wash on the Storage Field adjacent to the proposed guard house relocation site (~0.12-acre) and on the slope to the south of the Porter Fee Road Staging Area (~0.98-acre). Due to the more open tree canopy

and lesser amount of leaf litter associated with this type of woodland, a more developed understory consisting of shrubs such as sugarbush, white sage, and the non-native species horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) may be present in these upland areas. An herbaceous layer of primarily non-native annual grasses such as brome (*Bromus* sp.) and oat (*Avena* sp.) rounds out the understory. Within the riparian corridor of Limekiln Canyon Wash, the understory would have been of a more phreatophytic nature; however, understory and overstory were both sparse due to the recent burn. Some regrowth was observed in this area. As with the Coast Live Oak Woodland, this community is considered a sensitive biological resource.

California Ash Woodland. One stretch (~ 0.41-acre) of this plant community occurs along the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission line modifications, on the slopes of the ravine below Towers 14-3 and 14-4. This vegetation type is similar to and intergrades with Coast Live Oak and California Walnut Woodlands, but is dominated by California ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*).

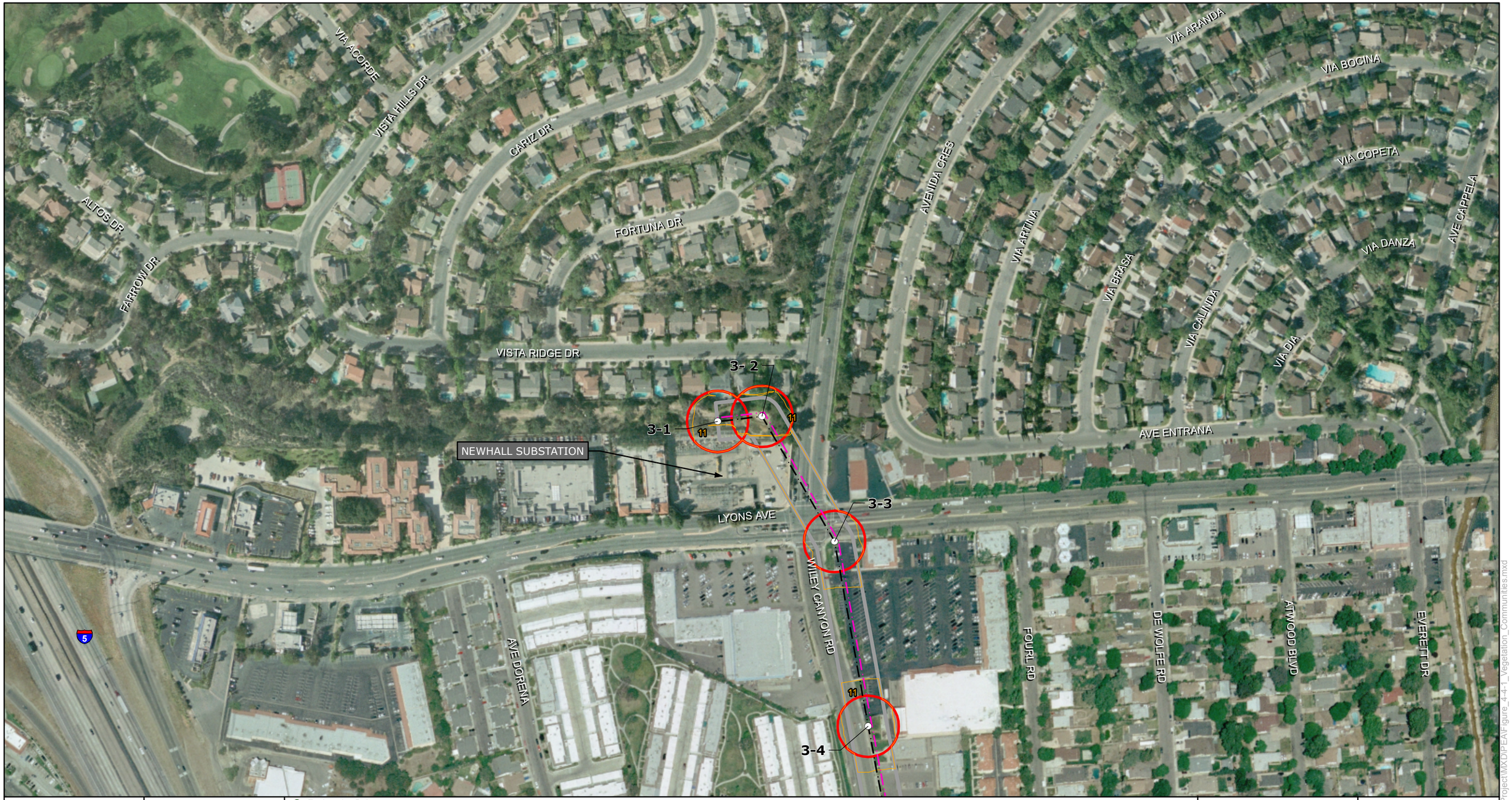
Southern Cottonwood – Willow/Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest. This habitat, which occurs in the Limekiln Canyon Wash along the western border of the Plant Station within the Storage Field facility, is actually a mixture of two Holland plant communities, Southern Cottonwood – Willow Riparian Forest and Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest. Approximately 0.53-acre of this habitat occurs to the northeast and south of the Porter 42 Staging Area and ~ 0.29-acre occurs within the new office trailer and compressor station study areas. The vegetation in this riparian area is dominated by coast live oaks along the upper banks and tree willows interspersed with Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) lower in the drainage. Historically, areas dominated by these communities are within perennial drainages with frequently flooding. However, as with most streams throughout southern California, improvements to the Aliso Canyon Wash have drastically reduced this flooding regime and changed the natural succession of this habitat. Due to this type of physical alteration and the pressures of development throughout southern California, both the Southern Cottonwood – Willow Riparian Forest and Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest plant communities are considered sensitive by the CDFG.

Southern Willow Scrub. This plant community, comprising ~ 0.15-acre of the Proposed Project study area, dominates the section of the South Fork Santa Clara River, which runs to the west of Towers 4-1 and 4-4. This dense riparian habitat occurs in loose, sandy, or fine gravelly alluvium and is dominated by several species of willow (*Salix* spp.) with scattered emergent Fremont cottonwood. Due to the density of the canopy, little understory is generally present, but this habitat can transition to a lower scrub including mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), emerging willows, and other riparian species. This habitat is listed by the CDFG as a sensitive resource.

Non-native Grassland/Disturbed. This habitat type also features prominently throughout the Proposed Project study area, comprising ~ 7.3 acres of hillsides and road margins and other disturbed areas. Areas occupied by this plant community have generally been previously disturbed, allowing opportunistic non-native grasses such as bromes, oats, and fescue (*Vulpia microstachys*) to dominate. In some areas, perennial natives including purple needle grass (*Nassella pulchra*) and California aster (*Lessingia filaginifolia*) may be present to some degree. Also prominent are several native annual 'wildflowers', including phacelia (*Phacelia* spp.), lupine (*Lupinus* spp.), and California poppy.

Developed/Urban Landscaping/Roads. Originating at the Newhall Substation, nearly 1-mile of the northern portion of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification travels through urban Santa

Clarita; several other locations along the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification consist of human development. These areas, which comprise ~ 24.3 acres of the total survey area, do not classify as a plant community, but as land use. They include urban development such as housing and commercial areas and associated non-native landscaped areas, and both paved and unpaved roads.



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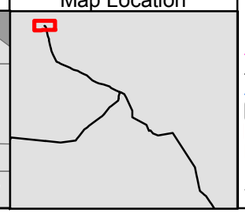

- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

1- California Ash Woodland
2 - California Walnut
3 - California Walnut Woodland
4 - Ceanothus Chaparral
5 - Chamise Chaparral
6 - Channelized Drainage
7 - Coast Live Oak
8 - Coast Live Oak Woodland
9 - Coast Live Oak/California Walnut Woodland
10 - Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
11 - Developed/Urban Landscaping/Roads
12 - Disturbed Chamise Chaparral/Non-native Grasses
13 - Disturbed Chamise Chappparal
14 - Disturbed Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
15 - Disturbed Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
16 - Disturbed Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Non-native Grasses
17 - Disturbed/Developed/Roads
18 - Eucalyptus
19 - Non-native Grassland
20 - Poison Oak Chaparral
21 - Southern Cottonwood - Willow Riparian Forest
22 - Southern Cottonwood-Willow/Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland
23 - Southern Willow Scrub
24 - Sparse Chamise Chaparral
25 - Sparse Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
26 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
27 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Non-native Grasses
28 - Unchannelized Drainage
29 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
30 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Oak Woodland Intergrade
31 - Walnut Woodland

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 01 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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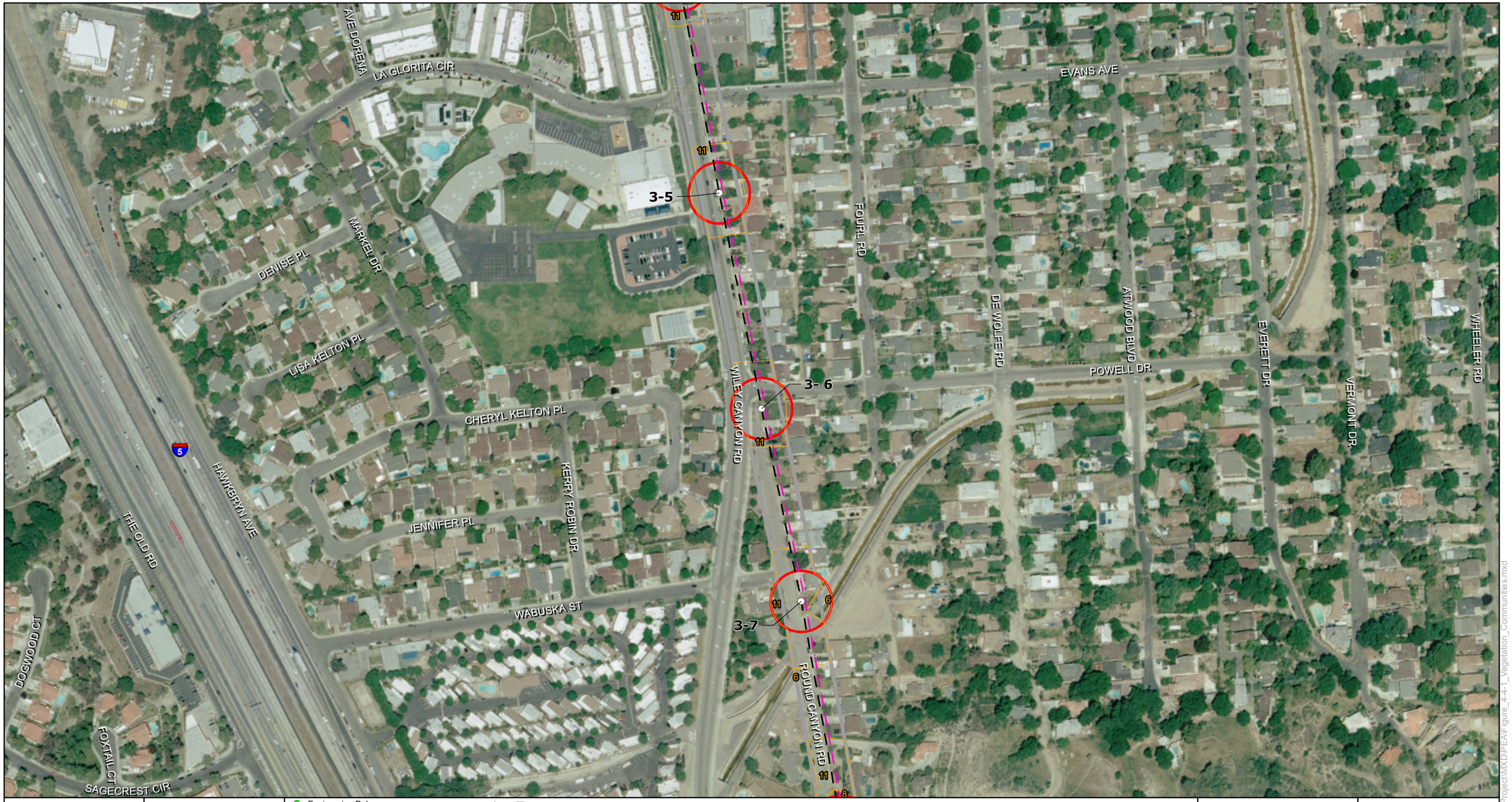

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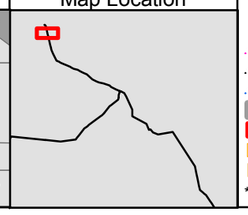

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N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 02 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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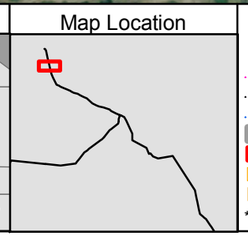

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12 - Disturbed Chamise Chaparral/Non-native Grasses
13 - Disturbed Chamise Chappparal
14 - Disturbed Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
15 - Disturbed Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
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22 - Southern Cottonwood-Willow/Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland
23 - Southern Willow Scrub
24 - Sparse Chamise Chaparral
25 - Sparse Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
26 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
27 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Non-native Grasses
28 - Unchannelized Drainage
29 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
30 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Oak Woodland Intergrade
31 - Walnut Woodland

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 03 of 18

Southern California Gas Company
A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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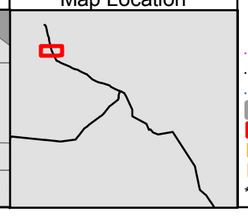
Map Location

Map Location



- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

1- California Ash Woodland
2 - California Walnut
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5 - Chamise Chaparral
6 - Channelized Drainage
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8 - Coast Live Oak Woodland
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0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 04 of 18

Southern California Gas Company
A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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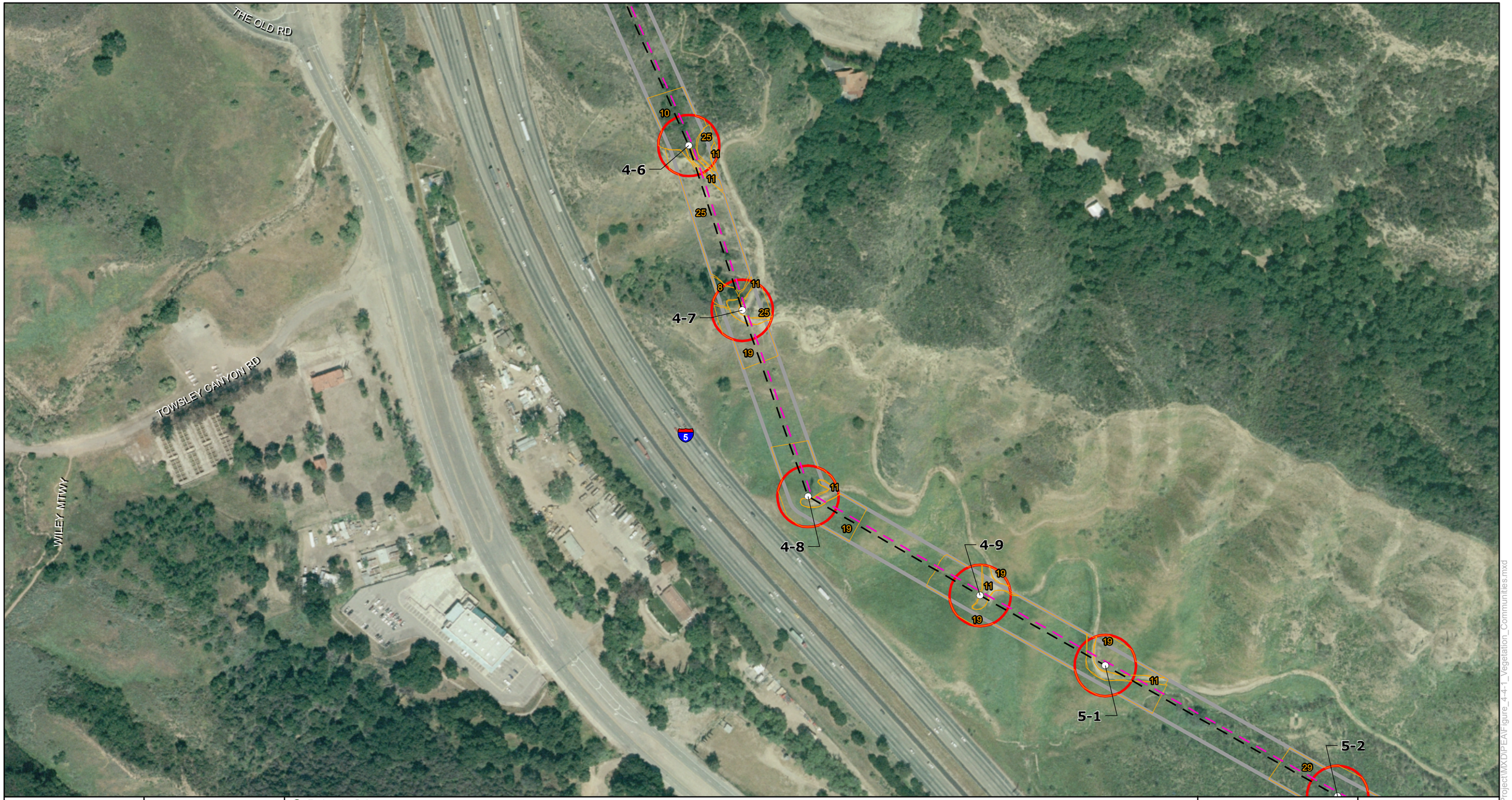

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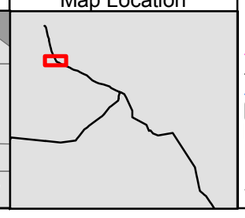

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 05 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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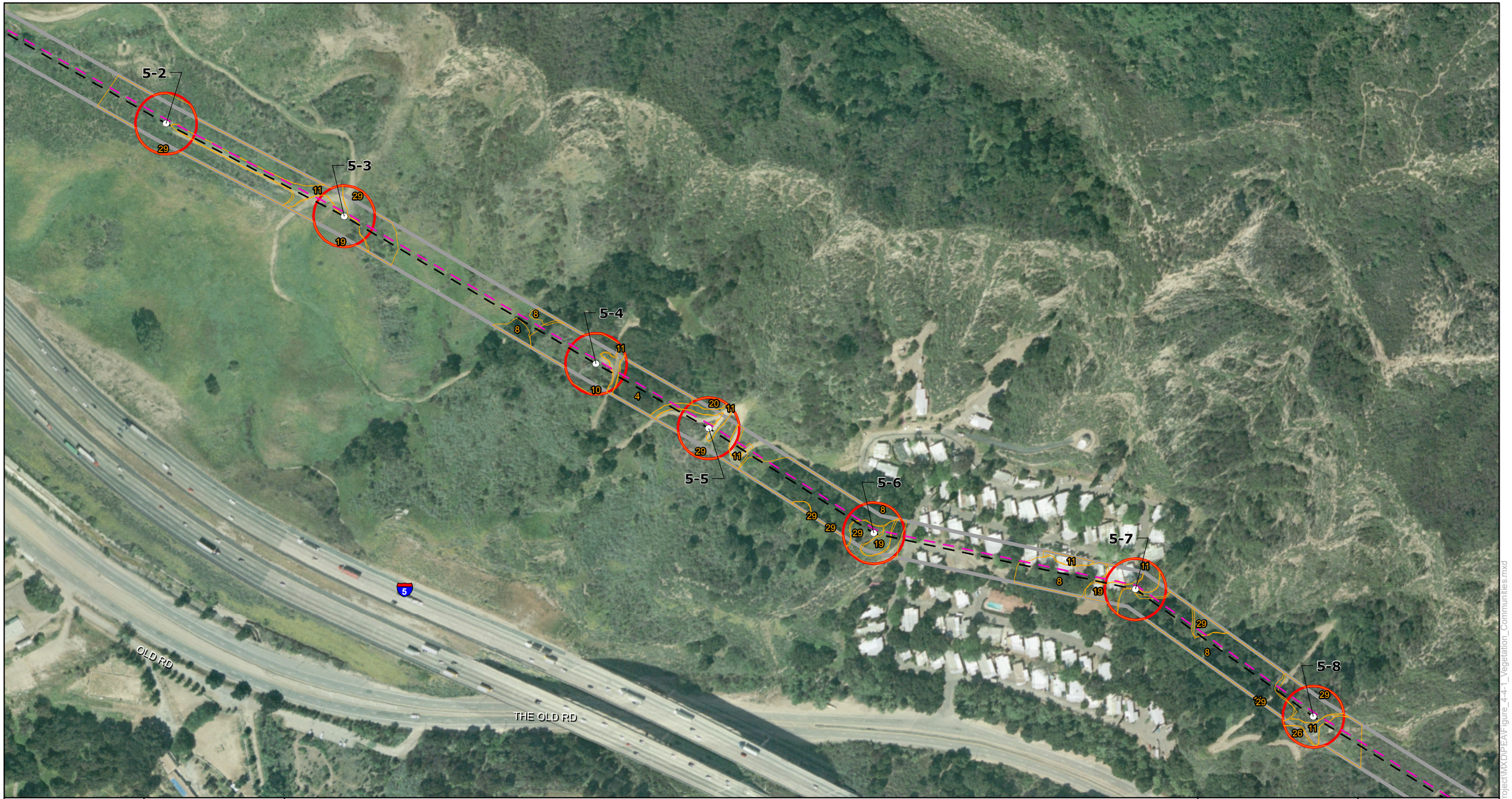

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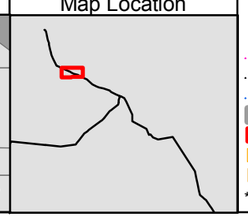

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 06 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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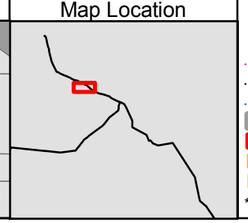

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31 - Walnut Woodland

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 07 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

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Date: September 2009

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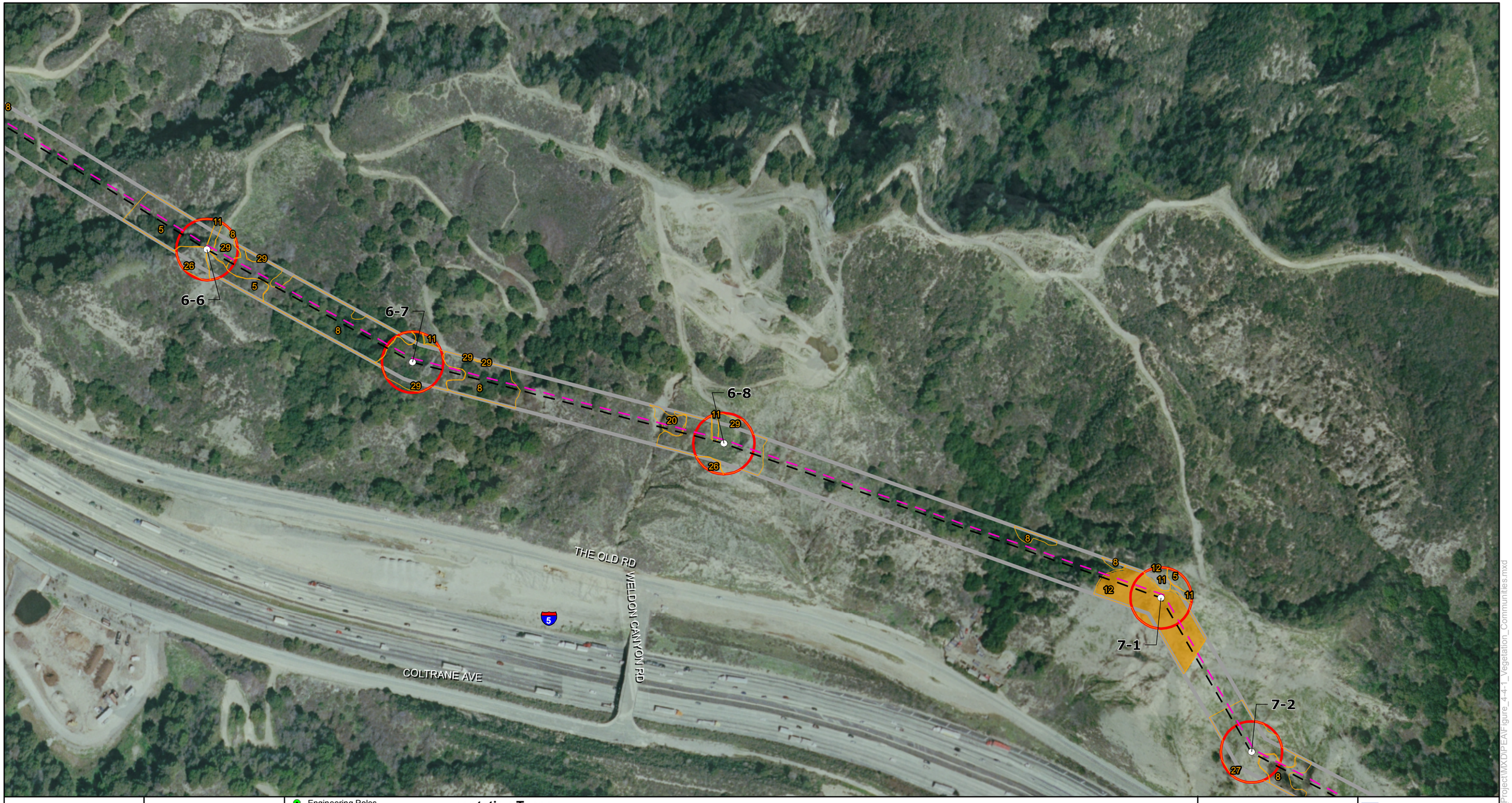

Map Location

Map Location

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 08 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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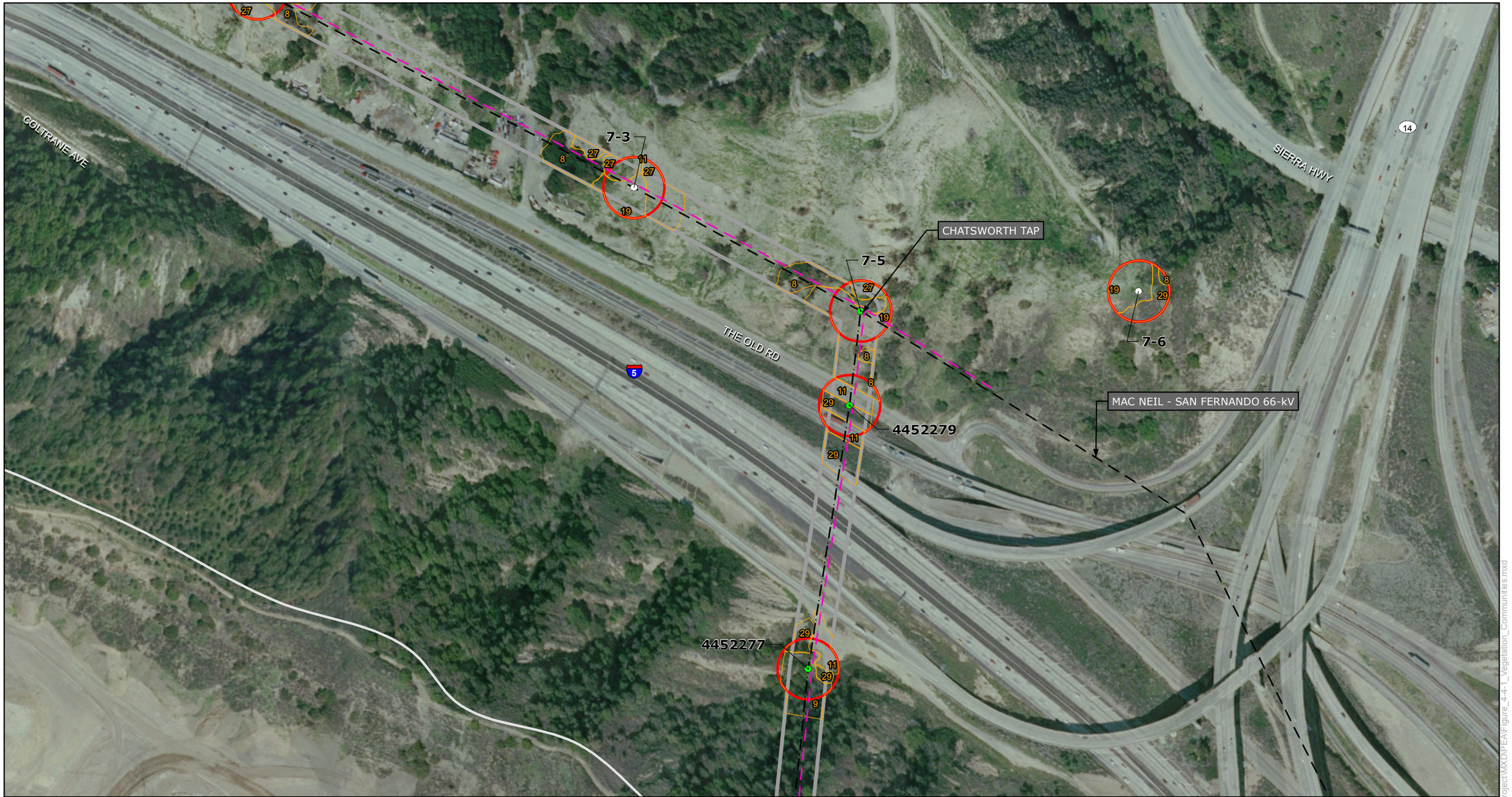

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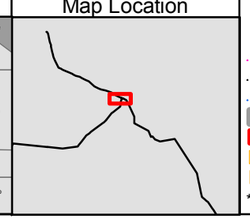

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31 - Walnut Woodland

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 09 of 18

Southern California Gas Company
A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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Map Location

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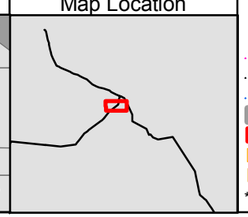

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0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 10 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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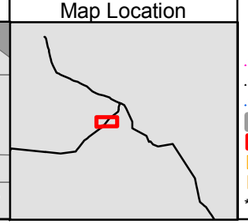
SUNSHINE CANYON LANDFILL

GENTILI RANCH RD

8
16
11
26
8
15-1

Map Location

Map Location



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N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 11 of 18

Southern California Gas Company
A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

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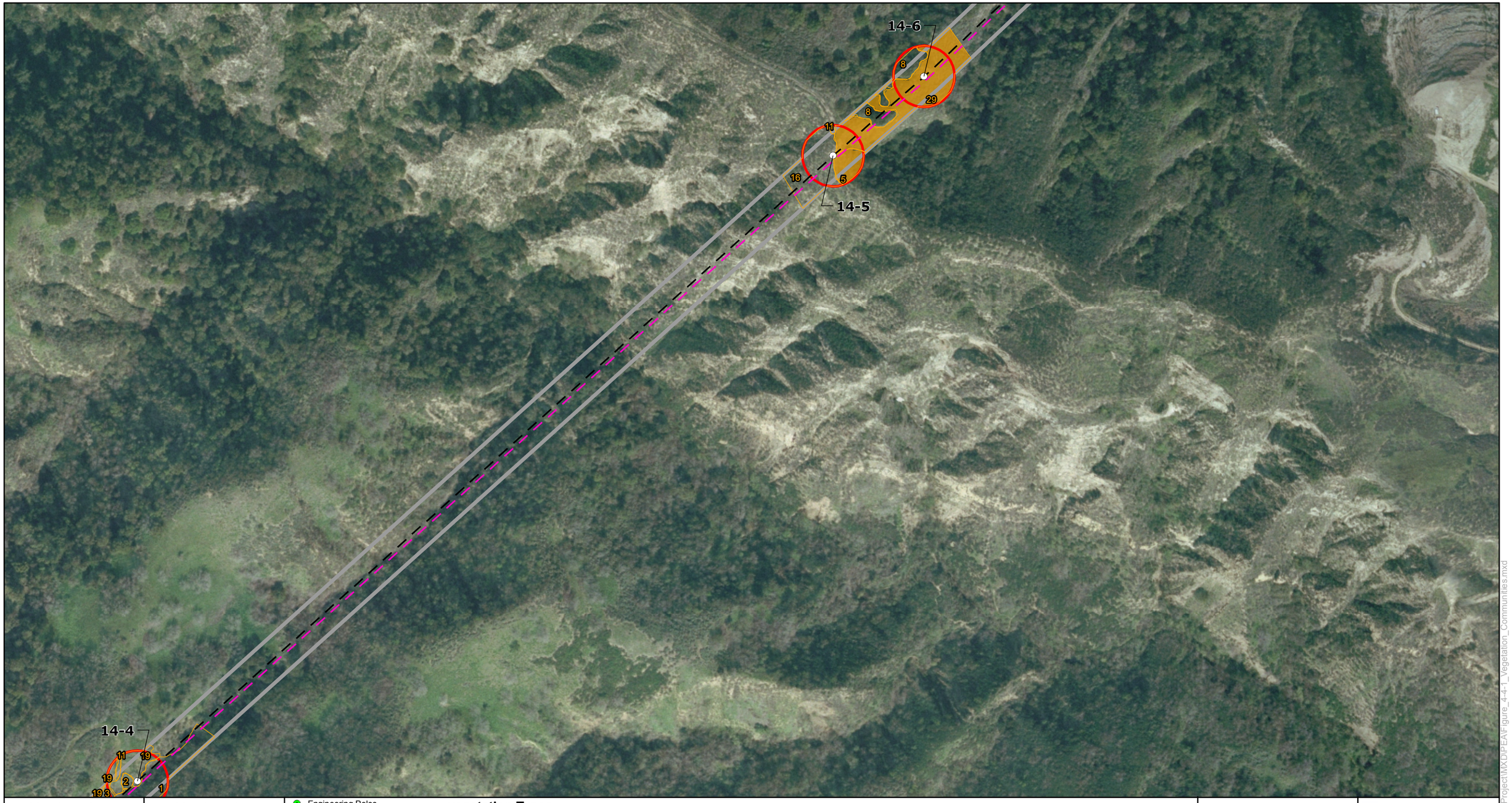

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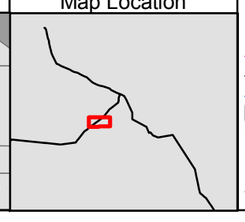

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 12 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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Map Location

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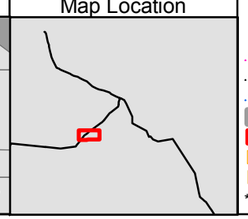

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15 - Disturbed Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
16 - Disturbed Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Non-native Grasses
17 - Disturbed/Developed/Roads
18 - Eucalyptus
19 - Non-native Grassland
20 - Poison Oak Chaparral
21 - Southern Cottonwood - Willow Riparian Forest
22 - Southern Cottonwood-Willow/Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland
23 - Southern Willow Scrub
24 - Sparse Chamise Chaparral
25 - Sparse Coastal Sage - Chaparral Scrub
26 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
27 - Sparse Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Non-native Grasses
28 - Unchannelized Drainage
29 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub
30 - Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub/Oak Woodland Intergrade
31 - Walnut Woodland

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 13 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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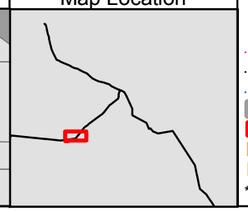
Map Location

Map Location



- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

1- California Ash Woodland
2 - California Walnut
3 - California Walnut Woodland
4 - Ceanothus Chaparral
5 - Chamise Chaparral
6 - Channelized Drainage
7 - Coast Live Oak
8 - Coast Live Oak Woodland
9 - Coast Live Oak/California Walnut Woodland
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N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 14 of 18

Southern California Gas Company
A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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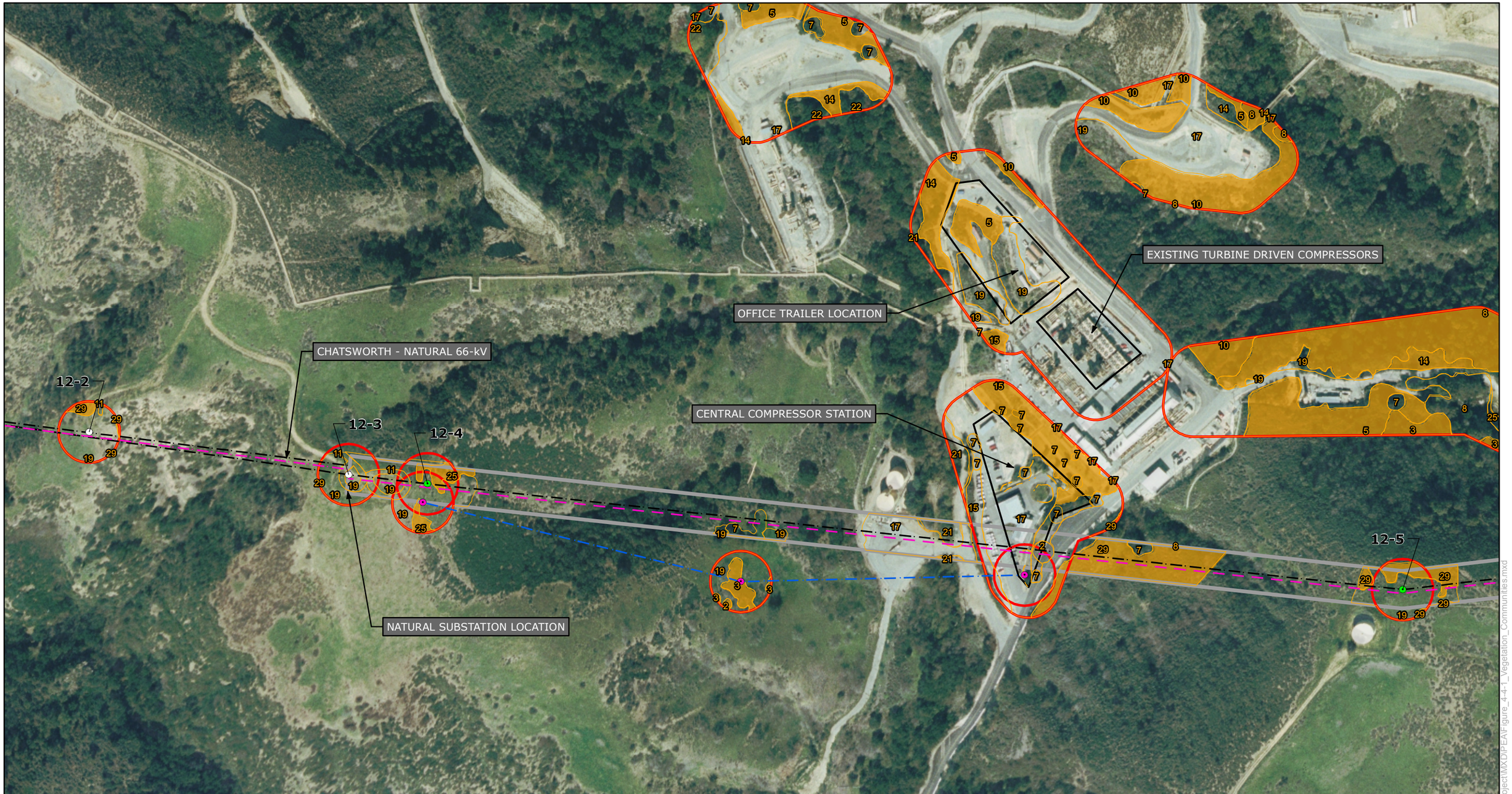

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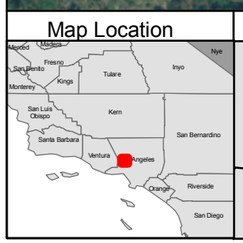

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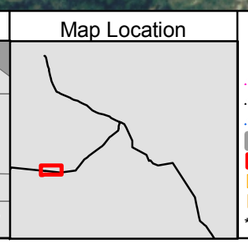

- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

1- California Ash Woodland
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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 15 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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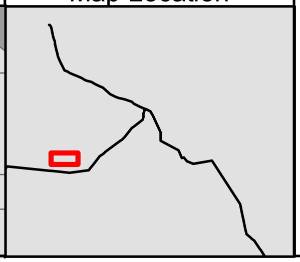
Map Location

Map Location



- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 16 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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Map Location

Map Location

- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
- Proposed SCE 66 kV Modification
- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
- PPL
- 100ft Wide ROW*
- 50m Tower/Facility Buffer*
- Vegetation Boundary
- Burnt Vegetation Area

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

vegetation Types

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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1 Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 17 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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13-1
13-2
San Fernando Substation
11
0-1
0-2
SAN FERNANDO MISSION BLVD
BRAND BLVD
VENA AVE
ALEXANDER ST
SHARP AVE
HAGAR ST
MACLAY ST
MACNEIL ST
BARTEE AVE
COLUMBUS AVE
MEMORY PARK AVE
BURNET AVE
NOBLE AVE
ARLETA AVE
DONNA WAY
SANDRA ST

Map Location

Map Location

- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers
- PPL Structures
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- Existing SCE 66 kV Alignment
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1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-1
Vegetation Communities

Mapsheet 18 of 18

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: September 2009

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Table 4.4-1 Acreage of Plant Communities in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Location	Acreages of Habitat								
	Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub	Chamise Chaparral	Coastal Sage – Chaparral Scrub	California Ash Woodland	Coast Live Oak Woodland	California Walnut Woodland	Southern Willow Scrub	Non-native Grassland	Developed/Urban Landscaping/ Disturbed/Roads
66 kV Sub Transmission System									
3-1									0.44
3-2									0.45
3-3									0.45
3-4									0.44
3-5									0.44
3-6									0.44
3-7									0.39
3-8	0.05				0.25			0.09	0.06
3-9		0.07	0.39						0.01
4-1	0.03						0.04		0.40
4-2	0.03								0.43
4-3								0.20	0.28
Pole 4170603								0.16	0.30
4-4					0.03		0.11	0.05	0.28
4-5		0.22	0.23						0.05
4-6			0.39						0.04
4-7			0.15		0.05			0.16	0.08
4-8								0.39	0.07
4-9								0.38	0.09
5-1								0.39	0.09
5-2	0.45								0.02
5-3	0.17							0.25	0.06
5-4[†]			0.39						0.06
5-5[††]	0.33								0.10
5-6	0.22				0.16			0.08	
5-7					0.15			0.11	0.19

Location	Acreages of Habitat								
	Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub	Chamise Chaparral	Coastal Sage – Chaparral Scrub	California Ash Woodland	Coast Live Oak Woodland	California Walnut Woodland	Southern Willow Scrub	Non-native Grassland	Developed/Urban Landscaping/ Disturbed/Roads
5-8	0.37				0.02				0.08
5-9		0.34							0.08
6-1	0.06	0.36							0.03
6-2					0.24			0.19	0.05
6-3	0.24	0.18			0.01				0.03
6-4	0.41				0.03				0.02
6-5	0.44								0.03
7-1		0.05 (0.34)							0.08
7-2	(0.42)				0.05				
7-3	(0.23)							0.24	0.01
7-5	(0.40)				0.07				
7-6	0.18				0.01			0.29	
Pole 4452279	0.15 (0.07)								0.22
Pole 4452277	0.08				0.28				0.09
15-8	0.19				0.20				0.04
Pole 4476886	0.39								0.04
15-1	0.45								0.01
14-6	0.37				0.10				
14-5	0.08	0.13						0.25	0.01
14-4				0.25		0.03		0.15	0.02
14-3	0.03			0.16	0.12	0.04		0.08	0.02
14-2	0.33				0.14				0.01
14-1	0.57				0.08				0.01
13-3	0.32								0.02
13-2	0.19							0.21	0.06
13-1	0.04							0.41	0.03
12-5	0.10							0.36	

Location	Acreages of Habitat								
	Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub	Chamise Chaparral	Coastal Sage – Chaparral Scrub	California Ash Woodland	Coast Live Oak Woodland	California Walnut Woodland	Southern Willow Scrub	Non-native Grassland	Developed/Urban Landscaping/ Disturbed/Roads
12-4	0.12							0.30	0.03
12-3								0.32	0.11
12-2	(0.08)							0.38	0.02
Aliso Canyon Storage Field Study Areas									
Plant Station	1.47	0.25	0.47		0.19		0.29†††	0.73	6.62
Soils Processing Site	0.70	0.86	0.28					0.06	3.76
Guard House Relocation Site						0.12		0.14	0.21
Porter Fee Road Staging Area		(1.01)	3.53 (0.82)		1.05 (3.41)	(0.98)		0.69	3.06
Porter 37 Staging Area		0.06	1.47		0.09			0.31	1.41
Porter 42 Staging Area		0.45	(0.23)		0.23		0.53†††		2.05
SCE Natural Substation and PPL Study Areas									
Natural Substation	0.12							0.62	0.14
PPL Pole #1	0.04		0.06					0.36	0.03
PPL Pole #2						0.15		0.32	
PPL Pole #3	(0.04)								0.39

† Additional habitat – 0.02-acre Ceanothus Chaparral

†† Additional habitat – 0.05-acre Poison Oak Chaparral

††† In these locations, this habitat is more accurately referred to and described in the text as Southern Cottonwood-Willow/Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland

*** Note:** Numbers in parentheses indicate acreages of disturbed and/or sparse habitat.

Special-Status Resources

"Special-status" refers to those resources that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Plant and animal species listed by the USFWS or CDFG as Threatened or Endangered, proposed for listing as Threatened or Endangered, or that are candidates for listing as Threatened or Endangered.

- Plant and animal species considered "Endangered, Rare, or Threatened" as defined by the CEQA Guidelines.[7] The CEQA Guidelines state that a species of animal or plant is Endangered when its survival and reproduction in the wild are in immediate jeopardy from one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, disease, or other factors.[8] A species is Rare when either "(A) although not presently threatened with extinction, the species is existing in such small numbers throughout all or a significant portion of its range that it may become endangered if its environment worsens; or (B) the species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a portion of its range and may be considered 'Threatened' as that term is used in the Federal Endangered Species Act."[9]

- Animal species designated as "Species of Special Concern" or "Fully Protected" by the CDFG.[10] Although these species are not listed as Threatened or Endangered, the CDFG recommends protecting them because populations of these species are generally declining and they could be listed as Threatened or Endangered (under the California Endangered Species Act [CESA]) in the future.

- Plants included on Lists 1 or 2 of the CNPS.[11] These species are included because the CNPS is recognized by the CDFG as an authority on the status of Rare plant species in California. Furthermore, the criteria for placement on List 1 or List 2 are similar to criteria that CDFG and USFWS use for species considered as candidates for listing or that are already listed as Threatened or Endangered.

- Birds designated by the USFWS as "Birds of Conservation Concern."[12] Although these species have no legal status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the USFWS recommends protecting them because populations of these species are generally declining and they could be listed as Threatened or Endangered (under the CESA) in the future.

---

[7] California Public Resources Code, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, Section 15380.

[8] Ibid, Section 15380(b).

[9] CFR, Title 16, Endangered Species Act, Chapter 35 – Endangered Species, Section 1531-1544.

[10] California Department of Fish and Game, Habitat Conservation and Planning Branch, *California's Plants and Animals*. Online: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/species.html.

[11] California Native Plant Society, *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California*. Sixth edition. September 2001.

[12] US Fish and Wildlife Service, *Birds of Conservation Concern 2002*. Division of Migratory Bird Management, Arlington, Virginia. 2002, 99pp. [Online: http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/reports/bcc2002.pdf].

- Species listed on the CDFG List of Special Animals.[13] This list incorporates the lists of a number of other agencies and authoritative groups, including the American Fisheries Society categories of risk for marine, estuarine, and diadromous fish stocks; the Audubon Watch List; the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection list of sensitive species; the USDA Forest Service list of sensitive species; the American Bird Conservancy Green List; the United States Bird Conservation Watch List; the Western Bat Working Group list of High, Medium, and Low conservation priority bat species; and the Xerces Society Red List of pollinators.

- Riparian habitat or other natural communities considered sensitive or otherwise regulated by the CDFG.

- Wetlands or other aquatic habitats under the jurisdiction of the USACE.

- Established resident or migratory wildlife movement corridors.

- Trees, habitats, or other resources protected by local policies and ordinances or otherwise considered of local concern.

Biological resources that meet one or more of these criteria are generally afforded some level of protection by Federal, State, and/or local agencies, including the CDFG, USFWS, and local municipalities such as the county of Los Angeles and the city of Santa Clarita. Based on the resource, its listing designation, and level of impacts to the resource, this protection may range from disallowing any take whatsoever, as is the case with CDFG "Fully Protected" species, to requiring various forms of mitigation, such as species-specific surveys, relocation of a species, consultation with resource agencies, or the development of a re-vegetation plan to compensate for lost habitat.

Figure 4.4-2 indicates the sensitive plant and animal species and other biological resources that were recorded during the April and June 2009 surveys and the locations in which they were observed.

Special-Status Plants

Review of the CNDDB and CNPS databases identified 21 special-status plant species that have been recorded in the Proposed Project region (9 USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles). These plants were evaluated for their potential to occur on the Proposed Project site based on habitat, soil, elevation, and range information for each species. The species with a reasonable potential to occur in the Proposed Project areas based on these factors were the focus of the rare plant surveys.

As described in the *Draft Special-Status Plant Species Report* (Appendix B-2), two sensitive plant species were identified during the April and June 2009 surveys, Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) and slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*), both listed as 1B.2 in the CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants. Four Plummer's mariposa lily individuals were observed on the Plant Station property within burned Coastal Sage – Chaparral Scrub habitat on the slope to the northeast of the existing compressor station, ~ 35 feet from the edge of the road. Slender mariposa lilies were

[13] Ibid, *California's Plants and Animals*. Online: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/hcpb/species/species.html.

identified in burned coastal sage and chaparral habitat in the vicinity of Towers 14-6 (5 individuals), 14-2 (~ 57 individuals), 14-1 (~ 186 individuals), 13-3 (more than [>] 500 individuals), 13-2 (>300 individuals), 13-1 (~ 40 individuals), and 12-5 (>200 individuals).

The CNPS defines List 1B plants as "rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere" with a Threat Rank of 0.2 denoting "[f]airly threatened in California (moderate degree/immediacy of threat)." These plants "meet the definitions of Sec. 1901, Chapter 10 (Native Plant Protection Act) or Sections 2062 and 2067 (CESA) of the CDFG Code, and are eligible for State listing."

Special-Status Wildlife

Review of the CDFG's CNDDB database[14] identified 38 special-status wildlife species that have been documented in the region surrounding the Proposed Project site. These species were evaluated for their potential to occur within the study areas and those determined to have some potential are identified in Table 4.4-1, along with their regulatory status and habitat requirements. Records of species sightings in Table 4.4-1 have been taken from the CNDDB. Species that were identified in the CNDDB as having occurred in the region but whose habitat requirements are not met within the project study area or in the immediate vicinity were not discussed.

No threatened or endangered wildlife species were observed during the April and June 2009 survey of the Proposed Project study areas. However, the following wildlife species and other resources that are considered otherwise 'sensitive' were observed during the field study:

- One coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum*), a CDFG Species of Special Concern (SSC) in the vicinity of Tower 14-1.

- One Cooper's hawk perching on Tower 14-2 and later soaring over the study area. This species is on the CDFG Watch List when nesting and is also protected under the MBTA.

- An active red-tail hawk nest in the lattice of Tower 4-8. One adult was observed tending the nest and foraging in the area. The red-tailed hawk and their nests are protected under the MBTA and raptors are protected by the CDFG under Section 3503.5 of the California Fish and Game Code.

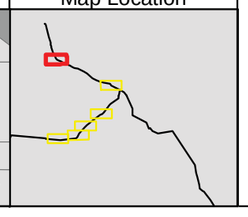
- An unoccupied nest comprised of larger sticks and twigs in the lattice of Tower 7-2. While not currently in use, this nest may be utilized by raptors during the breeding season.

The locations of these observations are depicted on Figure 4.4-2.

[14] California Department of Fish and Game, *Natural Diversity Database*, Version 3.1.0, Updated April 2009.

Map Location

Map Location



Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 1 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

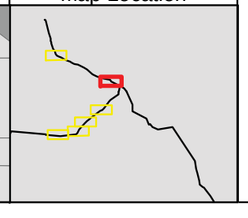
AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

Y:\Projects\Sempra_Energy\Aliso_Project\MXD\PEA\Figure_4-4-2_Biological_Resources.mxd

Map Location

Map Location



Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 2 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

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15-1

14-6

5 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

14-5

Map Location

Map Location

Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 3 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

Y:\Projects\Sempra_Energy\Aliso_Project\MXD\PEA\Figure_4-4-2_Biological_Resources.mxd

14-4

14-3

14-2

Flyover by Cooper's Hawk
~ 57 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

~186 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

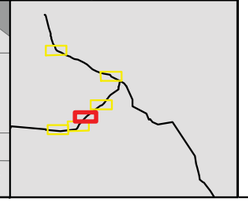
14-1

California Whiptail

Coast Horned Lizard

Map Location

Map Location



Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 4 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

Y:\Projects\Sempra_Energy\Aliso_Project\MXD\PEA\Figure_4-4-2_Biological_Resources.mxd

>500 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

13-3

13-2

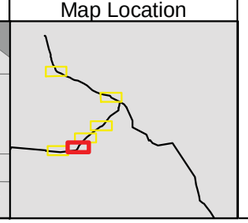
>300 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

13-1

~40 *Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*

Map Location

Map Location



Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 5 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

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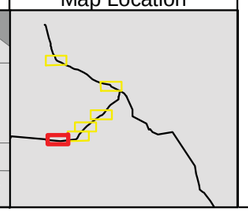
Map Location

Map Location



Legend

- Biological Resources Observed During 2009 AECOM Surveys
- Engineering Poles
- Existing Towers

*Study Area is 50 m Tower Buffer and 100ft Wide ROW

1 inch = 250 feet

0 250 500 Feet

N W E S

Aliso Canyon Turbine Replacement Project

Figure 4.4-2
Biological Resources Observed in the ACTR Project Study Areas

Mapsheet 6 of 6

Southern California Gas Company — A Sempra Energy utility

AECOM

Project: 06205-134
Date: August 2009

Y:\Projects\Sempra_Energy\Aliso_Project\MXD\PEA\Figure_4-4-2_Biological_Resources.mxd

As indicated in Table 4.4-2, based on the presence of suitable habitat and known occurrences in the vicinity of the Proposed Project site, 19 special-status wildlife species have some potential to occur on the site. The potential for occurrence was assessed as follows:

Observed: Species was observed within the Proposed Project area during the field surveys.

Expected: Species is known to occur within 5 miles of the Proposed Project study area (based on CNDDB records and /or professional expertise specific to the Proposed Project study area or species) and there is ideal habitat within the Proposed Project study area.

Moderate Potential: Species is known to occur within 5 miles of the Proposed Project study area (or 10 miles for airborne species) and generally suitable habitat is present, though not always ideal. Alternatively, there is good quality habitat in the area but there are no historic records within the 5-mile or 10-mile radius detailed above.

Low Potential: Species is known to occur in the vicinity of the Proposed Project study area; however, records may be old and the study area supports only poor quality or marginal habitat that would likely not be suitable to support a significant population. If the species does occur in the study area, it would likely be a migrant and not utilize the site to reproduce or nest due to a lack of suitable habitat, or because the area is outside the known breeding range of the species.

Not Expected: Species has been identified in the CNDDB records, but either the recorded observations are extremely old; key habitat requirements are absent; or the habitat in the Proposed Project study area is so degraded, small, or isolated that it would be very unlikely for the species to utilize the area.

Table 4.4-2
Special-Status Wildlife Species with the
Potential to Occur within the Proposed Project Study Area

Common Name and Scientific Name	Status		Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State		
INSECTS				
Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	--	CDFG Special Animal	Roosts located in wind-protected tree groves (eucalyptus, Monterey cypress) with nectar and water sources nearby. Winter roost sites extend along the coast from northern Mendocino County to Baja California, Mexico.	*Not Expected*: No appropriate roost sites exist within the Proposed Project study area.
AMPHIBIANS				
Coast Range newt *Taricha torosa torosa*	--	SSC	Terrestrial species inhabits moist areas such as beneath woody debris, in rock crevices, and animal burrows in wet forests, oak forests, chaparral, and rolling grasslands. Becomes aquatic when breeding, entering ponds, reservoirs, and sluggish pools in streams to breed, typically with the first heavy rains.	*Expected:* Species has been observed in catch basins in Limekiln Canyon Wash on the Storage Field property.
REPTILES				
Southwestern pond turtle *Actinemys marmorata pallida*	--	SSC	Streams, ponds, freshwater marshes, and lakes with growth of aquatic vegetation and adequate basking sites.	*Not Expected*: Suitable aquatic habitat, with basking sites, does not exist in riparian areas.
Silvery legless lizard *Anniella pulchra pulchra*	FSS	SSC	Leaf litter associated with sandy or loose loamy soil of high moisture content under sparse vegetation, particularly in coastal dune and oak woodland habitats.	*Expected*: Leaf litter in oak woodland habitat is likely to support this species.
Coast (San Diego) horned lizard *Phrynosoma coronatum* (*blainvilli* population)	FSS	SSC	Occurs in relatively open areas of coastal sage scrub, annual grassland, chaparral, oak woodland, riparian woodland, and coniferous forest habitat on sandy soil, often in association with harvester ants.	*Observed:* Suitable scrub habitat and friable soil exist throughout much of the alignment area. Species was observed near Tower 14-1.

Table 4.4-2
Special-Status Wildlife Species with the
Potential to Occur within the Proposed Project Study Area

Common Name and Scientific Name	Status		Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State		
Two-striped garter snake *Thamnophis hammondii*	BLM, FSS	SSC	Perennial and intermittent streams having rocky or sandy beds and artificially created aquatic habitats (man-made lakes and stock ponds); requires dense riparian vegetation.	*Expected*: Some riparian habitat exists within the Proposed Project study area in the Limekiln Canyon Wash and South Fork Santa Clara River drainage. While this habitat is not ideal, in that it is not of the dense nature preferred by this species, this species has been observed by SoCalGas personnel in Limekiln Canyon Wash on the Storage Field property.
BIRDS				
Cooper's hawk *Accipiter cooperi*	--	CDFG-WL SSC (nesting)	Nests in open forests, groves, or trees along rivers, or low scrub of treeless areas. The wooded area is often near the edge of a field or water opening.	*Observed:* One individual was observed perching on Tower 14-2 and later taking flight over the SCE 66 kV sub-transmission survey area. No nest was observed in the tower structure.
Grasshopper sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum*	--	SSC	Uncommon summer resident and breeder in foothills and lowlands west of the Cascade-Sierra Nevada crest from Mendocino and Trinity Counties south to San Diego County. Occurs in dry, dense grasslands, especially those with a variety of native grasses, tall forbs, and scattered shrubs for singing perches. A thick cover of grasses and forbs is essential for concealment. Occurs in southern California mainly on hillsides and mesas in coastal districts, but has bred up to 5000 feet (1500 meters) in the San Jacinto Mountains.	*Not Expected:* Several acres of grassland occur within the Proposed Project study area; however, it primarily comprises a monoculture of non-native grasses and does not provide the characteristics preferred by this species.
Golden eagle (nesting and wintering) *Aquila chrysaetos*	BCC, BLM	CDFG-FP/WL, CDF	Open terrain in deserts, mountains, slopes, and valleys. Nest mainly on cliffs, also in large trees (such as oaks), and rarely on artificial structures or the ground.	*Low Potential*: Open grassland for foraging and potential nesting areas in oaks and support towers occur throughout the study area. However, species is uncommon in the area; one reported observation in the region in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Table 4.4-2
Special-Status Wildlife Species with the
Potential to Occur within the Proposed Project Study Area

Common Name and Scientific Name	Status		Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State		
Burrowing owl *Athene cunicularia*	BCC, BLM	SSC	Open, dry grassland and desert habitats throughout California, or scrublands characterized by low-growing, widely spaced vegetation. Dependant upon burrowing mammals, especially California ground squirrel.	*Low Potential*: Ideal sparse grassland or scrub habitat with open areas and low vegetation does not generally occur within the Proposed Project study area. However, due to recent fires and slow stump sprouting, this species may spread to burrows in recovering scrub areas. There have been several recent observations of burrowing owl recorded in the region.
Western yellow-billed cuckoo (nesting) *Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*	FC, BCC	CE	Nests in thick willow riparian areas often mixed with cottonwood with an understory of blackberry, nettles, or wild grape.	*Not Expected*: The thick riparian habitat preferred by this species is not present in the Proposed Project study area. Willow habitat in Limekiln Canyon Wash and the unchannelized section of the South Fork Santa Clara River is not dense enough for nesting.
Yellow warbler *Dendroica petechia brewsteri*	--	SSC	Riparian habitats, preferably of willow, cottonwood, aspen, sycamore and alder for nesting and foraging. Also nests in montane shrubbery of open conifer forests.	*Not Expected:* Cottonwood – willow habitat in Limekiln Canyon wash may provide a suitable nesting and foraging area; however, this species has only been observed once in the region, in the Santa Clara river in 1979.
White-tailed kite (nesting) *Elanus leucurus*	--	CDFG-FP	Inhabits rolling foothills and valley margins with scattered oaks and river bottomlands or marshes next to deciduous woodland. Prefers open grasslands, meadows or marshes close to isolated dense-topped trees for nesting and perching.	*Moderate Potential*: Preferred habitat occurs throughout much of study area. Species was observed in 2005 along the Santa Clara River just west of I-5.
Yellow-breasted chat *Ictera virens*	--	SSC	Summer resident in riparian thickets of willow and other brushy tangles such as blackberry and wild grape near water courses. Forages and nests within 10 feet of the ground.	*Not Expected:* Riparian habitat within the study area does not provide the dense understory utilized by this species for nesting and foraging.

Table 4.4-2
Special-Status Wildlife Species with the
Potential to Occur within the Proposed Project Study Area

Common Name and Scientific Name	Status		Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State		
Coastal California gnatcatcher *Polioptila californica californica*	FT, ABC, AWL, USBC	SSC	Obligate, permanent resident of low coastal sage scrub on flat or gently sloping terrain below 2500 feet above mean sea level (MSL).	*Moderate Potential:* Suitable scrub habitat occurs within the Proposed Project area, particularly in the southern portion of SCE's 66 kV sub-transmission lines. It is possible that the species may be present in this area. It is also important to note that much of the study area lies within Critical Habitat for this species as designated by the USFWS.
Least Bell's vireo (nesting) *Vireo bellii pusillus*	FE, ABC, AWL, USBC, BCC	CE	Summer resident of riparian areas below 2000 feet above MSL. Nests primarily in willow, *Baccharis*, and mesquite.	*Low Potential*: Riparian habitat in Limekiln Canyon Wash drainage has some potential to support this species, though due to effects suffered during recent fires, this potential is low.
MAMMALS				
San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit *Lepus californicus bennettii*	--	SSC	Inhabits coastal sage scrub in southern California. Prefers intermediate canopy stages of shrub habitats and edges of shrub-herbaceous and tree-herbaceous transition areas.	*Moderate Potential*: Suitable scrub habitat does occur within the Proposed Project study area. Species was observed in 2005 approximately 3 miles south of Castaic Lake, 1-mile west of San Francisquito Canyon.
San Diego desert woodrat *Neotoma lepida intermedia*	--	SSC	Moderate to dense canopies in coastal scrub of southern California from San Diego County to San Luis Obispo County. Particularly abundant in rock outcrops, rocky cliffs, and slopes.	*Moderate Potential*: Suitable scrub habitat with rocky substrates is present throughout much of the Proposed Project study area. It is possible that this species occurs due presence of its preferred habitat. Woodrat nests were observed in oak woodlands in the area, but not within the study area.

Table 4.4-2
Special-Status Wildlife Species with the
Potential to Occur within the Proposed Project Study Area

Common Name and Scientific Name	Status		Habitat Requirements	Potential for Occurrence
	Federal	State		
Los Angeles pocket mouse *Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*	--	SSC	Prefers open ground with fine sandy soil in open grassland and coastal sage communities in and around the Los Angeles Basin. May not dig extensive burrows, but hide under weed and dead leaves.	*Low Potential:* Suitable habitat is present within the Proposed Project study area; however, only recorded occurrence of this specie was in 1903 in the San Fernando Valley.

STATUS KEY:

Federal
FE = Federally Endangered
FT = Federally Threatened
FC= Candidate for Federal Listing
BLM = Bureau of Land Management Sensitive
FSS = US Forest Service Sensitive
BCC = USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern (a watch list)

State
CE= California Endangered
CT= California Threatened
SSC= Species of Special Concern
CDFG-FP = CDFG Fully Protected
CDFG-WL = CDFG Watch List
CDF = California Department of Forestry Sensitive

Other
ABC = American Bird Conservancy Green List
AWL = Audubon Watch List
USBC = United States Bird Conservation Watch List
AFS = American Fisheries Society – Endangered (EN), Threatened (TH), and Vulnerable (VU)
WBWG = Western Bat Working Group (a watch list) – High (H), Medium (M), and Low (L) priorities
CDFG Special Animal = Species that do not have a formal designation by any resource agency, but that are considered sensitive resources by the CDFG due to declines known in population.

Sensitive Plant Communities

Four habitats types recognized as sensitive plant communities by the CDFG occur in the Proposed Project study area:

- Patches of coast live oak woodland occupy several areas along the existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission alignment as well as on the Storage Field property, totaling 1.71 acres within the Proposed Project study area.

- Two small areas of California walnut woodland totaling 0.07-acre occur adjacent to Towers 14-3 and 14-4 along the alignment of the existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines. Three additional burned areas of this community are located adjacent to Tower 13-3 (0.12-acre), in Limekiln Canyon Wash adjacent to the proposed guard house relocation area (0.12-acre), and to the south of the Porter Fee Road Staging Area (0.98-acre). Due to this disturbance, successional regrowth has resulted in these areas becoming dominated by fast-growing non-native species, including annual grasses, though some resprouting of the walnut trees is taking place.

- Approximately 0.1-acre of Southern Willow Scrub habitat occurs in the unchannelized section of the South Fork Santa Clara River that flows to the west of Towers 14-1 through 14-4, though it is

degraded due to urban influences, including channelization to the north and south and its proximity to Wiley Canyon Road.

- One community (0.29-acre) that is characterized as a mix of Southern Cottonwood – Willow Riparian Forest and Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, both of which are listed as sensitive plant communities by the CDFG, occurs on the Storage Field property occupying the Limekiln Canyon Wash drainage channel.

Jurisdictional Waters

Jurisdictional waters could include "Waters of the United States" and "Waters of the State," defined as follows:

Waters of the United States - a federal designation that includes traditionally navigable waters, wetlands adjacent to traditionally navigable waters, non-navigable tributaries of traditional navigable water that are relatively permanent (i.e., the tributaries typically flow year-round or have continuous flow at least seasonally), and wetlands that directly abut such tributaries.

Waters of the State - any surface or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of California. Waters of the state include natural streams , irrigation ditches or canals, ponds and waters in privately operated channels.

Jurisdictional waters are subject to a variety of state and federal regulatory review. Waters of the United States are under the jurisdictional administration of the USACE, under the provisions of Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA).[15] Waters of the State are subject to regulatory administration by the RWQCB, under the provisions of the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act.[16] In addition, the RWQCB, pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA,[17] has authority to review Section 404 permits. CDFG, under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code,[18] has regulatory authority over streambed and banks. Refer to Section 4.4.4.1, below, for a more detailed definition of the jurisdiction applicability of these agencies.

The goal of the field surveys conducted during April and June 2009 was to determine the general locations and conditions of potential jurisdictional resources; however, no comprehensive delineation or determination of the Federal and State jurisdictional waters and streams was conducted. If impacts to jurisdictional resources are anticipated, a comprehensive delineation would be required for submittal to the USACE for review.

[15] CFR, Title 33, Clean Water Act, Section 404, Navigation and Navigable Waters, Chapter 26 Water Pollution Prevention and Controls, Subchapter IV Permits and Licenses, Section 1344 Permits for dredged or fill material (1977, as amended 1994).

[16] California Water Code, (1969, as amended), *Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act*, Section 13020.

[17] Ibid, Certification.

[18] California Fish and Game Code, Section 1602. Online: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/1600/1600code.html.

Though the existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission system traverses several canyons and drainages, the areas of disturbance resulting from the proposed modification will be limited to the sites in which support structures are currently situated, which are generally in disturbed areas and on ridge tops. As such, significant impacts to jurisdictional areas along this alignment are not anticipated. There is one ~ 2,500-foot unchannelized section of the South Fork Santa Clara River, concrete lined to both the north and south, that flows just to the west of Towers 4-4 and 4-1. This section is populated by southern willow riparian scrub, interspersed with Fremont cottonwoods and its ordinary high water mark (OHWM) width ranges from 3 feet to 6 feet. Project plans do not include construction activities or the discharge of dredge or fill materials within the jurisdictional limits of this drainage; therefore, a Section 404 permit will not be required. The implementation of mitigation measures and BMPs are expected to limit potential indirect impacts such as sediment flows into this drainage, which will further reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

The Limekiln Canyon Wash flows through the Storage Field property, just west of the area in which the demolition of the existing compressor station and subsequent construction of a proposed Central Compressor Station will take place. Through this area, the average OHWM of this perennial stream measures 4 feet and the vegetation is dominated by coast live oak and tree willows interspersed with Fremont cottonwoods. While this drainage flows in relatively close proximity to the area in which a significant amount of Proposed Project activity will be taking place, project plans do not include construction activities or the discharge of dredge or fill materials within the jurisdictional limits of the drainage. The implementation of mitigation measures and BMPs is expected to limit potential impacts such as sediment flows into this drainage, which will further reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Protected Trees

Oak trees are a protected resource by both the City of Santa Clarita and Los Angeles County[19]. Under their respective oak tree ordinances, it is illegal to encroach upon, prune, or otherwise damage trees with a 6-inch or greater diameter-at-breast-height (DBH) (Santa Clarita) and 8-inch or greater DBH (Los Angeles County) without prior obtaining a permit to do so. The Los Angles County ordinance contains an exemption related to pruning during routine utility maintenance operations. There are several coast live and valley oaks throughout the alignment of SCE's existing 66 kV sub-transmission lines that are protected by these ordinances. In addition, within the proposed Central Compressor Station site, there is one oak tree that is protected by the County Ordinance. There are also several oak trees and at least one California walnut that may be impacted due to their location immediately adjacent to the proposed Central Compressor Station work area boundary.

4.4.1.5 Regulatory Setting

This section describes the regulatory framework surrounding the Proposed Project site. Discussed here are regulations ranging from the Federal level to local jurisdictions.

[19] Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, Chapter 22.56.2050, *Oak Tree Permit Regulations, Los Angeles County* (August 20, 1982, as amended).

Federal Regulations

- Federal Endangered Species Act

  The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), administered by the USFWS and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association Fisheries, Section 9(a)(1)(B),[20] prohibits the "take" of Federally listed Threatened and Endangered fish and wildlife species. However, the take provision does not apply to listed plants and Section 9(a)(2)(B) defers regulatory jurisdiction of listed plants on non-federal lands to the states. Refer to Section 4.4.4.2 for a discussion of state laws regulating impacts to sensitive plant species. FESA (Section 3(19)) defines "take" as any action that would harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect any Threatened or Endangered species. While unauthorized take is prohibited, provisions under the FESA allow for authorized 'incidental' take of listed species under certain terms and conditions while conducting otherwise lawful activities. Under the FESA regulatory program, there are two processes by which an applicant can procure an Incidental Take Permit (ITP):

  Section 7 – Applies to a project with a federal nexus, where a federal agency is authorizing, funding, or granting a permit on an activity that may affect listed species; and

  Section 10 – Applies to a project for which there is no federal nexus.

- Clean Water Act

  Wetlands and permanent and intermittent drainages, creeks, and streams are generally subject to the jurisdiction of the USACE under Section 404 of the Federal CWA.[21] By USACE definition, all aquatic or riverine habitats between the "ordinary high water mark" of rivers, creeks, and streams are potentially considered "Waters of the United States (US)" and may fall under USACE jurisdiction. Any discharge of dredge or fill materials into waters of the US, including wetlands, requires the procurement of a permit from the USACE pursuant to Section 404 of the Federal CWA. Discharge of dredge or fill materials includes the placement of dirt, rock, geotextiles, concrete, or culverts.

  The first step of the Section 404 compliance process is to evaluate the presence/absence of Waters of the US through completion of a jurisdictional delineation (JD). There are two options for a project relative to the JD process: a) a "preliminary JD" is a written indication that there may be Waters of the US, including wetlands, on a project site or indication of the approximate location(s) of Waters of the US on a site. A preliminary JD may be utilized in the USACE permit application process. Preliminary JDs are advisory in nature and may not be appealed.

[20] US Code, Title 16, Section 9, *Endangered Species Act*, (1973 as amended).

[21] CFR, Title 33, Section 404, *Clean Water Act*, Navigation and Navigable Waters, Chapter 26 Water Pollution Prevention and Controls, Subchapter IV Permits and Licenses, Section 1344 Permits for dredged or fill material (1977, as amended 1994).

An “approved JD” is a USACE document stating the presence or absence of Waters of the US, including wetlands, on a project site and may include a written statement and map identifying the limits of Waters of the US on a site (a determination that jurisdictional waters are completely absent from a given site is also an “approved JD”). Approved JDs are more formal and is a documented process, which can be appealed through the USACE administrative appeal process.

In June 2007, the USACE and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency issued a guidance document on the definition of a jurisdictional “Waters of the United States” under CWA Section 404. The guidance document was developed to implement the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in the June 2006 consolidated Rapanos and Carabell cases, which questioned the type of water bodies and wetlands that should be subject to the CWA. The guidance, commonly referred to as the “Rapanos Guidance,” introduces a new national water body and wetland classification scheme that may impact projects that propose activities within Waters of the US.

According to the guidance, Waters of the US are categorically considered to include navigable waters, relatively permanent tributaries to navigable waters, and wetlands adjacent to navigable waters and tributaries. Other waters, including ephemeral tributaries and isolated wetlands, could also be considered a Water of the US if determined on a case-by-case basis to have a “significant nexus” with a navigable water body. The guidance specifically identifies gullies, small washes, and many drainage ditches – all characterized by low volume, infrequent, and short duration flow – as generally non-jurisdictional under the CWA. The USACE will take the lead in implementing the new guidance with EPA involvement in “significant nexus” determinations of water bodies.

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918

The MBTA[22] protects all migratory birds native to the United States and their nests. This statute prohibits any person, unless permitted by regulations, to

> “pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, attempt to take, capture or kill, possess, offer for sale, sell, offer to purchase, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, cause to be shipped, deliver for transportation, transport, cause to be transported, carry, or cause to be carried by any means whatever, receive for shipment, transportation or carriage, or export, at any time, or in any manner, any migratory bird, included in the terms of this Convention . . . for the protection of migratory birds . . . or any part, nest, or egg of any such bird." (16 U.S.C. 703)

The list of migratory birds includes nearly all bird species native to the United States. The Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act of 2004 further defines the protected species and excludes all non-native bird species. The statute was amended in 1974 to include Parts of birds, as well as eggs and nests. Thus, it is illegal under the MBTA to directly kill or destroy an active nest of nearly any bird species, not just those listed as threatened or endangered under state or federal ESAs. In addition, activities that would result in the removal or destruction of an active nest, including inducing abandonment, would violate the MBTA.

[22] US Code, Title 16, Section 703-712*, Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918*, (1918 as amended)

State Regulations

- California Endangered Species Act

  Section 2080 of the CESA[23] prohibits the take of State-listed Threatened and Endangered species and also protects species that are candidates for listing. CESA is found within Division 3, Chapter 1.5, Article 3 of California Fish and Game Code. California Fish and Game Code defines "take" in Section 86 (found within Division 0.5, Chapter 1, General Definitions) as any action that would hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill any Threatened or Endangered species. If a Proposed Project may result in take of a listed species, an ITP pursuant to Section 2081 of CESA is required from the CDFG. Alternatively, in the case of a Project that is likely to impact species that are both Federally and State listed, the provisions of Section 2080.1 allows the CDFG to review the Federal document in support of the Federal ITP (i.e., the Biological Assessment [BA] document) for 'consistency' with the CESA. If the substantial requirements of CESA are addressed within the Federal BA, it would allow the CDFG to determine that it is consistent with CESA and state requirements. This mechanism of an integrated approach to CESA/FESA compliance precludes the need for a separate State ITP and generally streamlines the process. This process is only applicable for species that are both State and Federally listed.

- California Fish and Game Code

  Drainages. Streambeds are potentially subject to regulation by the CDFG under Sections 1600-1603 of the California Fish and Game Code.[24] Streambeds are defined in the California Code of Regulations (CCR)[25] as a body of water that flows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel having banks and that supports fish or other aquatic life. This definition includes watercourses having surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation. CDFG generally asserts that its jurisdiction extends to the edge of the riparian vegetation canopy associated with any stream. The CDFG requires that they be notified of activities within such a stream, including substantially diverting or obstructing the natural flow; substantially changing or using any material from the bed, channel, or bank; depositing or disposing of debris, waste, or other material where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake; and the removal of associated riparian vegetation requires. The CDFG requires a Streambed Alteration Agreement if the activity may substantially adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

  Protected Wildlife. The Proposed Project would also be subject to the requirements of Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code.[26] These regulations protect all

[23] California Fish and Game Code, Endangered Species Act, Section 2080 (1984).

[24] California Fish and Game Code, Endangered Species Act, Section 1600-1603. Online: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/1600/1600code.html

[25] CCR, Title 14, Chapter 1, Section 1.72.

[26] CCR, Title 14, Chapter 1, Sections 3503 and 3513. Online: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=fgc&group=03001-04000&file=3500-3516

native birds and their nests by making it unlawful to take any bird, their eggs, and active nests, including causing the abandonment of an active nest.

The state of California has also identified several "Fully Protected Species" that may not be taken or possessed at any time, including under incidental circumstances, except in the case of necessary scientific research. These species are listed in Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515. It is not anticipated that any of these Fully Protected Species will be encountered during implementation of the Proposed Project.

Native Plants. Sections 1900 – 1913, known as the Native Plant Protection Act, provides regulatory protection for endangered and rare plants in California. However, Section 1913(b) exempts some activities from NPPA requirements, including "*… the performance by a public agency or a publicly or privately owned public utility of its obligation to provide service to the public, shall not be restricted by this chapter because of the presence of rare or endangered plants,….*" This exemption is subject to a 10 day advance notification.

- California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Clean Water Act. Projects requiring a Section 404 permit also require a CWA, Section 401 Water Quality Certification. The Federal CWA, in Section 401, specifies that states must certify that any activity subject to a permit issued by a Federal Agency, such as the USACE 404 permit, meets all state water quality standards. In California, the State and regional water boards are responsible for certification of activities subject to USACE Section 404 permits. The State's implementing regulations to conduct certifications are codified under the CCR, Title 23 Waters, Sections 3830 through 3869.

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act. Protection of natural resources as defined in the Clean Water Act has been delegated authority to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. The State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB) administers a statewide general permit that covers a variety of construction activities that could result in wastewater discharges. Under this General Permit the State issues project-level construction permits for projects that disturb more than an acre of land (sometimes called a Section 402 Permit). Development of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) is required as part of the permit.

Porter Cologne Water Quality Act. In addition to the CWA, the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act allows the regional boards to protect the water quality of receiving waters. This Act[27] is the primary state regulation addressing water quality, and waste discharges (including dredged material) on land; and all permitted discharges must be in compliance with the Regional Basin Plan. For the proposed project site, the Act's requirements are implemented by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB).

27 California Water Code, Section 13000 et seq.; CCR, Title 23, Chapter 3, Chapter 15

Local Regulations

- Los Angeles County Draft General Plan – Conservation and Open Space Element

  Chapter 6 of Los Angeles County's Draft General Plan[28] provides a means for the County to "guide the long-range preservation and conservation of the County's natural resources and open space land, and sets policy direction for the open space, natural and energy-related resources of unincorporated Los Angeles County." This section of the General Plan generally defines the County's biological, water, and other natural resources and sets forth goals, policies, and actions to preserve and protect those resources.

  The Draft General Plan has not yet undergone final approval by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors; however, it is anticipated that major components of this section, including goals, policies, and procedures, will remain relatively unchanged upon adoption.

- Preliminary Draft Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan – Conservation and Open Space Element

  The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan is a supplement to the Los Angeles County General Plan intended to focus on providing a framework for development within unincorporated areas of the Santa Clarita Valley. Chapter 4 of the Area Plan, the Conservation and Open Space Element,[29] is similar to that in the Los Angeles County General Plan, but provides guidelines and procedures for preserving open space and biological, water, and other natural resources that consider the unique geographic and climatic conditions encountered in this area.

  A final version of this Area Plan has yet to be approved by the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. As with the General Plan, though, changes to the goals, policies, and procedures are likely to be minimal as the Area Plan is adopted.

- City of Santa Clarita General Plan – Conservation and Open Space Element

  The Conservation and Open Space Element of the City of Santa Clarita General Plan[30] provides goals and policies for managing open space in the City and preserving the City's and State's natural resources and specific measures for implementing those policies.

[28] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, *Draft General Plan*, Conservation and Open Space Element. 2008.
[29] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, *Preliminary Draft Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan*, Conservation and Open Space Element. 2008.
[30] City of Santa Clarita, *General Plan*, Conservation and Open Space Element. Adopted June 25, 1991, amended February 23, 1999.

4.4.1.6 Project Description on Biological Resources

This section discusses the potential impacts to biological resources that may result from the implementation of this Proposed Project. It is important to note that a final engineering plan detailing the implementation of this project has not yet been adopted and it is therefore difficult to calculate the precise extent of impacts to plant communities and other biological resources. Some of the impacts discussed below are referred to in general terms and, in the case of calculating acreages of habitat that may be affected, a generous estimation is provided that encompasses the entire Proposed Project study area, including the 25-meter buffer. These acreages are provided in Table 4.4-1. It is likely that actual impacts to vegetation will be less than the acreages provided below.

Direct impacts typically represent the physical alteration (i.e., loss of individuals or habitat degradation) of biological conditions on a project site as a result of project implementation. Indirect impacts are those reasonably foreseeable effects on remaining or adjacent biological resources that are caused by the project subsequent to project implementation over time.

The physical alteration of habitat is not, in itself, a significant impact under CEQA. Significance is determined by comparing physical alteration of habitat to each of the significance threshold criteria defined in the Project impact discussion below. For example, should the alteration of habitat result in the direct or indirect loss or have an otherwise substantial adverse effect on a species identified as a "candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the CDFG or USFWS," impacts would be considered significant unless a project implements mitigation that would reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

An evaluation of whether an impact on biological resources would be substantial and, therefore, a significant impact must consider both the resource and the CEQA threshold of significance criteria. For example, because of the dependence of most plant and wildlife species on native habitats to satisfy various life cycle requirements, a habitat-based approach that addresses the overall biological value of a particular plant community or habitat area is appropriate when determining whether alteration of that habitat will substantially affect special-status species, sensitive habitats, wetlands, and movement corridors. The relative biological value of a particular habitat area—its functions and values—can be determined by such factors as disturbance history, biological diversity, its importance to particular plant and wildlife species, its uniqueness or sensitivity status, the surrounding environment, and the presence or absence of special-status resources.

However, direct impacts with respect to specific plant and wildlife resources (e.g., active nests and individual plants and wildlife) are also evaluated and discussed when impacts to these resources, in and of themselves, could be considered significant or in conflict with local, State, and Federal statutes or regulations. The significance of impacts with respect to direct impacts on individuals or populations of plant and wildlife species takes into consideration the number of individual plants or animals potentially affected, how common or uncommon the species is (both within a site and from a regional perspective), and the sensitivity status if the species is considered to be of special status by resource agencies. These factors are evaluated based on the results of on-site biological surveys and studies, results of literature and database reviews, discussions with biological experts, and established and recognized ecological and biodiversity theory and assumptions.

It should be noted that potential impacts related to the Proposed Project discussed below will occur only during the construction phase of the Proposed Project. Once the buildings, equipment, and associated support infrastructure have been installed, the operation and maintenance of these facilities will be similar to that currently conducted by SoCalGas and SCE. Therefore, the discussion of impacts in this section is limited only to those that may be encountered during the construction phase of the Proposed Project.

4.4.2 Applicant Proposed Measures

Both SoCalGas and SCE company policies require the implementation of APMs to prevent impacts to biological resources for all construction activities. The following APMs will be implemented during construction related activities:

APM-BR-01: Pre-construction surveys will be conducted for nesting birds and other sensitive biological resources (including special-status wildlife and special-status plant species);

APM-BR-02: Protocol-level, focused pre-construction survey for gnatcatcher, where suitable habitat exists.

APM-BR-03: Exclusionary fencing will be installed around work and laydown/staging areas, where necessary; to prevent inadvertent encroachment into the native habitat adjacent to the required areas of impact. Protective construction fencing and silt fencing will be erected surrounding the work area where it abuts native habitat prior to the start of construction and/or demolition;

APM-BR-04: Biological monitoring will be conducted during construction work in areas in close proximity to native habitat to assure project compliance with all APM's and Mitigation Measures;

APM-BR-05: Prior to construction, a field survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist to detect if active nests of bird species protected by the MBTA and/or the California Fish and Game Code are present in the construction zone or within 100 feet (300 feet for raptors) of the construction zone. If detected, a minimum 50-foot exclusionary buffer will be established by temporary flagging or fencing (this distance may be greater depending on the bird species and construction activity, as determined by the biologist) between the nest site and construction activities. Clearing and construction within the fenced area shall be postponed or halted (except for vehicle traffic on existing roads), at the discretion of the biological monitor, until the nest is vacated and juveniles have fledged. The biologist shall serve as a construction monitor during those periods when construction activities occur near active nest areas to ensure that no inadvertent impacts on these nests will occur.

APM-BR-06: Special-status wildlife in-harm's way may be relocated to native habitat near the work area but outside the impact zone in order to avoid injury or mortality.

APM-BR-07: Pursuant to city of Santa Clarita/Los Angeles County ordinance guidelines, loss or impacts to all native oak trees via trimming or ground disturbance within the dripline shall be avoided using specific measures and/or agency guidance; if impacts cannot be avoided,

SoCalGas must submit an Oak Tree Permit Application (including an Oak Tree Report) to Los Angeles County and obtain an Oak Tree Permit prior to construction.

APM-BR-08: If substantial impacts to areas in which Plummer's mariposa lily are located are unavoidable, the Proponent shall consult the CDFG to determine appropriate mitigation procedures and monitoring requirements. However, it is important to note that under Section 1913(B) of the California Fish and Game Code, actions undertaken by an agency or publicly or privately owned public utility to fulfill its obligation to provide service to the public are exempted from take prohibitions under the Native Plant Protection Act.

Because the nature of the Proposed Project involves the replacement of buildings and infrastructure in areas that have been previously disturbed during the original development of these facilities, it is anticipated that impacts to sensitive biological resources will be minimal and will be reduced to a less-than-significant level by the APMs mentioned above in conjunction with the mitigation measure outlined below.

4.4.3 Significance Criteria

According to CEQA significance criteria and the CPUC's PEA checklists, the Proposed Project could cause a potentially significant impact if it would:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

4.4.4 Environmental Impact Analysis

The potential impact to biological resources from construction and operation of the Proposed Project was evaluated using the stated CEQA significance criteria and is presented in this section. For the purpose of

presenting potential biological resource impacts, CEQA criteria were evaluated and are discussed separately for construction and operations, by project component, where applicable.

4.4.4.1 Construction Impacts

Proposed Central Compressor Station, Proposed PPL, and Proposed Office Trailer, Guard House Relocation, and Construction Staging Areas

Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Native Vegetation/Special-status Plant Species

As previously discussed in the Special-status Plants subsection of Section 4.4.3.1, Existing Biological Conditions, Plummer's mariposa lily, a CNPS List 1B.2 species, has been identified to the northeast of the Plant Station in which the existing office trailer facility and compressor station will be dismantled and replaced. If the disturbance footprint extends into the areas in which this plant grows or its bulbs are located subsurface, implementation of the Proposed Project could result in the loss of individual plants or bulbs of this species. However, the number of individuals lost in proportion to the overall population of this species would not likely be considered a substantial adverse effect.

The project activities that are proposed to occur within the Plant Station area (locations of proposed office trailer relocation and proposed Central Compressor Station), the construction staging areas, and the soil processing site, P-32, of the Storage Field will likely take place entirely in areas that have been previously disturbed. However, many of those areas have experienced some revegetation of native species either through natural recruitment or planting/ seeding. Table 4.4-1 lists the areas of each plant community that have the potential to be impacted in the Plant Station, construction staging areas, and soil processing site. Based on the final project design, a relatively small amount of native vegetation may be required to be removed to facilitate demolition, construction, and/or the processing of fill. This removal will not be at a scale that will significantly impact the wildlife that utilizes these habitat types.

APM-BR-03 and APM-BR-04 shall be implemented before and during demolition, grading, and construction on the Storage Field property to reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Special-status Wildlife Species

The fire that recently affected the Storage Field decreased the quality of native scrub habitat that exists on the steep slopes throughout the property. In addition, the Proposed Project impact areas are, for the most part, developed or otherwise disturbed. Due to these facts and based on the high level of regular activity associated with the operation of the facility, it is unlikely that most sensitive wildlife species would establish a significant population or occur as permanent residents in the Proposed Project impact areas. However, there is some potential that individuals of these species may be present as a transient during implementation of the Proposed Project and may be injured or killed as a result of the Proposed Project activities.

Sensitive aquatic species such as the two-striped garter snake and Coast Range newt are known to occur in Limekiln Canyon Wash, which is in close proximity to the proposed construction in the Plant Station area. Because the Proposed Project will not encroach into the drainage and would not result in the removal of riparian vegetation, impacts to these species will likely be less than significant. The pre-construction surveys and biological monitoring proposed by the project proponent as APM-BR-01 and APM-BR-06 will further reduce the potential that individuals of these species would be impacted in the event that they stray from the riparian corridor. In addition, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared prior to implementation of the project to address the potential for contamination during the course of construction into local drainage areas. The SWPPP will ensure that measures are in place to contain sediment, debris, and other byproducts of the construction process within the boundaries of disturbance. The percent of total impervious surfaces following project development will be comparable to that of the existing facility. Therefore, there will be no significant indirect impacts to sensitive aquatic wildlife resulting from increased runoff from the facility.

With the implementation of APM-BR-01 through APM-BR-05, potential impacts to special-status wildlife species would be evaluated and minimized. If special-status wildlife species are identified in the Proposed Project area, APM-BR-06 would be implemented to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Nesting Birds

It is possible that native bird species may utilize the trees, scrub, landscaping, or other areas in the vicinity of the Plant Station and Soils Processing Site to nest during the breeding season, which generally takes place March through August. If construction were to take place during breeding season, impacts to these nesting birds, their eggs, or young could result.

With the implementation of APM-BR-01, the potential impacts to nesting areas would be minimized. If active nests are found, APM-BR-05 would be implemented to reduce impacts to levels below significance.

Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

One stretch of riparian habitat, classified as Southern Cottonwood – Willow/Coast Live Oak Woodland, occurs in the Limekiln Canyon Wash drainage to the west of the Plant Station and a small area of Coast Live Oak Woodland occurs to the northeast of the Plant Station. Each of these vegetation types is considered sensitive by the CDFG. Based on the final project design, these areas may be near enough to the construction activities that impacts to native vegetation, such as the trimming of overhanging branches, may result. However, because construction activities will be focused in previously disturbed areas that are currently occupied by existing facility structures, these impacts would be minimal and would not result in the large-scale removal of native habitat. Fencing and signage described in APM-BR-03, as well as on-site biological monitoring would serve to alert construction personnel to the limits of the work area and protect adjacent sensitive habitat.

Due to temporary impacts from construction activities to native habitat for Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub (CSS), the project will be required to mitigate these native communities to avoid a significant impact for

the Proposed Project. Through rehabilitation of these native communities, the temporary impacts due to construction activities will be mitigated to less than significant.

Would the Proposed Project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

The implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in the placement of fill or other significant impacts to the one potentially jurisdictional resource, Limekiln Canyon Wash, in the immediate vicinity of the Storage Field impact areas. As discussed above, minor trimming of riparian vegetation adjacent to the Plant Station work area may be necessary; however, with the implementation of APM-BR-03 and APM-BR-04, impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level due to the confinement of construction to existing disturbed areas and the drainage's location on the periphery of this work area. If required, a 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) Notification Package will be submitted to the CDFG.

Would the Proposed Project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Wildlife movement corridors are linear landscape elements that serve as linkages between historically connected habitats and natural areas, thereby facilitating wildlife movement between these natural areas. There is a known migration corridor that connects the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast of the 5 and 14 Freeways interchange to the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains to the west of the 5 Freeway. As discussed above, impacts to native habitat will be limited to the areas immediately surrounding existing areas of disturbance that will be replaced and no large scale removal of vegetation or construction of facilities outside of these disturbed areas is proposed as part of this project. This level of impact would not be significant relative to the function of the wildlife movement corridor.

Would the Proposed Project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Both the city of Santa Clarita and Los Angeles County have formal tree protection ordinances for native oak trees, which are considered sensitive resources. As depicted on Figure 4.4-1, there are numerous coast live oak trees present within the Plant Station impact area and based on the final project design, some of these trees may require removal and/or trimming to implement the Proposed Project. With implementation of APM-BR-07, potentially significant impacts to oak trees would be reduced to a less than significant impact.

Would the Proposed Project conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

No such plans have been adopted in the Storage Facility area; therefore the project would not conflict with any such provisions. As such, no impacts would result from implementation of the project.

Proposed Natural Substation

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Native Vegetation/Special-status Plant Species

There were no sensitive plants observed at the proposed SCE Natural Substation study area. The construction activities associated with the proposed SCE Natural Substation will likely take place entirely in areas that have been previously disturbed during the construction and subsequent maintenance of the existing infrastructure. The proposed SCE Natural Substation will measure 270 feet by 122 feet, which will result in permanent impacts to 0.76-acre of vegetation. Table 4.4-1 lists the areas of each plant community that have the potential to be impacted. Based on the final Proposed Project design, a relatively small amount of native vegetation may be required to be removed during Proposed Project implementation. This removal will not be at a scale that will significantly impact the wildlife that utilizes these habitat types.

Concerns regarding impacts to native habitat in areas of the proposed SCE Natural Substation are in line with those addressed above in Construction Impacts - Proposed Central Compressor Station, Proposed PPL, and Proposed Office Trailer, Guard House Relocation, and Construction Staging Areas. With the implementation of APM-BR-01, APM-BR-03 and APM-BR-04 potential impacts would be minimized. MITIGATION-BR-01 will be implemented if significant areas of native habitat are impacted during construction, which will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Special-status Animal Species

The disturbed nature of the habitat on the hilltop of the proposed SCE Natural Substation location significantly decreases the potential that this area would support a viable population of sensitive animals. There is some potential that one of these species may be present as a transient during implementation of the Proposed Project and may be taken as a result of Proposed Project activities. APM-BR-01 and APM-BR-03 through APM-BR-06 will be implemented if a special-status animal is likely to be impacted during construction. This will serve to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Nesting Birds

It is possible that native bird species may utilize the scrub or man-made structures in the vicinity of the proposed SCE Natural Substation location to nest during the breeding season, which generally takes place March through August. If construction were to take place during breeding season, adverse impacts to these nesting birds, their eggs, or young could result. SCE's existing Avian Protection Plan will be implemented during project construction to reduce and avoid adverse impacts. APM-BR-05 will be implemented if nesting birds have the potential to be impacted during construction. This will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

No riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community exists in the proposed Natural Substation study area; therefore, there would be no impact.

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

No wetlands or other jurisdictional features exist in the Natural Substation study area; therefore, there would be no impact.

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Wildlife movement corridors are linear landscape elements that serve as linkages between historically connected habitats and natural areas, thereby facilitating wildlife movement between these natural areas. There is a known migration corridor that connects the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast of the 5 and 14 Freeways interchange to the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains to the west of the 5 Freeway. Construction of the proposed SCE Natural Substation will be limited to previously disturbed areas and no large scale removal of vegetation or construction of facilities outside of these disturbed areas is proposed as part of this project. This level of impact would not be significant relative to the function of the wildlife movement corridor.

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

No biological resources protected by local policies or ordinances occur in the proposed Natural Substation study area; therefore, there would be no impact.

Would construction of the proposed Natural Substation conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

No such plans have been adopted in the Proposed Project area; therefore, there would be no impact.

Proposed 66 kV Sub-transmission System Modification

Would proposed modifications to SCE's 66 kV sub-transmission system have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

Native Vegetation/Special-status Plant Species

As previously discussed in the Special-status Plants subsection of Section 4.4.3.1, Existing Biological Conditions, slender mariposa lily, a CNPS List 1B.2 species, has been identified in the vicinity of several locations along the 66 kV alignment in which project activities, including ground disturbance, vegetation clearing, and construction, will be taking place. If the disturbance footprint extends into the areas in which this plant grows or its subsurface bulbs are located, implementation of the proposed project could result in the loss of individual plants or bulbs of this species. However, the number of individuals lost in proportion to the overall population of this species would not likely be considered a substantial adverse effect.

The replacement of the 66 kV support structures will take place entirely in areas that have been previously disturbed during the original construction of the 66 kV sub-transmission lines. However, through natural succession, native plant communities have re-grown at some of these tower locations. Table 4.4-1 lists the areas of each plant community by tower location. In many cases, a relatively small amount of native vegetation will be required to be removed to facilitate the removal of the existing support structures and the construction of the new TSPs. This removal will not be at a scale that will significantly impact the wildlife that utilizes these habitat types.

Concerns regarding impacts to native habitat and species along the SCE 66 kV sub-transmission alignment is in line with those addressed above in Construction Impacts of the proposed Central Compressor Station. With the implementation of APM-BR-01, APM-BR-03, and APM-BR-04, the potential impacts to native habitat would be minimized. If native habitat is impacted during construction APM-BR-06 and MITIGATION-BR-01 would be implemented to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Special-status Animal Species

As discussed in the Special-status Wildlife subsection of Section 4.4.3.2, Existing Biological Conditions, several sensitive species were observed or have the potential to occur within areas that will be impacted by project construction. While impacts to areas of native vegetation will be minor, in the event that any of these species were present within the work area during construction, there would be potential for injury or mortality.

With the implementation of APM-BR-01, APM-BR-03, and APM-BR-04, the potential impacts to special-status animal species would be minimized. If a special-status animal species has the potential to be impacted during construction APM-BR-06 would be implemented to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Nesting birds

It is possible that native bird species may utilize the trees, scrub, landscaping, or other areas along the existing SCE 66 kV sub-transmission alignment, to nest during the breeding season, which generally takes place March through August. In fact, two nests, one occupied by a red-tailed hawk, were observed in the lattice structure of two support towers. If construction were to take place during breeding season, impacts to these nesting birds, their eggs, or young could result.

With the implementation of SCE's Avian Protection Plan, APM-BR-01, APM-BR-03, and APM-BR-04, the potential impacts to nesting birds would be minimized. If a nesting bird could be impacted during construction, APM-BR-05 would be implemented to reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Would the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?

One area of riparian habitat, classified as Southern Willow Scrub, to the west of Tower 4-4 may be located in close proximity to the work area such that impacts to native vegetation, such as the trimming of overhanging branches, could occur. However, based on the relatively small work area and the separation of the work area and the riparian corridor, these impacts will be minimal and would not result in the large-scale removal of native habitat.

Areas of Walnut Woodland, a CDFG sensitive community, occur in the vicinity of Towers 14-3 and 14-4. These pockets of habitat are far enough from the work area to avoid impacts from the replacement of the 66 kV support structures.

Concerns regarding impacts to sensitive natural communities along the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications are in line with those addressed above in Construction Impacts of the proposed Central Compressor Station. As such, MITIGATION-BR-01 will be implemented in this area to reduce potential impacts to these biological resources to a less-than-significant level.

Would the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

The implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in the removal of or significant impacts to jurisdictional resources along the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications. As discussed above, minor trimming of riparian vegetation adjacent to Tower 4-4 may be necessary; however, impacts would be less than significant due to the small footprint of the work area and its location outside the limits of the limits of the OHWM; there would be no discharge of fill materials into the waters of the United States.

Would the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Wildlife movement corridors are linear landscape elements that serve as linkages between historically connected habitats and natural areas, thereby facilitating wildlife movement between these natural areas. There is a known migration corridor that connects the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains to the northeast of the 5 and 14 Freeways interchange to the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains to the west of the 5 Freeway. As discussed above, impacts to native habitat will be limited to the areas immediately surrounding the support towers that will be replaced and no large scale removal of

vegetation or construction of facilities is included as part of this proposed project. This level of impact would not be significant relative to the function of the wildlife movement corridor.

Would the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

As noted in Section 4.4.1.1, a segment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission lines to be modified, located to the west of the Sunshine Canyon Landfill, passes through the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA as designated by Los Angeles County. The County General Plan mandates that SEAs be maintained in as natural a condition as possible, without considering them formal preserves and prohibiting development within their boundaries. The Proposed Project is not expected to disrupt the SEA's function due to the fact that impacts will primarily be limited to previously disturbed areas and wildlife movement will not be impeded by the replacement of the existing transmission system. In addition, the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification will be constructed by SCE, which is exempt from SEATAC consultation per G.O. 131-D. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant to the designated SEA within the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification.

Would the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modifications conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

No such plans have been adopted in the Proposed Project area. However, as stated in Section 4.9 Land Use, General Plan policy mandates the conservation of SEAs in as viable and natural a condition as possible without treating them as preserves and prohibiting development. The portion of the SCE 66 kV alignment that parallels the boundary line of the city and county of Los Angeles is located within the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA. According to the proposed update to the Los Angeles County General Plan (2008), this SEA is "largely undisturbed by the urbanization that has occurred both to the south (San Fernando Valley) and to the north (Santa Clarita). These wilderness areas are important for maintaining gene flow and wildlife movement between the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains, which are now largely isolated from one another by urban development."

The Proposed Project is not expected to disrupt the SEA's function as a wildlife corridor nor create a geographical barrier for gene flow, as wildlife could move freely underneath the existing 66 kV sub-transmission system. In addition, construction activities at the Storage Facility will primarily occur in previously disturbed areas. The Proposed Project does not affect wildlife culverts under the freeway and any proposed fencing occurs in areas that have previously been fenced. Grading activities may temporarily result in the conversion of natural habitat for pole placement; however these activities are not expected to impede wildlife movement. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant to the designated SEA within the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-transmission modification

4.4.5 Mitigation Measures

Construction activities may have a significant impact on native Venturan CSS habitat. The native habitat was identified throughout the Proposed Project site including approximately 1.47 acres within the Plant Station, within the Storage Field, approximately 0.12 acres within the proposed SCE Natural Substation location, and approximately 7.44 acres total within the alignment of the proposed SCE 66 kV sub-

transmission modification. The final Proposed Project design impacts significant areas of native habitat, BIO-MM-01 would be implemented to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

BIO-MM-01 To mitigate potential impacts to the Venturan CSS habitat, a Habitat Restoration Plan will be prepared, detailing plans to replant and/or seed impact areas. The plan will include planting and seeding palettes and a monitoring and contingency program. The Habitat Restoration Plan will be prepared prior to construction and will include details on the monitoring schedule, duration and specific measures required to ensure success of the restoration effort.

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