

E.3.5 Wilderness and Recreation

The definition of a recreation area and a wilderness area detailed in Section D.5 will be used for the Wilderness and Recreation analysis for the Route D Alternative. The Route D Alternative is a 16.8-mile 500 kV overhead segment that would deviate from the Interstate 8 Alternative at MP I8-70.3 and travel north through CNF and private lands to connect to the Central South Substation Alternative, which is described and analyzed below. This alternative route would traverse or be located adjacent to recreation and wilderness areas under the jurisdiction of the Viejas Indian Reservation and CNF. Refer to Figure E.1.5-1 for a map of the Route D Alternative and nearby recreation and wilderness areas. This alternative would not traverse any federal or State wilderness or wilderness study areas. However, the alternative route would traverse portions of the proposed Eagle Peak Wilderness Area.

E.3.5.1 Environmental Setting

From MP I8-70.3 (MP D-0), the Route D Alternative would travel north, immediately east of the Viejas Indian Reservation and approximately 0.5 miles east of the Ma-Tar-Awa RV Park, which is located on the Reservation. The RV park includes a clubhouse, swimming pool, RV hookups, campsites, and shuttle service to the Viejas Casino (Ma-Tar-Awa, 2007). Continuing north, the alternative route would cross the California Riding and Hiking Trail near MP D-1.2 and would pass approximately 2 miles west of the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park on CNF land.

The Route D Alternative would traverse portions of the proposed Eagle Peak Wilderness within the CNF. Five distinct units would comprise the Eagle Peak Wilderness, as proposed, and the alternative route would pass through three and between two of these units, as shown on revised Figure E.1.5-1. The proposal to designate this area as federal wilderness, is part of a larger proposal (S.493: California Wild Heritage Act of 2007) to designate more than 2 million acres of federal land in California as wilderness. On February 6, 2007, the bill was a referral to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for review (Govtrack.us, 2007). As of July 5, 2008, S.493 was still in this first step of the legislative process. The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources is expected to deliberate, investigate, and revise the bill before it would go to general debate (Govtrack.us, 2007). Many bills do not continue beyond committee.

The alternative route would intersect the Trans-County Trail at approximately MP D-9.4. The trail crosses the alternative ROW three times in the following 0.3-mile segment. Then, both the trail and the alternative route would turn northwest and the alternative would be approximately 1 mile northeast of the Trail for almost 3 miles (to MP D-13.5) before the Trail turns southwest and away from the alternative route (refer to Figure E.1.5-1). In Figure E.1.5-1, the Trans-County Trail is shown with a dashed line on CNF land because a trail route across the National Forest has not been officially approved. Near the Trans-County Trail, the alternative route would be located approximately one mile northeast of Cedar Falls (also known as Devil's Punchbowl), a popular hiking destination with panoramic views of the San Diego River Valley. Between MP D-13.5 and the Central South Substation Alternative, the route would continue northwest through CNF and private lands.

E.3.5.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table E.3.5-1 summarizes the impacts of the Route D Alternative for wilderness and recreation.

Table E.3.5-1. Impacts Identified – Alternatives – Wilderness and Recreation

Impact No.	Description	Impact Significance
Route D Alternative		
WR-1	Construction activities would temporarily reduce access and visitation to recreation or wilderness areas	Class II
WR-2	Presence of a transmission line or substation would permanently change the character of a recreation area, diminishing its recreational value	Class I
WR-3	Presence of the transmission line would permanently preclude recreational activities	Class II
WR-4	Presence of a transmission line in a designated wilderness or wilderness study area would result in loss of wilderness land	No Impact
Central South Substation Alternative – No Impacts		

Construction Impacts

Impact WR-1: Construction activities would temporarily reduce access and visitation to recreation or wilderness areas (Class II)

The Route D Alternative would cross the Trans-County Trail at MP D-9.4 and continue to roughly parallel the trail for 3 miles. Construction activities along the Trans-County Trail would create a hazard to recreationists and a temporary closure of this trail during project construction would result in a significant impact. In order to allow for continued use of the Trans-County Trail, Mitigation Measure WR-1b (Provide temporary detours for trail users) would be implemented. Additionally, implementation of Mitigation Measures WR-1a (Coordinate construction schedule with the authorized officer for the recreation area) and WR-1c (Coordinate with local agencies to identify alternative recreation areas) would reduce construction-related impacts of the Route D Alternative to recreational resources to less than significant levels. (Class II).

Mitigation Measure for Impact WR-1: Construction activities would temporarily reduce access and visitation to recreation or wilderness areas

- WR-1a** **Coordinate construction schedule and activities with the authorized officer for the recreation area.**
- WR-1b** **Provide temporary detours for trail users.**
- WR-1c** **Coordinate with local agencies to identify alternative recreation areas.**

Operation Impacts

Impact WR-2: Presence of a transmission line or substation would permanently change the character of a recreation area, diminishing its recreational value (Class I)

The landscape along the Route D Alternative ROW is remote and predominantly natural in appearance, which attracts outdoor recreationists, such as hikers. As described above, the alternative route would intersect the Trans-County Trail at approximately MP D-9.4 and would be approximately 1 mile northeast of the Trail for almost 3 miles (to MP D-13.5) before the trail turns southwest and away from the alternative route. Where the route and the trail intersect, there would be unauthorized motorized access to the trail if preventative measures are not taken. The Route D Alternative would traverse portions of the proposed Eagle Peak Wilderness within the CNF, approximately between MPs D-6 and

D-7, D-10 and D-13, and D-14.3 and D-15.3 (refer to Figure E.1.5-1). The alternative route would be adjacent to and east of an existing 69 kV overhead transmission line between approximately MPs D-8 and D-11, the area where the alternative ROW would be near the Trans-County Trail and between two of the proposed Eagle Peak Wilderness parcels, the Route D transmission line would be adjacent to and east of an existing 69 kV overhead transmission line. However, because the Eagle Peak Wilderness is not currently designated, no impact on designated wilderness would occur. Additionally, the Route D Alternative would be visible from Cedar Falls, a hiking destination with panoramic views of the San Diego River Valley to the north. Although the existing 69 kV line is also visible from this location, the Route D 500 kV steel lattice towers visible from the Trans-County Trail and Cedar Falls would be substantially larger and more industrial than the existing 69 kV support structures, as described in Section E.3.3, Visual Resources.

The alternative route would be immediately adjacent to the Ma-Tar-Awa RV Park in a new ROW without other overhead utilities. The community of Alpine's rural setting is advertised as one of the assets of Ma-Tar-Awa RV Park, which would not be consistent with the presence of the large, industrial steel towers for the Route D 500 kV line.

Within these areas, construction of the 500 kV transmission line would introduce a new feature, much more industrial in character than the existing 69 kV lines that are currently parallel to some of the northern segments of the alternative ROW. As described in Section E.3.3, Visual Resources, the increase in structural complexity and industrial character resulting from presence of the Route D Alternative would contrast with the surrounding natural landscape. Additionally, the corona noise from the 500 kV line would substantially elevate the ambient noise levels within 500 feet of the edge of the 500 kV ROW in the natural areas along the Route D Alternative (i.e., Trans-County Trail and California Riding and Hiking Trail corridors and Ma-Tar-Awa RV Park). Refer to Section E.3.8 for additional information on noise impacts along the Route D Alternative.

Where the route would intersect a trail, there is the potential for unauthorized motorized access to be gained to the trail, damaging the trail and disrupting its use by others (Class II). Biological Resources Mitigation Measure (Provide restoration/compensation for affected sensitive vegetation communities) includes a provision requiring that after construction entrances to access roads shall be gated and signs prohibiting unauthorized use of the access roads shall be posted on the gates. Visual resource and noise impacts would directly and adversely affect the character of recreation areas along the Route D Alternative and result in a significant and unmitigable impact (Class I). Visual Resources Mitigation Measures V-3a (Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors) and V-45a (Prepare and implement Scenery Conservation Plan) and Noise Mitigation Measure N-3a (Respond to complaints of corona noise) would reduce impacts to the recreational value of the recreation areas along the Route D Alternative, but the impact would remain significant. The full text of the visual and noise mitigation measures presented below is provided in Appendix 12, along with the full text of all other mitigation measures. Mitigation Measure V-45a is specific to Forest Service land.

Mitigation Measures for Impact WR-2: Presence of a transmission line or substation would permanently change the character of a recreation area, diminishing its recreational value

B-1a Provide restoration/compensation for affected sensitive vegetation communities.

V-3a Reduce visual contrast of towers and conductors.

V-45a Prepare and implement Scenery Conservation Plan.

N-3a Respond to complaints of corona noise.

Impact WR-3: Presence of the transmission line would permanently preclude recreational activities (Class II)

The Route D Alternative would cross the California Riding and Hiking Trail near MP D-1.2 and the Trans-County Trail three times near MP D-9.4. If transmission support structures were sited on the trails, recreationists would be permanently precluded from these locations. Exact locations of transmission support structures have not been determined. Although preliminary locations have been proposed, these may be modified based on site-specific environmental conditions (i.e., slope stability, presence of sensitive biological or cultural resources). This impact analysis, therefore, conservatively assumes that structures would be sited on trails. Impacts to existing recreational resources that resulted from locating new towers on or immediately adjacent to the trail would be significant. Preclusion of the use of the Trans-County Trail would be mitigated to a less than significant level (Class II) through implementation of Mitigation Measure WR-3a (Coordinate tower and road locations with the authorized officer for the recreation area).

Mitigation Measure for Impact WR-3: Presence of the transmission line would permanently preclude recreational activities

WR-3a Coordinate tower and road locations with the authorized officer for the recreation area.

Impact WR-4: Presence of a transmission line in a designated wilderness or wilderness study area would result in loss of wilderness land (No Impact)

The Route D ROW would not traverse any wilderness areas or WSAs. As such, direct impacts to these resources would not occur.

E.3.5.3 Central South Substation Alternative

The Central South Substation would be constructed as part of the Route D Alternative to transition from 500 kV to double-circuit 230 kV. This substation would be located on private land at the north end of the Route D transmission line segment where the alternative rejoins the Proposed Project route (MP 113.5), west of the crossing of the San Diego River Canyon. This substation would not be near or visible from any wilderness or recreation areas or their primary access routes. As such, impacts to wilderness or recreation areas would not occur from construction or operation of the Central South Substation.

E.3.5.4 Future Transmission System Expansion

For the Proposed Project and route alternatives along the Proposed Project route, Section B.2.7 identifies Future Transmission System Expansion routes for both 230 kV and 500 kV future transmission lines. These routes are identified, and impacts are analyzed in Section D of this EIR/EIS, because SDG&E has indicated that transmission system expansion is foreseeable, possibly within the next 10

years. For the SWPL alternatives, 500 kV and 230 kV expansions would also be possible. The potential expansion routes for the Route D Alternative are described in the following paragraphs.

230 and 500 kV Future Transmission System Expansion

The Route D Alternative would begin at approximately MP I8-70 and would head northward until it reached the Central South Substation Alternative at approximately MP 114.5 of the Proposed Project. The Route D Alternative would convert to 230 kV at the Central South Substation and a double-circuit 230 kV line would be constructed southwest from that substation to the Sycamore Canyon Substation. The Central South Substation would accommodate up to six 230 kV circuits and an additional 500 kV circuit. Only two 230 kV circuits are proposed at this time, but construction of additional 230 kV circuits and a 500 kV circuit out of the Central South Substation may be required in the future. There are two routes that are most likely for these future lines; each is addressed below. Figure E.1.1-6 illustrates the potential routes of the future transmission lines.

Additional 230 and 500 kV circuits could follow the Proposed Project corridor starting at MP 114.5. The routes could either: (1) follow the Proposed Project corridor southwest to the Chicarita Substation and then follow the Proposed Project's 230 kV Future Transmission Expansion System (see description in Section B.2.7) from Chicarita to the Escondido Substation; or (2) the Proposed Project northeast to the Proposed Central East Substation and then follow the Proposed Project's 500 kV Future Transmission Expansion route shown in Figure B-12b (see description in Section B.2.7). See Section D.5.2, D.5.7, D.5.8, and D.5.9 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures for the Central, Inland Valley, and Coastal Links of the Proposed Project. See Section D.5.11 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures for the Future Transmission System Expansion of the Proposed Project.

References

[GovTrack.us. S.493 – 110th Congress \(2007\): California Wild Heritage Act of 2007, GovTrack.us \(database of federal legislation\). http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s110-493. Accessed April -27, 2008.](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s110-493)