

2.2 Agriculture Resources

<u>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</u>	<u>Potentially Significant Impact</u>	<u>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</u>	<u>Less Than Significant Impact</u>	<u>No Impact</u>
2. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES				
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland.				
Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This section provides a description of local agricultural resources on parcels through which the Proposed Project would traverse and within the project vicinity. A general overview of applicable State and county regulations is also provided. The impact analysis evaluates the Proposed Project’s potential to adversely affect existing agricultural resources and mitigation is identified, where appropriate, to reduce these project impacts.

Setting

Existing Agriculture Resources Overview

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, there are 610,388 acres of farmland in Siskiyou County (USDA, 2002). The Proposed Project would traverse parcels that are currently agricultural in nature. Use of the parcels varies from open fields to grazing to cattle ranching. The Weed Segment would traverse parcels that are primarily industrial and residential in character. Please refer to Section 2.9, *Land Use and Planning*, for a more detailed description of existing land uses through which the Proposed Project and Weed Segment would traverse.

Important Farmland

To characterize the environmental baseline for agricultural resources, Important Farmland Maps produced by the Department of Conservation’s Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) were reviewed. Important Farmland maps show categories of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance (if adopted by the county), Grazing Land, Urban and Built-up Land, Other Land, and Water. Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance map categories are based on qualifying soil types, as determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation

Service (NRCS), as well as current land use. These map categories are defined by the Department of Conservation's FMMP as follows:

Prime Farmland: Land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods.

Farmland of Statewide Importance: Land that is similar to *Prime Farmland* but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to hold and store moisture.

Unique Farmland: Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of specific high economic value crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. It is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Examples of crops include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers.

Farmland of Local Importance: Land of importance to the local agricultural economy, as determined by each county's board of supervisors and local advisory committees. Examples include dairies, dryland farming, aquaculture, and uncultivated areas with soils qualifying for *Prime Farmland* and *Farmland of Statewide Importance*.

Grazing Land: Land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of livestock.

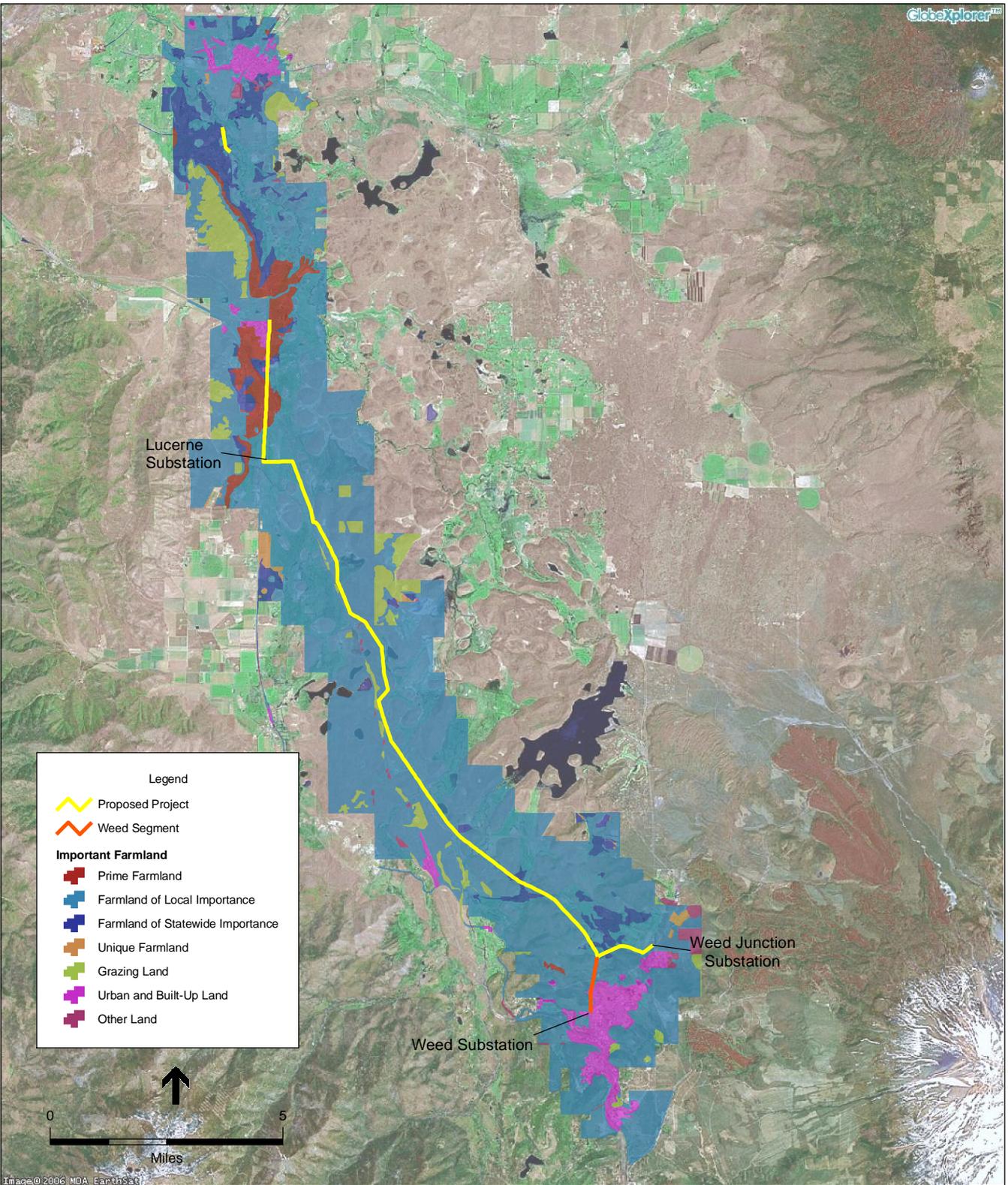
Urban and Built-up Land: Land used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administrative purpose, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment plants, water control structures, and other development purposes. Highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities are also included in this category.

Other Land: Land which is not included in any of the other mapping categories. Common examples include low-density rural developments, brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing, confined livestock, poultry or aquaculture facilities, strip mines, borrow pits, and water bodies smaller than 40 acres.

Water: Water areas with an extent of at least 40 acres.

The Proposed Project and Weed Segment would traverse parcels that contain soils classified as *Prime Farmland*, *Farmland of Statewide Importance*, and *Unique Farmland* (Figure 2-1). Most of the Proposed Project would cross land designated as *Farmland of Local Importance*. In addition, the Proposed Project would cross designated *Prime Farmland* on parcels 61, 62, 67, 68, 10, 74, 73, 75, 76, and 77 and designated *Farmland of Statewide Importance* on parcels 14, 15, 17, 20, 23, 10, 120, 121, 128, 129, and 132 (Figures 2.2-1(a) through 2.2-1(g)). The Lucerne Substation is designated as *Urban and Built Land* and *Farmland of Local Importance* (FMMP, 2004). The Weed Segment would traverse parcels designated mostly as *Urban and Built Land* but would also cross parcels

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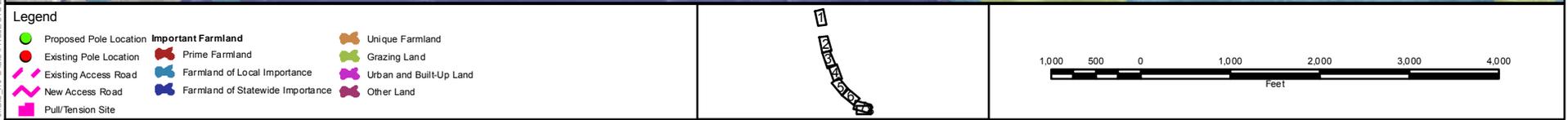
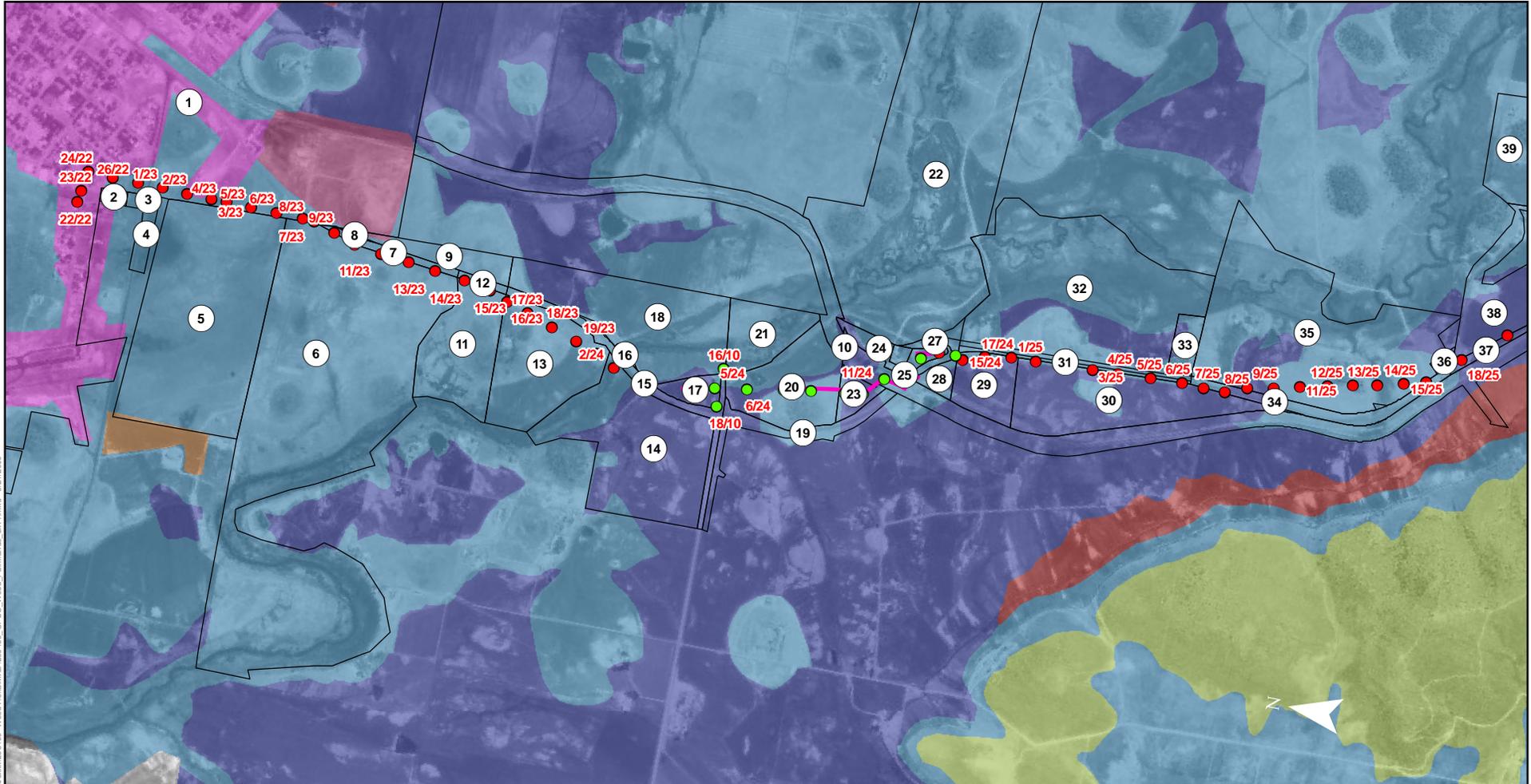
- Proposed Project
- Weed Segment

Important Farmland

- Prime Farmland
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Unique Farmland
- Grazing Land
- Urban and Built-Up Land
- Other Land

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439
 SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

Figure 2.2-1
 Important Farmlands

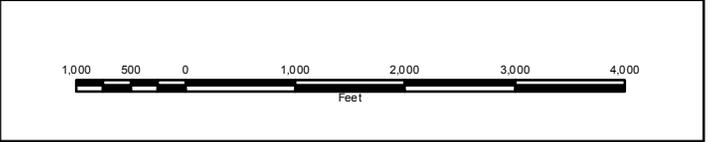
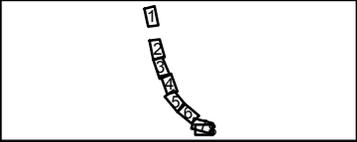
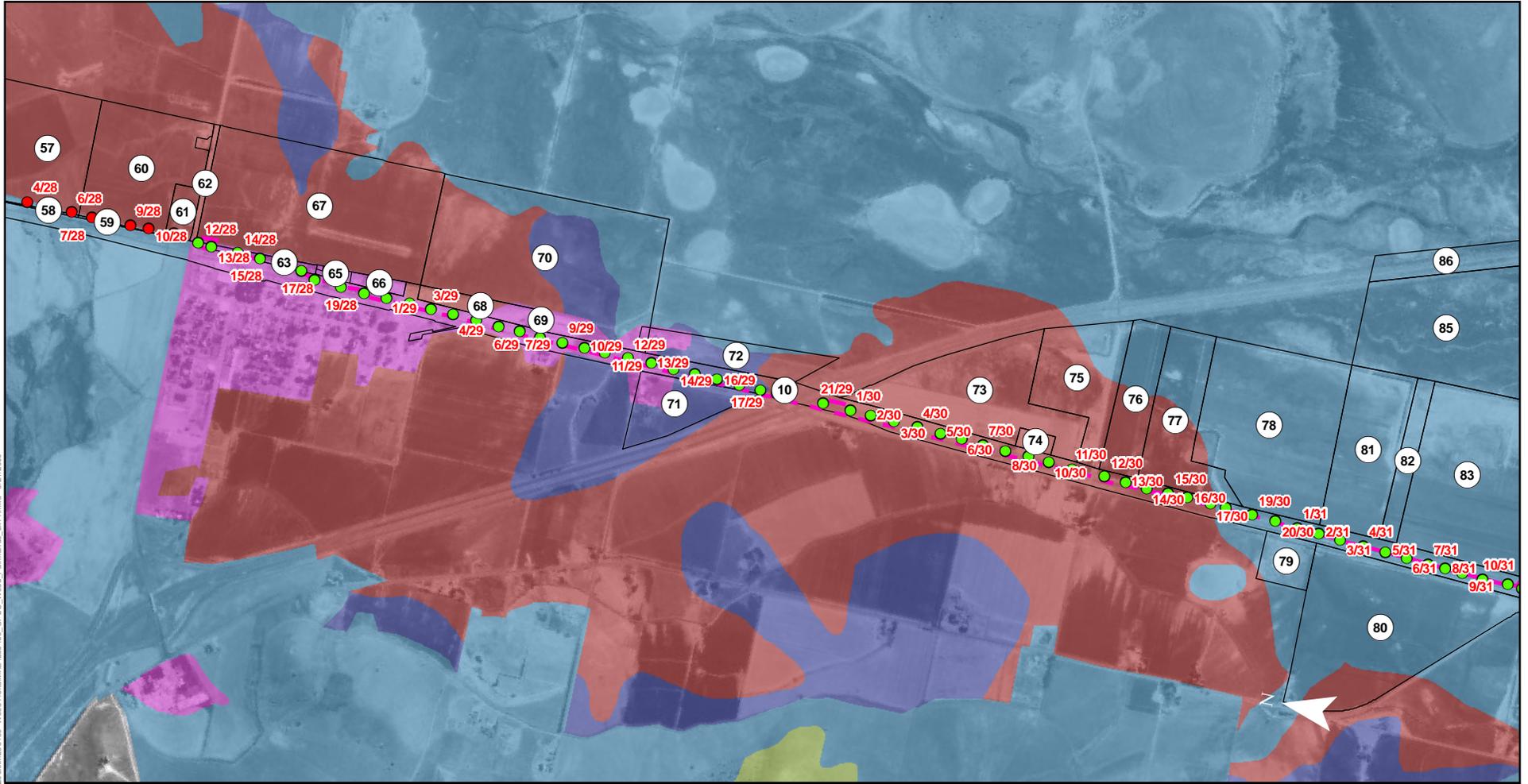


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SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

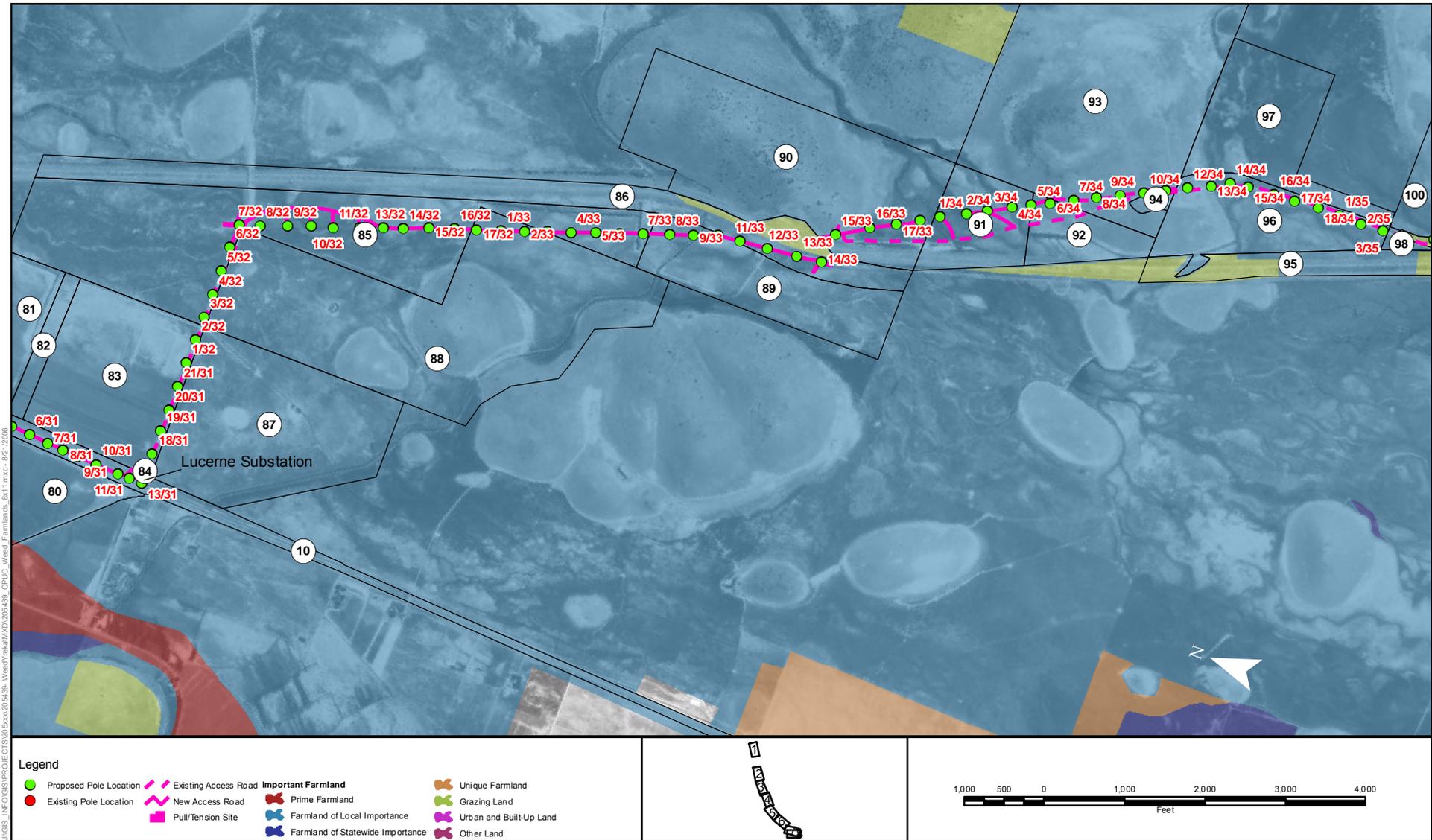
Figure 2.2-1(a)
Important Farmland Detail



SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

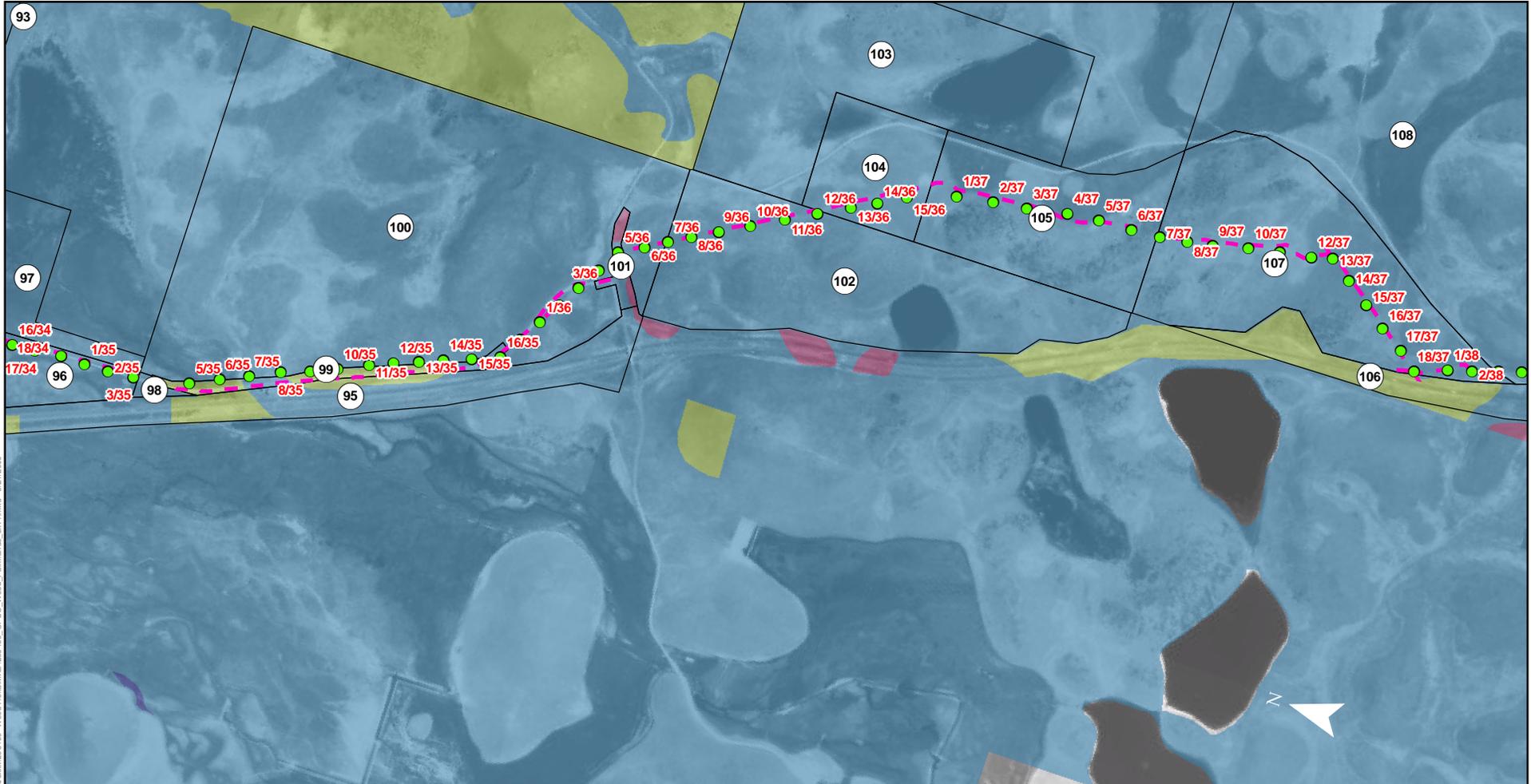
Figure 2.2-1(b)
Important Farmland Detail



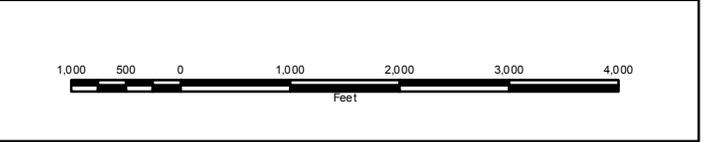
SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

Figure 2.2-1(c)
Important Farmland Detail



Legend		
● Proposed Pole Location	Important Farmland	■ Unique Farmland
● Existing Pole Location	■ Prime Farmland	■ Grazing Land
— Existing Access Road	■ Farmland of Local Importance	■ Urban and Built-Up Land
— New Access Road	■ Farmland of Statewide Importance	■ Other Land
■ Pull/Tension Site		

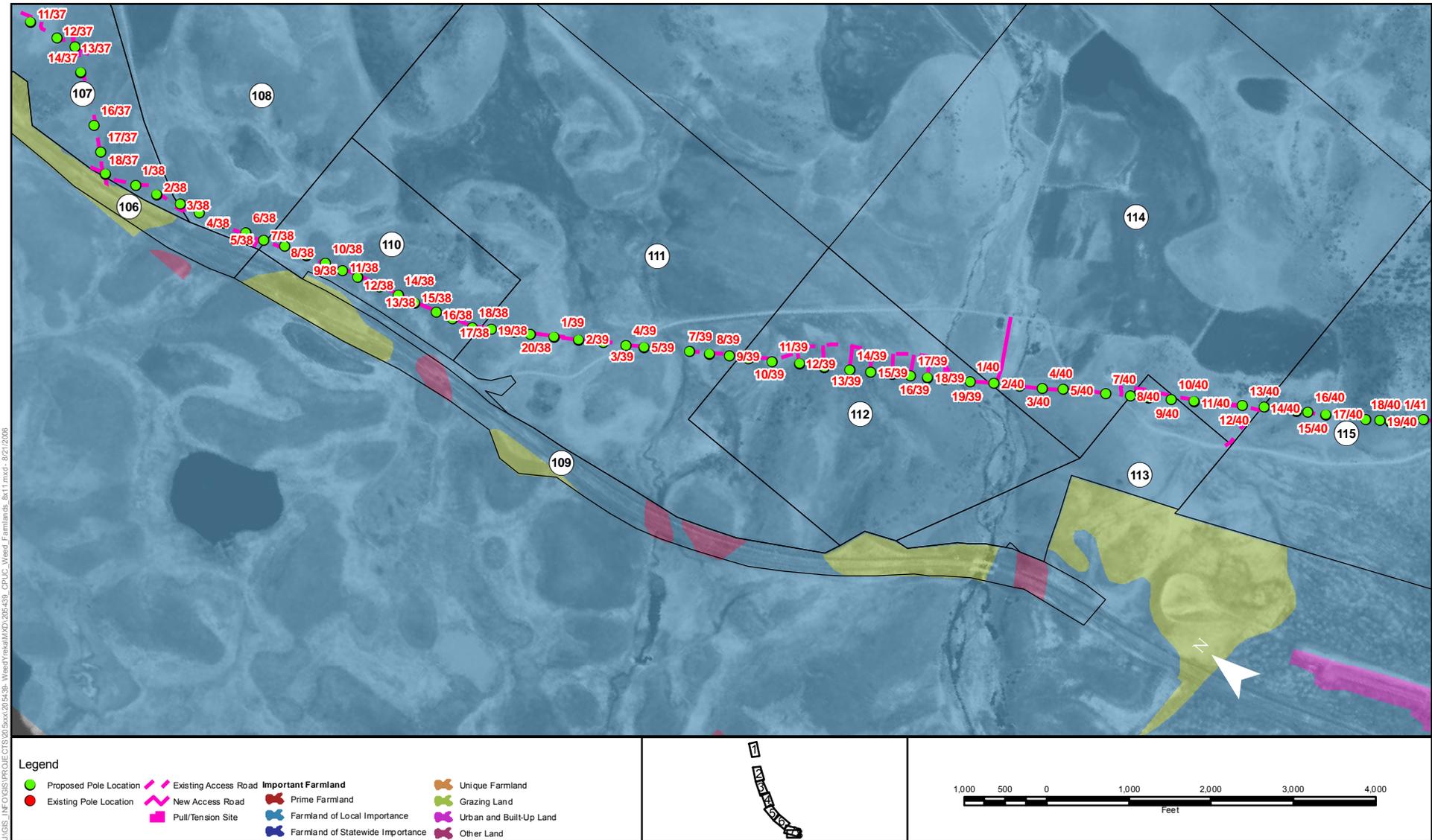


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SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

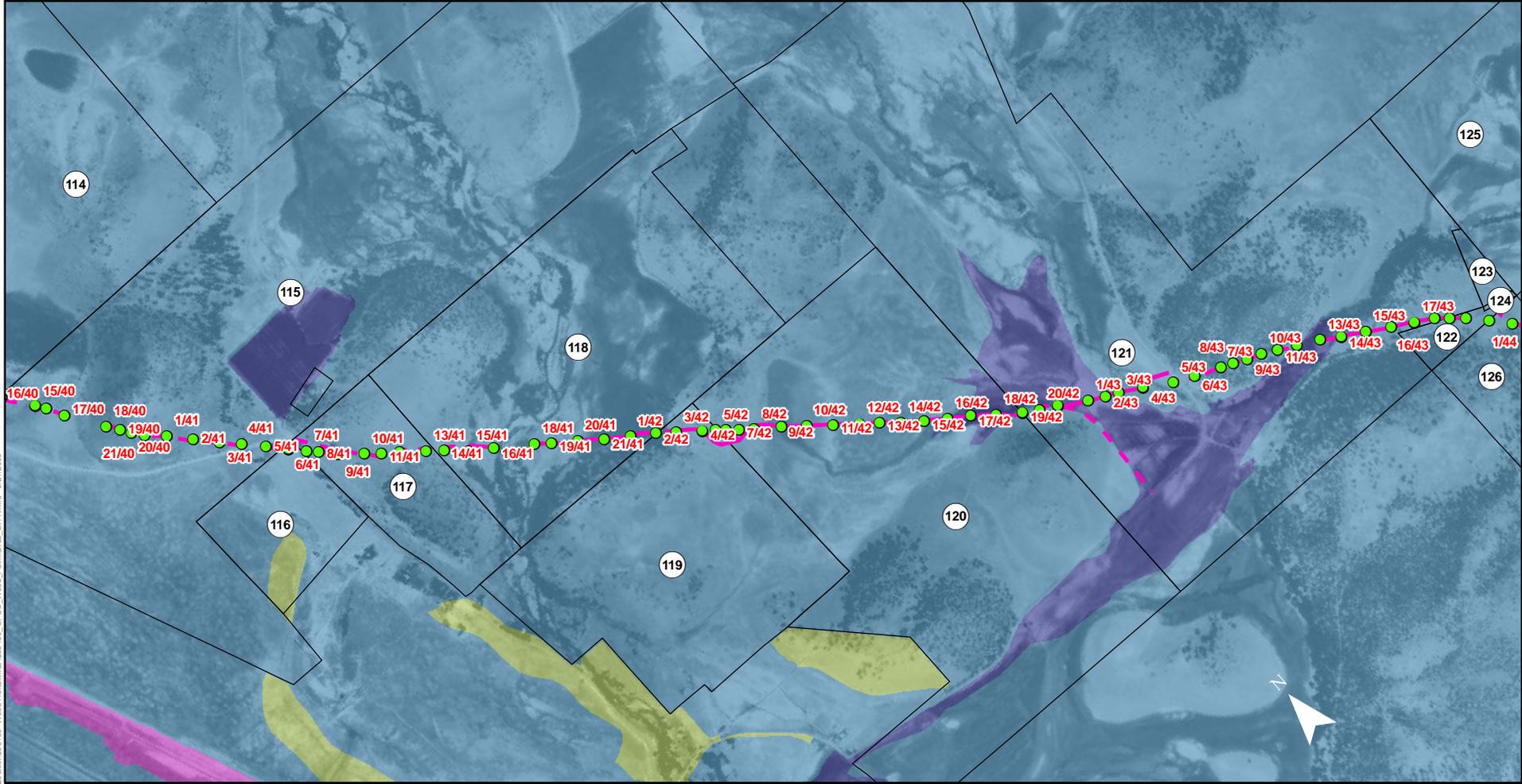
Figure 2.2-1(d)
Important Farmland Detail



SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacificCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

Figure 2.2-1(e)
Important Farmland Detail



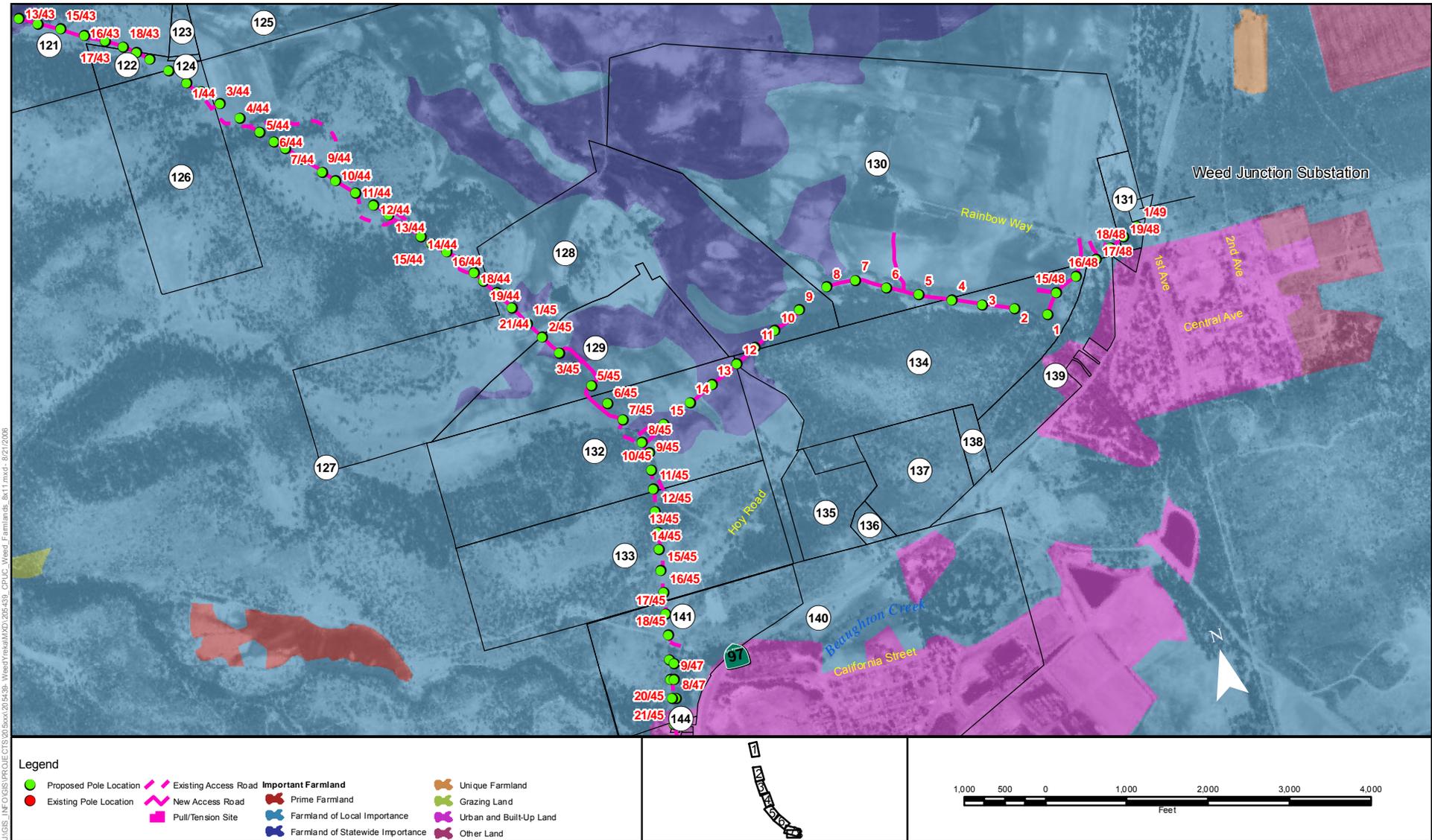
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<p>Legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proposed Pole Location ● Existing Pole Location Existing Access Road New Access Road Pull/Tension Site 	<p>Important Farmland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prime Farmland Farmland of Local Importance Farmland of Statewide Importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unique Farmland Grazing Land Urban and Built-Up Land Other Land
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SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

Figure 2.2-1(f)
Important Farmland Detail



SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

Figure 2.2-1(g)
Important Farmland Detail

132, 133, 141, 176, 196, and 201, which are designated as *Farmland of Local Importance* (Figure 2.2-1(h)).

Table 2.2-1 shows the acres of farmland in Siskiyou County, as well as the amount of recent farmland conversions.

**TABLE 2.2-1
FARMLAND CONVERSION FROM 2002–2004 IN SISKIYOU COUNTY**

Land Use Category	Total Acres Inventoried		2002–2004 Acreage Changes		
	2002	2004	Acres Lost	Acres Gained	Net Change
Prime Farmland	93,046	79,822	13,351	127	-13,224
Farmland of Statewide Importance	31,525	28,747	2,796	18	-2,778
Unique Farmland	34,691	33,714	1,143	166	-977
Farmland of Local Importance	626,964	620,164	8,757	1,957	-6,800
Grazing Land	393,253	386,315	13,123	6,185	-6,938
Agricultural Land Subtotal	1,179,479	1,148,762	39,170	8,453	-30,717

SOURCE: California Department of Conservation (2004)

Williamson Act Contracts

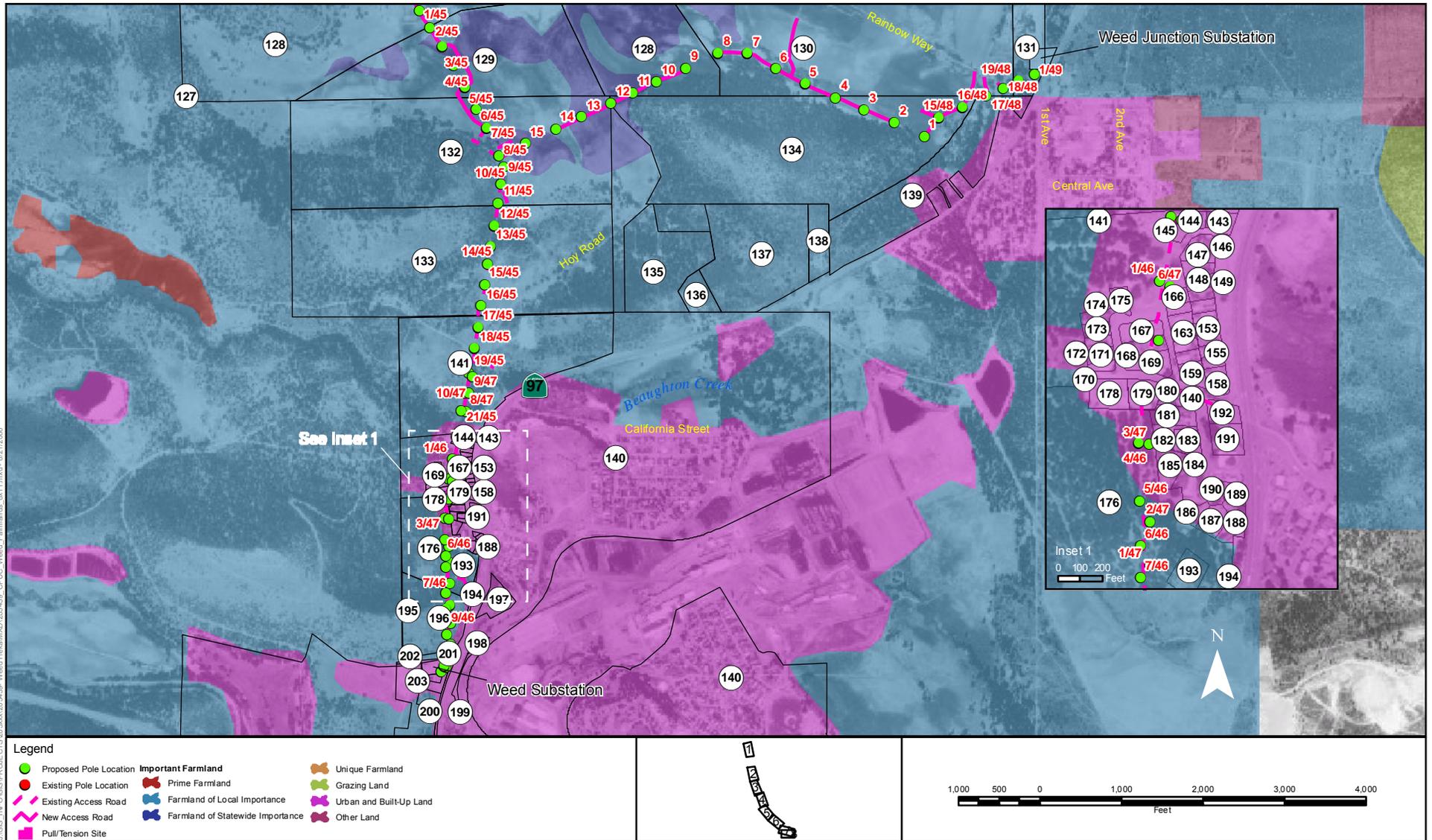
Williamson Act contracts are a tool often used by local governments to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion to urban uses (see Regulatory Context below for more specific details). Approximately 10.1 percent of the land acreage in Siskiyou County is currently in a Williamson Act contract (CSAC, 2006). A majority of the Proposed Project would cross parcels currently under a Williamson Act contract; none of the parcels crossed by the Weed Segment are currently under a Williamson Act contract except parcel 132. Figure 2.2-2 shows parcels through which the Proposed Project and Weed Segment would traverse that are currently in a Williamson Act contract.

Regulatory Context

State

California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (Non-regulatory)

The California Department of Conservation, under the Division of Land Resource Protection, has set up the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). The FMMP monitors the conversion of the state’s farmland to and from agricultural use. The map series identifies eight classifications and uses a minimum mapping unit size of 10 acres. The FMMP also produces a biannual report on the amount of land converted from agricultural to non-agricultural use.

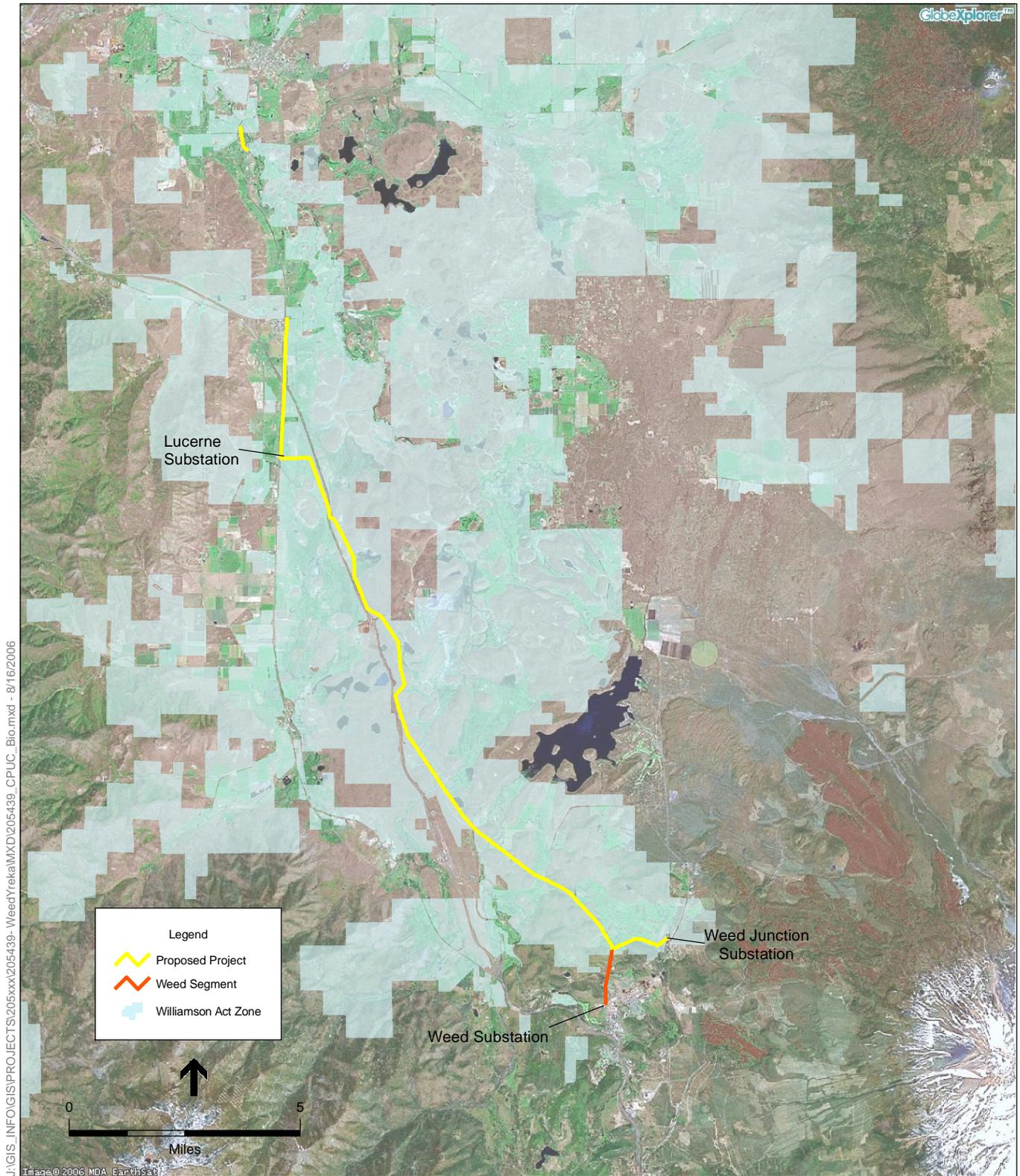


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SOURCES: ESA (2006), PacifiCorp (2006), GlobeExplorer (2006), FMMP (2004)

PacifiCorp's Yreka-Weed Transmission Line Upgrade Project . 205439

Figure 2.2-1(h)
Important Farmland Detail



The FMMP is an informational service only and does not have regulatory jurisdiction over local land use decisions. For the purpose of this environmental analysis and consistent with the Farmland Policy Act of 1981, farmland includes prime farmland, unique farmland, and land of statewide or local importance, and any conversion of land within these categories is typically considered to be an adverse impact.

California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) (Non-regulatory)

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965 (Williamson Act) enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use. Its intent is to preserve agricultural and open space lands by discouraging premature and unnecessary conversion to urban uses. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. Local governments receive an annual subvention of forgone property tax revenues from the state via the Open Space Subvention Act of 1971. The vehicle for these agreements is a rolling term 10 year contract (i.e., unless either party files a “notice of nonrenewal” the contract is automatically renewed annually for an additional year). Several parcels within the project area are currently under Williamson Act contract (Figure 2.2-2).

Local

Siskiyou County General Plan

The Siskiyou County General Plan identifies certain constraints to development for land within its jurisdiction. The General Plan does not identify agriculture land impacts for parcels through which the Proposed Project would traverse. However, the General Plan Conservation Element recognizes that prime soil is a “land resource [that is] not...readily renewable...and must be protected for its present and future value to the people of the county and state. The General Plan further states that “...safeguarding of agricultural lands is as essential as the protection afforded other types of land use.” The following Conservation Element objective related to agricultural resources would be applicable to the proposed project:

- Preserve and protect the prime and productive agricultural lands and the agricultural economy of Siskiyou County.

(Siskiyou County, 1973)

City of Weed General Plan

The City of Weed General Plan designates the parcels through which the proposed Weed Segment would traverse for residential, industrial, and open space uses; it does not designate any of the parcels for agricultural use (Salvestrin, 2006).

Agriculture Resources Impacts and Mitigation Measures

- Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring**

Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use: *Less than significant with mitigation.* (See c, below, for discussion)

- c) **Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use: *Less than significant with mitigation.***

Proposed Project (Transmission Line) and Weed Segment (Transmission Line)

As discussed in the Setting, the Proposed Project would cross: designated *Prime Farmland* on parcels 61, 62, 67, 68, 10, 74, 73, 75, 76, and 77, and designated *Farmland of Statewide Importance* on parcels 14, 15, 17, 20, 23, 10, 120, 121, 128, 129, and 132. The Proposed Project and the Weed Segment would also cross many parcels designated as *Farmland of Local Importance* (see Figures 2.2-1(a) through 2.2-1(h)).

Project construction would involve a temporary construction staging area, work areas, pull and tension sites, and new access roads, some of which would be located on agricultural land. Table 2.2-2 shows impacts that would result from these construction activities from the Proposed Project and the Weed Segment. In total, the Proposed Project and the Weed Segment would result in the temporary removal of approximately 27 acres of designated Farmland.

**TABLE 2.2-2
TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS**

	Pull/Tension Sites (acres)	Access Roads (acres)	Total
Grazing Land	0.0790	0.4815	0.5605
Farmland of Local Importance	4.2793	18.7603	23.0396
Prime Farmland	0.4223	1.4801	1.9024
Farmland of Statewide Importance	0.4027	1.4362	1.8389
Total Farmland Impact	5.1833	22.1581	27.3414

SOURCES: ESA (2006) and PacifiCorp (2006)

Impact 2.2-1: The Proposed Project and Weed Segment project would result in the temporary removal of farmland that is designated *Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, or Farmland of Local Importance.* In total, the construction of a staging area, work areas, pull and tension sites, and new access roads would temporarily reduce the amount of designated Farmland available for agricultural purposes by about 27 acres. This would be a less than significant impact with implementation of Mitigation Measure 2.2-1, which would ensure that the reduction is temporary and the duration is minimized.

Mitigation Measure 2.2-1: Implement Mitigation Measure 2.4-3b (see section 2.4, *Biological Resources*) to preserve and replace topsoil disturbed by project-related activities.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than significant.

Similar to the existing transmission line, the Proposed Project and Weed Segment would occupy a small amount of prime agricultural land for pole placement. Table 2.2-3 provides a summary of the impacts to designated farmland from poles that would be placed as part of the Proposed Project and Weed Segment.

**TABLE 2.2-3
PERMANENT IMPACTS TO AGRICULTURAL LANDS FROM POLE PLACEMENT**

	Impact Area (acres)
Grazing Land	0.0003
Farmland of Local Importance	0.0151
Prime Farmland	0.0012
Farmland of Statewide Importance	0.0019
Total Farmland Impact	0.0185

SOURCES: ESA (2006) and PacifiCorp (2006)

The installation of poles would result in the permanent conversion of approximately 0.02 acres of land designated as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance, and Grazing Land. The reduction of 0.02 acres of Farmland, which is equivalent to approximately 871 square feet, would not result in the conversion of a significant amount of Farmland. The 0.02 acres of Farmland that would be converted would be comprised of many individual pole footprints spread out over the length of the Proposed Project and Weed Segment and would not result in the permanent conversion of whole parcels of Farmland. This would be a less than significant impact.

Proposed Project – Lucerne Substation

The Lucerne Substation is designated by the FMMP as *Farmland of Local Importance*. Modifications to the Lucerne Substation, which would occur within the existing boundary and fence lines of the existing substation, would not result in the conversion of *Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide or Local Importance* or any other changes in the existing environment that could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

Weed Segment

Impacts related to the Weed Segment are included in the discussion of the Proposed Project impacts above. The Weed Segment would traverse parcels designated mostly as *Urban and Built Land* but would also cross parcels 132, 133, 141, 176, 196, and 201, which are designated as *Farmland of Local Importance* (see Figure 2.2-1(h)). In addition, the Weed Substation is primarily designated as *Urban and Built Land*; however, a portion of the Weed Substation site is also designated as *Farmland of Local Importance*. Improvements proposed for the Weed Substation include construction of a temporary substation adjacent to the existing Weed Substation, expansion of the existing fenced area and construction of a new standard 115 kV to 12.5 kV substation, and then subsequent removal of the temporary substation.

Similar to the existing transmission line, the Weed Segment would occupy a small amount of prime agricultural land for pole placement and also for new segments of permanent access roads. However, the transmission line would allow for many agricultural uses under and adjacent to the line. Impacts to *Farmland of Local Importance* resulting from implementation of the Weed Segment would be less than significant.

- b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract:**
Less than significant.

Proposed Project – Transmission Line

The Proposed Project would traverse many parcels zoned for agricultural use and through parcels which are currently under a Williamson Act contract. Government Code Section 51238 states that electrical facilities are a compatible Williamson Act use. The placement of transmission poles on land currently under Williamson Act contract would not remove the land from Williamson Act contract status. Thus, there would be no impact related to Williamson Act status of parcels through which the Proposed Project would traverse. In addition, the transmission line would allow for many agricultural uses under and adjacent to the line. The Proposed Project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, as it would primarily replace an existing transmission line in an existing utility corridor. In addition, while a new 1.6 mile segment would be constructed as part of the Proposed Project, agriculture is generally considered to be a compatible land use with utility corridors.

Proposed Project – Lucerne Substation

The Lucerne Substation is located on a parcel that is zoned *Non-Prime Agricultural (AG-2)* (Siskiyou County). The AG-2 District is intended to provide an area where general agricultural activities and agriculturally related activities can occur. The substation site is also located on a parcel that is under a Williamson Act contract. However, the modifications to the substation would occur within the existing boundary and fence lines of the existing substation, and would not result in any new conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

Weed Segment

The Weed Segment would traverse land zoned by the City of Weed as *General Industrial (M)*, *Limited Industrial (C-M)*, *Open Space (OS)*, and *Low Density Residential (R-1)* and would not conflict with existing agricultural zoning. However, the Weed Segment transmission line would cross parcels (132, 133, 141, 176, 196, and 201 (the Weed Substation)) which are currently under a Williamson Act contract. Government Code Section 51238 states that electrical facilities are a compatible Williamson Act use. The placement of transmission poles on land currently under Williamson Act contract would not remove the land from Williamson Act contract status. Thus, there would be no impact related to Williamson Act status of parcels through which the Weed Segment would traverse.

References – Agricultural Resources

California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, 2004. *Table A-35, Siskiyou County, 2002-2004 Land Use Conversion, 2004.*

California Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), 2004. Geographic Information System data from http://www.consrv.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/map_products/download_gis_data.htm, 2004.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2002. *2002 Census of Agriculture – County Data, 2002.*

California State Association of Counties (CSAC), 2006. *Percentage of County Acreage in Williamson Act*, http://www.csac.counties.org/legislation/williamson_act/williamson_act_county_acreage.pdf, accessed July 5, 2006.

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Siskiyou County, 1973. *The Conservation Element of the General Plan, Siskiyou County, California, July 1973.*