

E.4.5 Wilderness and Recreation

The Modified Route D Alternative route is described in Section E.4.1. It includes three main segments: a southwesterly segment that crosses BLM, CNF and private lands before reaching the Cameron Substation, a westerly segment that follows the southern boundary of the CNF, and a northerly segment that is primarily on CNF land and includes the Modified Route D Substation.

The Modified Route D Alternative would traverse or be located adjacent to recreation and wilderness areas under the jurisdiction of BLM and CNF. Refer to Figure E.1.5-1 for a map of the Modified Route D Alternative and nearby recreation and wilderness areas. This alternative would not traverse any federal or State wilderness or wilderness study areas.

E.4.5.1 Environmental Setting

The Modified Route D Alternative route would diverge from the Interstate 8 Alternative east of CNF at MP I8-49, crossing the freeway in a southwesterly direction before turning due west then southwest through BLM land to the existing Cameron Substation. This segment of the alternative route would be approximately 2 miles east of and roughly parallel to the PCT and Lake Morena County Park.

Just east of the Cameron Substation, the route would turn northwest, pass the substation, and continue west just south of the southern border of CNF, primarily on BLM land. Because of the PCT's sinuosity, the Modified Route D Alternative would intersect the PCT three times between MP MD-12 and -13. This would occur immediately south of CNF. This route would pass between BLM's Hauser Mountain WSA and CNF's Hauser Wilderness parallel to an existing 69 kV line, but in new ROW. Approximately 17,000 acres have been recommended to be added to the Hauser Wilderness Area, as illustrated in Figure E.1.5-1. This recommended wilderness, Hauser South Expansion Area, encompasses the Hauser/Cottonwood Creek Canyon and provides "better-than-average opportunities for solitude, adventure, and self-reliance" (USDA, 2005). The alternative route would be located east and south of the Hauser South Expansion Area and would be approximately 0.1 miles (700 feet) south at the closest point near MP MD-13.

The Modified Route D alternative would pass approximately one mile north of the Hauser Mountain WSA, a 5,540 acres area that can only be accessed by the PCT, which runs north-south through the eastern portion of the WSA. Recreational opportunities in the WSA include hiking and dispersed camping. Hauser Mountain WSA was recommended for elimination from consideration as wilderness by BLM in 1990 (BLM, 2007g). However, in the absence of a determination by Congress as to whether Hauser Mountain will be removed from consideration, the area is managed by BLM to maintain the characteristics of wilderness so that the suitability of the WSA for preservation as a wilderness area is not impaired, as described in Section D.3.

Hauser Wilderness is a congressionally designated 7,547 acres wilderness area within CNF. The only trail within this Wilderness Area is the Hauser Creek Trail, which follows Hauser Creek. Recreational activities include day-use hiking, hunting, and dispersed camping (USDA, 2005). The Modified Route D Alternative would be approximately 0.5 miles south of the Hauser Wilderness Area.

The alternative route would continue west, outside and south of CNF property, still roughly parallel to an existing 69 kV line. At MP MD-22, the route would pass the existing SDG&E Barrett Substation heading north and re-enter CNF. This route would diverge from the existing 69 kV corridor five miles north of the substation, passing east of residences through the Japatul Valley. This segment would be

located approximately two miles east of the Hauser Wilderness Area and 1.5 miles east of the Pine Creek Wilderness Area between MPs MD-24 and MD-28.

The Modified Route D Alternative would have three options for connecting with the Proposed Project route: (1) remain at 500 kV, cross Interstate 8, and connect with the Route D Alternative (Route D Alternative analysis is provided in Section E.3.5); (2) convert to 230 kV at the new Modified Route D Alternative Substation (described below) and connect overhead with the Interstate 8 Alternative (Interstate 8 Alternative analysis is provided in Section E.1.5); or (3) convert to 230 kV at the new Modified Route D Alternative Substation, exit the substation overhead and transition underground at Star Valley Road (the Star Valley Option is described below).

E.4.5.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section presents a discussion of impacts and mitigation measures for the Modified Route D Alternative as a result of construction, operation, and maintenance of the project. Table E.4.5-1 summarizes the impacts of this alternative on wilderness and recreation.

Table E.4.5-1. Impacts Identified – Alternatives – Wilderness and Recreation

Impact No.	Description	Impact Significance
Modified 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
Modified Route D Alternative Substation and Star Valley Option		
WR-1	Construction activities would temporarily reduce access and visitation to recreation or wilderness areas	No Impact
WR-2	Presence of a transmission line or substation would permanently change the character of a recreation area, diminishing its recreational value	No Impact
WR-3	Presence of the transmission line would permanently preclude recreational activities	No 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

Construction Impacts

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

Project construction activities would create a number of temporary conditions that may dissuade recreationists from visiting recreation areas along the Modified Route D Alternative, especially in the southern portion of CNF. Noise, dust and heavy equipment traffic generated during construction activities would negatively affect a visitor’s enjoyment of recreation areas. As such, recreationists may be less likely to visit these resources during project construction.

As described above, the Modified Route D Alternative would intersect the PCT three times between MP MD-12 and -13 and would pass approximately one mile north of the Hauser Mountain WSA, which can only be accessed by the PCT. The location of construction equipment along the PCT may temporarily preclude or constrain access to the Hauser Mountain WSA. Disturbances to recreational activities would cause a temporary reduction of access and visitation along portions of the Modified Route D Alternative during construction activities, thereby resulting in a significant impact (Class II).

In order to allow for continued use of the PCT, 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 to recreational resources to less than significant levels (Class II). (See Appendix 12 for the full text of the mitigation measures.)

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.**

Operational 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 500 kV steel towers required for the Modified Route D Alternative would be highly visible to hikers along the PCT and visitors to the Hauser Wilderness and Hauser Mountain WSA. National Scenic Trails, including the PCT, are intended to provide conservation and enjoyment of nationally significant scenic and natural qualities of the areas through which they pass (NPS, 1993). Also, Hauser Wilderness and the surrounding area is one of the most remote locations in CNF (USDA, 2005). These recreational resources are valued for their solitude and expansive scenic setting. Presence of a 500 kV transmission line would be contrary to the expectations of many recreationists in these areas.

The Modified Route D Alternative would generally follow an existing SDG&E-owned 69 kV transmission line for most of the route. Due to the presence of the alternative, the character of the affected BLM land and this southern portion of CNF would be permanently changed from an open space with minimal development to one that includes large industrial structures. The recreational experience in this area would be diminished by the presence of the large, steel structures required to support the Modified Route D Alternative 500 kV transmission line.

As described in Section D.3.12.2, Visual Resources, long-term, operational visual impacts would be experienced by viewers throughout the length of this alternative. Additionally, the corona noise from the proposed 500 kV segment would substantially elevate the ambient noise levels within 500 feet of the edge of the 500 kV ROW in the natural areas along this alternative route. Refer to Section E.4.8 for additional information on noise impacts along the Modified Route D Alternative route.

Visual resource and noise impacts would directly adversely affect the character of recreation areas along the Modified 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) are presented to reduce impacts to the recreational value of the PCT, Hauser Wilderness, and Hauser Mountain WSA, but the impact would remain significant for these recreation areas. Full descriptions of the visual and noise mitigation measures listed below are presented in Appendix 12. 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

- 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 Modified Route D Alternative would intersect the PCT three times between MP MD-12 and -13 in new ROW. If transmission support structures were sited on the PCT, recreationists would be precluded from these locations. In turn, preclusion of access to the PCT would preclude access to the Hauser Mountain WSA. 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 may be potentially sited on trails. Impacts to existing recreational resources that resulted from locating new towers on or immediately adjacent to the PCT would be significant (Class II). Preclusion of the use of recreational resources along the Modified Route D Alternative would be mitigated to a less than significant level through implementation of Mitigation Measure WR-3a (Coordinate tower and road locations with the authorized officer for the recreation area). (See Appendix 12 for the full text of the mitigation measures.)

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 Modified Route D Alternative ROW would not traverse any wilderness areas or WSAs. As such, direct impacts to these resources would not occur. Indirect impacts to wilderness are addressed under Impact WR-2.

E.4.5.3 Modified Route D Alternative Substation

The Modified Route D Alternative Substation would require a 40 acres site located on private land. 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 Modified Route D Alternative Substation.

E.4.5.4 Star Valley Option

Environmental Setting

In this option, the route would exit the Modified Route D Alternative Substation in the north as an overhead double-circuit 230 kV transmission line, heading west and northwest for 2.2 miles, then north for approximately 0.3 miles to meet Star Valley Road, 0.7 miles east of I-8 Exit 33 for Willows Road. On the southwest side of the bend in Star Valley Road, the route would transition underground and continue north to Alpine Boulevard. This option would join the Interstate 8 Alternative at Alpine Boulevard, approximately 0.5 miles east of the California Riding and Hiking Trail and 2 miles west of the Ma-Tar-Awa RV Park and Viejas Casino.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Construction of this 3.2-mile option would eliminate the need for the eastern 3-mile underground portion of the I-8 Alternative, thereby eliminating the temporary construction impacts to the Viejas Casino and Ma-Ta-Awa RV Park that would otherwise result from construction of the I-8 Alternative underground segment. Construction and operation of the Star Valley Option would not result in impacts to recreational resources. Further, there are no wilderness areas or WSAs near this option and impacts to these resources would not occur.

E.4.5.5 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 Modified Route D Alternative would begin at approximately Interstate 8 MP-47 and would head southwest then northward until it reached the Interstate 8 Alternative at approximately MP I8-71. A substation could be built to convert the 500 kV line to 230 kV at approximately MD-34, the Modified Route D Substation Alternative. The double-circuit 230 kV line would exit the substation overhead, then continue north into the CNF, joining the Interstate 8 Alternative at approximately MP I8-71 where it transitions to underground at the east end of Alpine Boulevard. The Modified Route D Substation would accommodate up to six 230 kV circuits and a 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 Modified Route D Substation may be required in the future. There are three routes that are most likely for these future lines; each is described below. Figure E.1.1-6 illustrates the potential routes of the future transmission lines.

- Two additional 230 kV circuits could be installed underground within Alpine Boulevard, with appropriate compact duct banks and engineering to avoid, or possibly relocate, existing utilities. This route would follow the Interstate 8 Alternative route from the Interstate 8 Alternative Substation until MP I8-70.8 where it would transition underground until MP I8-79 where it would transition overhead again. The future transmission line route would continue to follow the Interstate 8

Alternative's overhead 230 kV route to the point where it meets the Proposed Project at MP 131. See Section E.1.5.1 and E.1.5.2 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures along the I-8 route. The future transmission route would then join the proposed route corridor to the west, continuing past the Sycamore Canyon Substation to the Chicarita Substation. See Section D.5.2, D.5.8, and D.5.9 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures for the Inland Valley and Coastal Links. It could then follow the Proposed Project's 230 kV Future Transmission Expansion route (see description in Section B.2.7) from Chicarita to the Escondido Substation shown in n B-12a. 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.

- Additional 230 and 500 kV circuits could follow the Route D Alternative corridor (see description in Section E.3.1) to the north of Descanso, after following the Interstate 8 Alternative 230 kV route from the Interstate 8 Substation to MP I8 70.3. See Section E.3.5.1 and E.3.5.2 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures along Route D. The Route D corridor would connect with the Proposed Project corridor at Milepost 114.5, and could then follow either: (1) the Proposed Project southwest to the Chicarita Substation and then follow the Proposed Project's 230 kV Future Transmission Expansion route (see description in Section B.2.7) from Chicarita to the Escondido Substation; or (2) the Proposed Project northeastward 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.
- The future 230 and 500 kV lines could follow the Modified Route D Alternative corridor (within the 368 Corridor identified by the Department of Energy's Draft West-wide Corridor Programmatic EIS) south for 8 miles to MP MD-26. See Section E.4.5.1 and E.4.5.2 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures along Modified Route D. At MP MD-26, new 230 or 500 kV circuits would turn west and connect with the northernmost segment of the West of Forest Alternative route as described in Section E.1.1. See Section E.1.5.5 for the Wilderness and Recreation setting, impacts, and mitigation measures along MP MD-26 to MP I8-79 corridor. This route would meet up with the Interstate 8 Alternative at approximately MP I8-79 and would follow the Interstate 8 Alternative's overhead 230 kV route to the point where it meets the Proposed Project at MP 131 (for a description of the Interstate 8 transmission corridor see Section E.1.1). The future transmission route would then join the proposed route corridor to the west, continuing past the Sycamore Canyon Substation to the Chicarita Substation. It could 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. 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.