

## 4.13 Recreation

This section presents the environmental setting and impact analysis for parks, open space, and recreational resources for the Proposed Project and the surrounding project area. The purpose of this section is to assess the impacts of the Proposed Project and alternatives on recreational services. Cumulative impacts are determined with consideration of projected development in the study area.

### 4.13.1 Setting

#### Existing Setting

Existing recreational and open space resources in the study area are discussed by jurisdiction below.

#### ***National Parks***

In Tulare County, there are no national parks in the study area. However, the northeastern portion of Tulare County is home to parts of the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

In Fresno County, the Big Creek 3 Substation is located in the Sierra National Forest, at the eastern tip of Redinger Lake. Constructed by Southern California Edison (SCE) in 1951, Redinger Lake is located on the South Fork of the San Joaquin River above Kerckhoff Reservoir, and is part of the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project. Surrounded by oak and shrub covered foothills, the lake provides year-round fishing for German brown and eastern brook trout, small mouth bass, bluegill and catfish. The lake has a public boat launching ramp and offers opportunities for recreational activities that include water skiing, jet skiing, canoeing, kayaking, and camping (USFS, 2009).

#### ***State Parks***

There are no state parks in the study area. The only state park in Tulare County is Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in Allensworth, located approximately 30 miles southwest of the City of Visalia (California State Parks, 2008).

#### ***Tulare County Parks***

Tulare County contains over 460 acres of a wide range of open space, parks and recreational areas, which fall under the jurisdiction of the County Resource Management Agency (Tulare County, 2008). Open space and recreation areas within the County offer residents and visitors recreational opportunities including hiking, picnicking, fishing, and sports facilities. In addition to nature reserves, campgrounds, and parks, there are several rivers and two lakes that provide recreational opportunity within the County – Lake Kaweah and Lake Success (Tulare County, 2008).

Located approximately one-half mile north of the Proposed Project, Kaweah Oaks Preserve in the City of Exeter is a 324-acre property that contains the largest protected example of Great Valley oak riparian forest within the Kaweah River Delta. Furthermore, approximately half of the Preserve is an alkali meadow habitat, an equally rare habitat where bunchgrasses and other alkali-loving native plants thrive (see Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*, for further information) (City of Farmersville, 2002).

Cutler Park is located approximately two miles north of the Proposed Project and approximately one-quarter mile east of Alternatives 2, 3 and 6 at 15520 Ivanhoe Drive near the community of Ivanhoe. Acquired in 1919, it is a 50-acre County park along the St. Johns River. The Park has picnic tables, a playground and large valley oaks. Attendance is generally highest during the summer when there is flow in the river, as locals use the park for swimming, inner-tubing and wading. Local middle schools, high schools, and colleges use the park for cross country meets, setting up a track through the park. While City of Visalia designated waterways and trails currently do not go through Cutler Park, the City has plans for such trails to traverse the park in the future (Pilegard, 2008).

### **Fresno County Parks**

Fresno County contains a variety of regional parks and landscaped areas. Regional recreational facilities in the County include thirteen parks, three fishing access areas and a boat-launching ramp. Recreational activities offered in these areas include fishing, hiking, picnicking, jogging, bird-watching, sports, barbecues, and overnight camping. The Big Creek 3 Substation is the only portion of the Proposed Project and alternatives located in Fresno County. It is approximately 20 miles (by car) from the closest designated county recreational facility, the Shaver Lake boat launching ramp (Fresno County, 2009).

### **Local Parks**

#### **City of Visalia**

The City of Visalia Parks and Recreation Department is located at 345 North Jacob Street in the City of Visalia. The City is home to 35 parks, groves, and gardens, as well as numerous community centers. The City's parks provide recreation opportunities including play equipment for toddlers and older children, picnic facilities and places to host parties, as well as fields for baseball, soccer, and other sports. Visalia also has an extensive system of waterways, trails, and bike paths that traverse the City (City of Visalia, 2008). The City has identified a future community park site that would be located adjacent to Alternatives 2, 3, and 6. The park would be located east of the existing SCE ROW, just north of State Route 198 (SR 198), which is outside the City limits but within the City's urban boundary. The park would be 100 acres, with a planned build-out date of 2012 (Shepard, 2008).

#### **City of Farmersville**

The City of Farmersville Department of Public Works manages local parks, and is located at 873 South Farmersville Boulevard in the City of Farmersville. The City of Farmersville has six developed park sites comprising approximately 25.5 acres, including: Jennings Park (2.1 acres),

Memorial Park (4.2 acres), Roy's Park (4.5 acres), Ash Street Park (2.2 acres), Riverbank Park (one-half acre), Liberty Park (six acres), and Armstrong Park (four acres) (City of Farmersville, 2002; Martinez, 2008). Existing parks feature amenities such as: grass fields, baseball diamonds, handball courts, picnic tables, barbecues, and playgrounds. The City has a 26-acre planned park-site located next to Memorial Park, with plans to build a sports complex with baseball, soccer, jogging, and other amenities in the next year or two (Martinez, 2008). The City has an additional four to five acres of land reserved for small parks in the next few years. The City of Farmersville does not have a system of bike paths, and as of 2008 had no plans for such a system (Martinez, 2008).

## Regulatory Setting

### *Local*

#### **Tulare County General Plan (Proposed Project and Alternatives 2, 3 and 6)**

The protection and preservation of recreation and open space areas from urbanization is an important issue for Tulare County. The communities of Lemon Cove, Three Rivers, and Success have been designated by the Tulare County General Plan Policy Summary as special study areas of considerable potential for the location of recreation-oriented residential and commercial development (Tulare County, 2001).

The Environmental Resource Management Element of the Tulare County General Plan contains the following goals that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives:

*Goal 6.A:* To preserve and enhance the quality of life of present and future generations of citizens by preventing a degradation of the natural environment, by taking steps to offset and alleviate the effects of that degradation which already has occurred, and by seeking an optimum balance between the economic and social benefits to be derived from the County's natural resources.

*Goal 6.A:* To preserve for subsequent generations the greatest possible range and freedom of choice in the use and enjoyment of the County's natural resources— to maintain as many options for the future as reasonably may be possible, consistent with the need for action in the short-term.

(Tulare County, 2001).

#### **Fresno County General Plan (Proposed Project and Alternatives 2, 3 and 6)**

The Fresno County General Plan contains the following policy that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives:

*Policy OS-H.1:* The County shall promote the continued and expanded use of national forest, national park, and other recreational areas to meet the recreational needs of County residents.

(Fresno County, 2000).

### **City of Visalia General Plan (Proposed Project and Alternatives 2, 3 and 6)**

The Conservation, Open Space, Recreation and Parks Element of the City of Visalia General Plan includes the following goal and policy that would be applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives:

*Goal 3, Objective C:* Provide park sites which respond to the needs of the City's diverse population, including waterway systems, trails and bikeways for pedestrians, joggers and bicyclists, as well as non-traditional types of recreation and open space such as skateboarding, community gardens, and habitat protection.

*Policy 3.4.2:* Develop a community-wide trail and bikeway loop along selected planning area waterways and roadways to link Cutler Park and Plaza Park. Develop the St. John's River, Mill Creek, Persian Ditch, and Cameron Creek as scenic trail, bike path and recreation open space corridors through the community.

(City of Visalia, 1989).

### **City of Visalia Waterways and Trails Master Plan (Proposed Project and Alternatives 2, 3 and 6)**

The City of Visalia Waterways and Trails Master Plan is a map that includes existing and future parks, bike paths and trails, as well as potential rest and staging areas. As discussed in the Setting, Cutler Park (a County owned and operated park) would be located in the vicinity of the Proposed Project and alternatives. No other existing parks or bike trails identified on the Master Plan are located in the study area. A future (planned) Class I bike trail, designated by the Master Plan to run adjacent to the existing SCE power-line easement from Cameron Creek to just south of Cutler Park, is located in the study area for the Proposed Project and alternatives. However, it is not projected to be in the active planning stages until after 2013, well after the projected completion of Proposed Project construction (Shepard, 2008). The Master Plan also identifies a future community park site, located just north of SR 198, that would be located adjacent to Alternatives 2, 3, and 6 (discussed above in the Setting) (City of Visalia, 2004).

### **City of Farmersville General Plan (Proposed Project)**

The Conservation, Open Space, Parks and Recreation Element of the City of Farmersville General Plan includes the following goal and objective that would be applicable to the Proposed Project:

*Issue One, Objective 1:* Maintain compliance with adopted City park standards now and as the City grows.

*Issue Three, Goal 1:* Create and preserve open space in the Farmersville area to meet the needs of the community now, and in the future.

(City of Farmersville, 2002).

### 4.13.2 Significance Criteria

The *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix G provides guidance for assessing the significance of potential environmental impacts. Relative to recreation and open space, a project will normally have a significant effect on the environment if it would:

- a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; or
- b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

### 4.13.3 Applicant Proposed Measures

No Applicant Proposed Measures have been identified by SCE to reduce project impacts on parks and recreation.

### 4.13.4 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Approach to Analysis

This impact analysis considers the potential adverse impacts on recreational services associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project.

- a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.***

**Impact 4.13-1: The Proposed Project could increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facilities would occur or be accelerated. *Less than significant (Class III)***

Increases in demand for recreational facilities are typically associated with substantial increases in population. The Proposed Project would not contain a residential component that would result in an increased use of existing recreational facilities. As further discussed in Section 4.11, *Population and Housing*, the number of construction workers that would be required to construct the Proposed Project, at its peak, would be approximately 50 crew members per day. This includes the seven-person crews anticipated for the proposed modifications at the Springville, Vestal, and Big Creek 3 Substations. It is expected that at least 30 to 40 of the craft personnel would be from the contractor's pool of experienced personnel, with the remaining construction personnel coming from local sources (SCE, 2008). The Proposed Project construction activities would be temporary, lasting approximately nine to 12 months, and would not result in additional staffing at the substations or along the alignment. The Proposed Project therefore would not result in a substantial increased demand for recreational facilities, and implementation of the Proposed Project is not expected to result in any substantial physical deterioration of existing facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

**Mitigation:** None required.

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***b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.***

The Proposed Project does not include any plans for the addition of any recreational facilities nor would it require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any adverse physical effects on the environment from construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities (No Impact).

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### 4.13.5 Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope of this impact is the regional recreational facilities in the project area, generally located within western Tulare County and the cities of Visalia and Farmersville.

As described above, implementation of the Proposed Project would have no impact on the environment from construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities, and so would not have any contribution to cumulative impacts there from.

With regard to increased use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated, impacts from the Proposed Project would occur only during the nine to 12-month construction period and even then would be inconsequential. The past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects described in Section 3.6, *Cumulative Projects*, include several development projects in Tulare County that could increase the demand on existing and/or result in the need for new recreational facilities within the project vicinity by significantly increasing the population in the project area. These projects include the Yokohl Ranch Project as well as numerous subdivisions and planned developments approved for construction. However, because the Proposed Project would have no incremental demand on existing recreational facilities once construction is complete, it would not contribute to the cumulative demand from the other planned development projects.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not contribute to cumulative long-term impacts on recreation (Class III).

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## 4.13.6 Alternatives

### No Project Alternative

Under the No Project Alternative, the Proposed Project would not be implemented; therefore, no recreational impacts would occur (No Impact).

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### Alternative 2

Like the Proposed Project, Alternative 2 would not contain a residential component that would result in an increased use of existing recreational facilities, and would not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Compared to the Proposed Project, Alternative 2 would require the removal of an additional 158 existing towers and the construction of an additional 44 towers and poles. As such, total project construction of Alternative 2 is estimated to be approximately 20 months, which is eight months longer than the Proposed Project. However, the additional time necessary for construction of Alternative 2 would not result in substantial physical deterioration of recreational facilities. Therefore, like the Proposed Project, impacts to recreational resources resulting from implementation of Alternative 2 would be less than significant (Class III).

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### Alternative 3

Like the Proposed Project, Alternative 3 would not contain a residential component that would result in an increased use of existing recreational facilities, and would not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Alternative 3 would require the removal of an additional 216 existing towers and the construction of an additional 79 towers and poles, compared to the Proposed Project. Consequently, total project construction of Alternative 3 is estimated to be approximately 24 months, which is 12 months longer than the Proposed Project. However, the additional time necessary for construction of Alternative 3 would not result in substantial physical deterioration of recreational facilities. Therefore, like the Proposed Project, impacts to recreational resources resulting from implementation of Alternative 3 would be less than significant (Class III).

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### Alternative 6

Like the Proposed Project, Alternative 6 would not contain a residential component that would result in an increased use of existing recreational facilities, and would not include or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Compared to the Proposed Project, it is estimated that Alternative 6 would require the removal of more existing towers and the construction of more poles, though it would require the construction of fewer towers. Total project construction of Alternative 6 is estimated to be approximately 16 months, which is four

months longer than the Proposed Project. However, the additional time necessary for construction of Alternative 6 would not result in substantial physical deterioration of recreational facilities. Therefore, impacts to recreational resources resulting from implementation of Alternative 6 would be less than significant (Class III).

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