

2.3.3 Outside Federal Lands

BLM lands extend more than 20 miles to the west of the SDG&E transmission line corridor but private lands in the Imperial Valley are within one or two miles of the corridor on the east. Any route to the east or west could not avoid federal lands entirely, since the IV Substation is located wholly within federal lands. Routing the proposed transmission lines farther east than proposed could avoid much federal lands. If the lines were routed directly into the IV Substation from the east parallel to the Southwest Power Link, this alternative would traverse a little over a mile in federal lands. Utility Corridor N of the Desert Plan, however, is designated for the location of utility lines and is the most direct route between the Imperial Valley Substation in the United States and the La Rosita Substation in Mexico.

Routing the transmission lines through private land in the east would require considerably longer routes. The generating facilities and the La Rosita Substation are west of Mexicali and south of the BLM lands. The route of the transmission lines, to use private lands, would have to run east, then north, then back west to connect to the IV Substation. Such a route would be considerably longer, more costly to construct, and would result in a larger total area of impacts. Private lands to the east are being used for agriculture. Any easterly alternative route for the transmission line would displace agricultural lands under towers and/or around poles and create conflicts with aerial crop dusting and other agriculture practices.

2.4 Interrelationship with Other Planned Projects

The applicants are not aware of any projects similar to the proposed action related to power transmission line interconnections to Mexico in southern California other than:

- SDG&E's rebundling of the SDG&E 230 kV circuit position from the international border to the IV Substation; and
- SDG&E's plan to install a second circuit on the existing 230 kV transmission line from the international border to the IV Substation.

Other independent power developers have expressed interest in constructing power plants in the north Baja California area. However, no specific information on such proposals was available.

2.4.1 SDG&E 230 kV Circuit Position Reconductor

The SDG&E 230 kV Circuit Position Rebundling project replaced the single 1033 aluminum conductor steel reinforced (ACSR) conductors in the existing position on SDG&E's 230 kV transmission line from the international border to the IV Substation, on

both the steel lattice towers and wooden poles near the substation. The single conductor was replaced with a bundled conductor to increase transmission capacity for importation of additional power from Mexico. Work on the project began August 14, 2001, and was completed on October 5, 2001.

Work on this project was carried out within the existing SDG&E right-of-way and involved principally the use of access roads and pull sites. The existing access roads were used, but the pull sites were a new temporary area of disturbance. These sites are wholly within the SDG&E right-of-way. North of the Southwest Power Link, some pull sites were within the area of potential effect of the proposed action.

2.4.2 SDG&E 230 kV Second Circuit

This SDG&E 230 kV Second Circuit project is proposed by SDG&E to add a second bundled conductor circuit in the empty position on the 230 kV transmission line between the international border and the IV Substation. Matching conductors would be installed on the Mexican portion of the transmission line by CFE. The proposed in-service date for this project is November 2002. Its effects would be similar to the SDG&E reconductor project for the existing line, affecting areas within the SDG&E right-of-way. According to project schedules, it would occur after the completion of the BCP and SER transmission lines.