

Humbug Valley Planning Unit

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measure:

- *Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*

The Stewardship Council recommends measures to protect habitat from ongoing vehicle, trespassing cattle, and vandalism damage, including vehicle barriers and fencing where impacts have been observed. These habitat protection measures would also protect cultural resources. Habitat values would be enhanced through assessment of stream, meadow, and sensitive species habitats in Humbug Valley and support of restoration efforts. The objective of these measures is to enhance the habitat potential of the resources in Humbug Valley and ensure the continuation of long-standing restoration efforts.

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan in coordination with the Ecological Resource Committee.*
- *Assess and restore hydrologic function of the meadow to improve riparian zones and overall ecological conditions.*

Areas of emphasis would be meadow areas where the hydrology has been altered by drainage activities to benefit grazing, as well as willow riparian habitat. Management would include assessing and restoring the hydrologic functions of the meadow to improve riparian zones and overall ecological conditions. The draft Humbug Valley Resource Management Plan details future enhancement activities to be considered in Humbug Valley such as additional stream channel improvements, targeted plantings of riparian vegetation, focused fencing to minimize negative human impacts in sensitive or high use areas, added recreational use signage, and improved monitoring and notification procedures dealing with the presence of trespass cattle. Management of the valley is intended to occur in consultation with the Rock Creek-Cresta Project Ecological Resources Committee (ERC), the USFS, and the Feather River Coordinated Resource Management (FRCRM) Group, as under current agreements. (Requirements related to hydropower operations and FERC license requirements do not apply to this planning unit.) The commitments made by PG&E in the 2000 Rock Creek-Cresta Settlement Agreement for restoration activities in Humbug Valley are contained in Appendix B because they do not address lands or resources within or affected by the FERC Project. As such, the commitments are not monitored or enforced by FERC. However, Humbug Valley restoration activities are monitored by the ERC, which was established by a condition of the 2001 Rock Creek-Cresta Project FERC License. This oversight would continue.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan.*

The amount and distribution of noxious weeds are currently unknown within the planning unit; however, former grazing and ongoing recreational uses have likely introduced and spread noxious weeds within the planning unit. The Stewardship Council recommends development of a noxious weed management plan that would incorporate traditional ecological knowledge as applied by

local Native Americans in the nearby Maidu Stewardship Project. For example, removal would be done by hand pulling and grubbing with hand tools as much as possible.

Preservation of Historic Values

Continued ecological recovery of meadow and riparian areas would be supported through Maidu ecological/ethnobotanical management and use of plant resources, as ecologically appropriate with consideration of sensitive habitats (such as for the willow flycatcher). This management would include measures such as controlled burning to enhance meadow conditions, pruning of willows to stimulate young growth, removal of exotic plant species and planting of native species, and harvest of certain plant materials. Specific actions and other aspects of ecological/ethnobotanical management would be addressed in a wildlife and habitat management plan in conjunction with a future restoration and resource management plan developed cooperatively among the several agencies and groups with existing agreements. This plan would be preceded by a thorough assessment of current conditions.

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Conduct an ethnographic study to identify traditional use areas and assess the potential to restore these areas and uses.*
- *Remove and/or replace some of the signage leading to cultural sites to prevent further vandalism.*

Measures to protect historic and archeological sites include: installation of signage, additional vehicle barriers such as boulders and rail fences, and fencing to exclude trespassing cattle from sensitive areas, and a potential on-site monitor presence to discourage vandalism. (The California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program [CAASP] regularly trains local citizens to monitor archaeological sites, mostly on BLM lands. They may be able to do the same for monitors in Humbug Valley.) These measures are in response to observations of impacts, particularly at the soda springs and to rock mortars, and the lack of barriers or inadequate barriers. Impacts to the cemeteries and Big Springs have not been observed, but their importance as spiritual and ceremonial sites as well as Big Springs' rare habitat and source of flows in Yellow Creek suggest that proactive measures to protect these sites should be considered. There is a high likelihood of additional cultural sites, and the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys and an ethnographic (and ethnohistoric) study to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. Documentation efforts should be coordinated with the Native American entities.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a cultural resource management plan to protect cultural resources and traditional use areas.*

Based on the findings of the surveys and recommended ethnographic study and to provide a framework for the protective measures of known sites, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a cultural resources management plan. The plan would include appropriate measures for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of cultural resources (archaeological and historical), as well as traditional use areas. Treatment measures would include guidance on avoidance, specific protective measures (e.g., fencing), site monitoring, and methods to preserve,

restore, or enhance cultural resource values through conservation easements, management agreements, or through public interpretation and education programs.

Potential Measure:

- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural measures.*

Development of the cultural resources management plan and all other cultural resource enhancement measures should be coordinated with the local Native American community, as Maidu organizations and individuals are interested in having a greater role in improved protection of cultural resources in the valley. When developing a plan that affects religious or sacred places, special effort will be undertaken to consult with spiritual religious leaders of the tribes. They have also expressed a desire and interest in transmitting knowledge of traditional practices focused on enhancement and use of plants for traditional crafts and foodstuffs, and medical, spiritual, and ceremonial practices. The Stewardship Council recommends providing an opportunity to introduce youth groups to Maidu cultural practices, resource management, and education. Nearby, the Maidu Stewardship Project involving local Maidu groups is demonstrating traditional management techniques on several thousand acres of Plumas National Forest land. This project has been in existence for several years and may serve as a model and source of support for Maidu management in Humbug Valley.

Outdoor Recreation**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a recreation management plan (RMP) to formalize increasing uses and protect valuable recreation, habitat, and cultural values from being impacted.*

Due to the proximity to growing development areas around Lake Almanor and the anticipated related increase of recreation use in the area, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a recreation management plan (RMP) with focus on retaining the primitive character of Humbug Valley and protecting ecological and cultural resources. This RMP should be developed in coordination with the ERC, agencies, and Native American entities to formalize current and future recreation use and thus protect the sensitive ecological and cultural values. To formalize and guide rather than increase recreation use, recommended measures are mostly programmatic and related to the interpretation and education of ecological and cultural values. Physical recreation enhancements would thus be mostly limited to the already-developed camping and historic site facilities. Other suggested elements of an RMP include developing a recreation monitoring program, evaluating recreation needs (e.g., ADA facilities, alternative camping facilities, etc.), developing a dispersed recreation use management component, and developing an operations and maintenance program. It should also coordinate law enforcement and seek to coordinate patrol of the area to reduce unauthorized uses. Management of unauthorized OHV and snowmobile use would also be addressed in the dispersed recreation use management component of the plan.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop an interpretation and education plan in coordination with local Native American entities as part of the RMP.*

Along with creating an RMP, the Stewardship Council recommends developing an interpretation and education plan in coordination with local Native American entities. Interpretation and

education are important components of the recreation experience and can offer new knowledge to visitors on many topics, guide their behavior, and foster stewardship. Due to its immense wealth of natural and cultural resources, the planning unit offers a range of opportunities to educate visitors, especially about the cultural, terrestrial, and aquatic resources. Suggested elements of an interpretation and education plan include: evaluating the potential for educational sites in the valley; developing consistent information and directional signage; developing educational programs with local schools, groups (4-H, Boy Scouts, etc.), and Native American entities; and developing interpretation programs and materials focused on traditional use of the area, ethnobotanical resources and plant identification, meadow hydrology, special status species, and appropriate recreation use.

Potential Measures:

- *Assess the potential for a demonstration site and educational loop trail for area visitors.*
- *Assess youth program opportunities at Yellow Creek Campground.*

Stewardship Council recommendations also include the assessment of educational sites – a demonstration site and loop trail – near the access roads, which would provide the potential to facilitate Maidu and others' education of school groups and other youth program activities. Many of the cultural and ethnobotanical resources in the valley (such as wild potato and willows) are close to existing gravel roads and would be accessible for educational purposes. The Yellow Creek Campground would be assessed as a base for youth program activities, for example for camping trips with an educational focus. In summary, the existing recreation opportunities would continue, though enhanced through educational features, and greater efforts would be made to exclude illegal vehicle access to sensitive cultural and ethnobotanical sites.

Open Space

Potential Measures:

- *Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.*
- *Remove non-functional fencing remnants and unusable structures to enhance the viewshed.*

The Stewardship Council recommends preserving open space values through permanent conservation easements and thus protect Humbug Valley from development pressures. It includes only minor additions of educational site facilities, and the meadow setting would remain primarily undeveloped and primitive in character. To enhance open space, remaining non-functional fence posts and other unusable structural remnants would be removed. Protection of open space values may be particularly important given the presence of the large block of private land on the west side of the valley near Big Springs, and large areas of private forest land to the north and south, all of which are relatively close to the growing Chester and West Lake Almanor resort and residential areas.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a baseline conditions report that describes agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the area, including current uses and state of improvement.*
- *Evaluate the potential to reinstate low intensity grazing as a tool for meadow management within the planning unit.*

Grazing leases and allotments were removed from Humbug Valley by a coalition of agencies and stakeholder groups due to impacts on sensitive wildlife and riparian habitats. The valley may retain potential for cattle grazing or other agricultural uses in the future, but any renewed grazing (e.g., for meadow maintenance) would need to be carefully managed and monitored to protect the unique and sensitive resource values present, including cultural sites. Because of resource concerns, the Stewardship Council does not propose re-establishing the grazing leases that ended in 2001. In the future, however, carefully managed and controlled grazing may have value as a tool for future meadow management. Any use of grazing would require a baseline conditions report and careful evaluation. Measures to protect the fragile ecosystem would require re-establishment of fencing to exclude cattle from riparian areas, springs, and cultural resource areas and development of cattle fords where creek crossing is necessary. Any measures to reinstate grazing would have to be closely coordinated with the ERC, the USFS and other participating agencies, and Native Americans entities.

Sustainable Forestry

Potential Measures:

- *Evaluate timber inventory data and supplement as appropriate.*
- *Develop a forest management plan for the planning unit to promote wildlife habitat and structural and physical diversity in the surrounding forests for long-term ecological, social, and cultural benefits.*
- *Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness.*
- *Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit to ensure long-term forest health and reduce loading and fire hazards.*

The Stewardship Council recommends developing a forest management plan for the planning unit through the evaluation of existing forest inventory data and supplemental information, when appropriate. In addition to supporting natural forest development, the forest management plan would promote holistic watershed management, supporting the enhancement of other BPVs over the long term. In coordination with the local Native Americans, Maidu Stewardship Project management measures (such as fuels management) would be included in the plan as applicable. The forest management plan would be compatible with current habitat connectivity, recommended habitat and cultural resource protection, and current viewsheds. Encroaching lodgepole pine would be removed from the meadow as part of habitat restoration and protection efforts but would be low in volume. Special consideration would be given to historic, archeological, and cultural resource protection when conducting thinning, salvage, or other work. Where applicable, forest management would also be closely coordinated with the Lassen National Forest to consistently promote forest connectivity and late successional habitat. The fuels

management plan would be incorporated in the forest management plan and both plans would be coordinated with relevant county plans. Also, a fire management and response plan, detailing exit strategies for visitors and fire fighting response would be prepared in coordination with Plumas County, the USFS, and other interested agencies.