

North Fork Feather River Planning Unit

The recommended measures are intended to complement actions agreed to by PG&E during FERC Project relicensing proceedings and, in some cases, assist in the implementation of actions proposed in completed FERC Project plans. When available, final license conditions for the UNFFR and Poe Projects would be incorporated into plans for this planning unit.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements to complement planned river access improvements at Rock Creek Dam bench.*

Improvement of river access sites is focused on two priority sites identified in the 2003 River Access Management Plan that are used primarily for whitewater boating. Development of new facilities at these sites would increase opportunities for riverside day use recreation. The recommended measures for Rock Creek Dam bench include development of semi-primitive campsites, and interpretive and day use improvements to take advantage of the attractive, partially wooded site and the potential spawning channel. The measures are also intended to complement the planned access and parking improvements. Camping sites are at a premium on the Rock Creek reach during whitewater release weekends, and the site currently receives informal camping use. The interpretive improvements would augment the new interpretive panels installed at Shady Rest and Belden Rest Stop in the initial phase of the 2002 River Corridor Interpretation Plan prepared for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project. Potential new interpretive sites and panels are items for discussion identified in the “future phase” of that plan.

Potential Measure:

- *Improve river access at Tobin Vista in accordance with the 2003 River Access Management Plan; add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends camping and day use enhancements at the Tobin Vista site to complement planned vehicle entry and egress and planned river access improvements for whitewater boaters. Improvements at Tobin Vista are identified in the 2003 River Access Management Plan as a second priority after the Rock Creek Dam bench but, due to the high costs of the Rock Creek Dam bench improvements, are not covered by the existing funding commitments. The site is heavily used, particularly for informal camping, during weekends when whitewater releases are made.

Potential Measure:

- *Redevelop Indian Jim Campground as a river-side day use area, in cooperation with the USFS.*

Redevelopment of the decommissioned Indian Jim/James Lee Campground is intended to take advantage of the site’s potential for use as a scenic day use area. Although at risk for flooding during high flows, the site is very attractive with large trees providing shade, and a large gravel bar providing river access during normal flow conditions. Few such flat, shady sites exist along the river within the planning unit. Day use at the site could complement the development of a visitor center or similar education facility at the adjacent Indian Jim School, which has been discussed as a possible future use of the facility by the USFS and others. The site also has

potential for use by youth programs with the recommended improvements, and the school may have potential for this use as well. Plumas County representatives have indicated that organized youth activities, such as rafting trips, have occurred on the Rock Creek reach, and the recommended enhancements could support such uses. Another attraction is Granite Creek, which empties into the Feather River at the site and was recently enhanced as a trout spawning site under the Rock Creek-Cresta License. Due to flood risk, permanent structures such as restrooms may not be feasible, and the site may need to be closed during winter and spring high flow periods. Before any measures could be implemented, clarification of the extent of PG&E ownership would be needed. Also, given that part of the site is known to be in USFS ownership, collaboration with the USFS would be required in planning any future enhancements. All measures in the Rock Creek-Cresta Project area would require reviews and coordination with the Ecological Review Committee established by the 2001 License.

Potential Measure:

- *Evaluate Caribou Crossings concession regarding resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition; implement needed improvements in cooperation with lessee.*

Evaluation of the Caribou Crossings commercial recreation facility is intended to ensure that biological resources are protected and recreation visitor needs met. The evaluation would focus on potential resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition, to be followed by needed improvements as indicated by the evaluation. The concession is situated directly on the bank of the river, with recreational vehicle (RV) sites located mere steps away from the water. Use of these sites increases the potential for impacts to the river and riparian habitat. The concession provides desired services, and during a summer weekend visit to the planning unit was found to be one of only a few places for canyon visitors to purchase food or beverages. The facility provides campers an alternative to the three nearby USFS campgrounds, which recent data indicate are frequently full during the peak season, and do not provide showers nor electrical or sewage hookups for RVs. Needed improvements would be implemented by the lessee in cooperation with PG&E or other future easement holder.

Potential Measure:

- *Clean up debris in the river and on riverbank at Poe Powerhouse river access site.*

Although no enhancements are recommended for the informal recreation sites near the Poe Powerhouse beyond those proposed in the Poe Project License Application, site users would also benefit from removal of rebar and other man-made debris seen in the river and on the riverbank. The debris is unsightly and poses a possible hazard to anglers, swimmers, and boaters.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measure:

- *Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC boundaries to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*

Recent terrestrial and aquatic habitat data are available for much of the planning unit as a result of relicensing studies conducted for three FERC Projects that overlay the planning unit. However, because most of the lands in the planning unit are outside the FERC boundaries, data are not available for many areas, particularly for the large parcels in the downstream third of the unit. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of lands outside the FERC

boundaries to identify biological resources and thus gain a broader knowledge of the wildlife, plants, and habitat to enable their protection.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries.*

Several species of noxious weeds have been documented in the planning unit in relation to three of the hydropower projects. In the Rock Creek-Cresta Project area, PG&E conducts annual weed surveys, monitors known populations, and has prepared a Noxious Weed Management Plan. Development of a similar plan has been agreed to by PG&E for the UNFFR Project area, and a noxious weed management plan is likely to be a condition of the Poe Project License. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a noxious weed management plan for portions of the planning unit not included in the FERC license required plans to eradicate existing populations of noxious weeds where possible, and implement preventative actions to minimize the spread of weeds in the future. The noxious weed management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat, fuels, forest, and rangeland management plans.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.*

The Stewardship Council recommends using biological resource survey data to develop a wildlife and habitat management plan. The planning unit contains habitat for several special status species, and recommended surveys may reveal additional special status plants and wildlife. Once surveys are completed, potential habitat enhancements and restoration opportunities can be identified and developed into a comprehensive plan describing habitat and species goals and objectives, as well as measures needed to enhance and protect habitat for both plants and wildlife. Monitoring of species and/or habitats would also be developed as a component of the plan. The wildlife and habitat management plan should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed, rangeland, forest, and fuels management plans. The plan would be consistent with completed or proposed wildlife plans for the three FERC Projects, such as the bald eagle management plans for the UNFFR and Poe Projects and the Transmission Line Right-of-Way (ROW) Wildlife Plan for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project.

Sustainable Forestry

Potential Measures:

- *Evaluate existing timber inventory data and supplement as appropriate.*
- *Develop a forest management plan for the planning unit to promote natural forest development and structural and physical diversity in forests for long-term ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits.*

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. The forest management plan would be compatible with the FERC license required vegetation management plans and fuels management plans that address lands within the FERC boundaries. Coordination with the USFS (Plumas National Forest) would be required in

development of the plan to foster consistency with management of the surrounding USFS forestlands. The forest management plan should also be coordinated with relevant county plans.

In areas where timber extraction is consistent with the forest management plan, timber harvesting techniques would be promoted that maintain mosaics of forest stands of different age, size, and rotation period. In addition to utilizing PG&E's uneven-age selection harvest system, harvesting practices and a monitoring program would be included to protect watercourses and lakes and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests. Post-harvest, a monitoring plan would be developed to ensure that forest management and the proposed harvesting schedule would be consistent with the forest management plan, promoting natural forest development in perpetuity. Monitoring of stream sediment loads, revegetation, and noxious weeds is particularly important in regard to the large Timber Management Units (TMUs) in the Big Bend area that burned in recent fires.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.*

The occurrence of several large fires, each burning thousands of acres of forest, in and near this planning unit in recent years, underscores the fire threat. Management of fuels is very important in reducing fire risk. Fuel load management is particularly important in the Belden TMU, which is adjacent to a private resort and summer home developments and includes PG&E leases for recreation homesites. The anticipated UNFFR Project vegetation management plan and Poe Project fuel treatment plan will each likely contain fuel load reduction measures; however, these plans would only apply to lands within the FERC boundaries. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries consistent with measures in those existing or proposed plans to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard. Development of the fuels management plan should be coordinated with relevant county plans, as well as the forest, wildlife and habitat, noxious weeds, and rangeland management plans.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness.*

To increase fire preparedness and enhance fire prevention, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fire management and response plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries consistent with, and as companions to, the existing and anticipated fire management and response plans developed for the FERC Projects. The fire management and response plan would include fire prevention measures designed to promote public awareness about fire danger and provide the provisions and staff for an appropriate response to fire.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the grazed area, including current uses and state of improvement.*

- *Develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use that includes goals and objectives, a monitoring and adaptive management strategy, and specifies grazing practices that address soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, and habitat protection.*

Grazing would continue in the area of the existing grazing lease at Big Bend. To enable the protection of resource values in that area, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the grazed area, including current uses and state of improvement. This baseline information would be used to develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use in the planning unit that includes goals and objectives, a monitoring and adaptive management strategy, and specifies grazing practices that may address topics including soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, habitat protection, and cultural resources management. Erosion control and monitoring of sediment loads and noxious weeds are particularly important given that the lease area is within two TMUs that burned in a 2001 fire. The rangeland management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat, noxious weed, fuels, and forest management plans to ensure consistency among the plans.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Cultural resource surveys conducted for FERC Project relicensing have not included the majority of the lands in the planning unit, most of which are outside the FERC Project Areas of Potential Effects (APEs). Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. Documentation of cultural sites should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify traditional use areas.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

An ethnographic study was done in 2001 for the UNFFR Project APE, but no ethnographic studies were done for the Rock Creek-Cresta or Poe Projects. Contacts made by PG&E with local tribes regarding ethnographic use areas in the Poe Project area did not result in the identification of any such areas. However, because most of the planning unit is outside the FERC Project APEs, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify traditional use areas. The ethnographic study should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries or APEs consistent with the existing and anticipated cultural resource plans for the FERC Projects.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

If new cultural resources are identified, this information would be used to develop a cultural resources management plan to ensure that cultural resources are provided adequate protection in the future. The plan would include appropriate measures for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of cultural resources (archeological and historical), as well as traditional use areas. Treatment measures could include 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. Development of the cultural resources management plan should be coordinated with Native American entities, and should be consistent with plans required by FERC Project licenses, including the final Heritage Properties Management Plan (HPMP) to be prepared for the UNFFR Project and the Cultural Resource Inventory and Management Plan prepared for the Poe Project in 2001.

Open Space

Potential Measure:

- *Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.*

Lastly, the Stewardship Council recommends preserving scenic open space values contained in canyon and foothill parcels through permanent conservation easements. These are particularly important for preserving the viewshed for Feather River Canyon visitors and travelers, as well as for visitors to the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area, just below the Big Bend area.