

Fordyce Lake Planning Unit

The Stewardship Council stresses close cooperation with Nevada Irrigation District (NID) and the upcoming relicensing effort to ensure consistency with proposed studies and subsequent actions to avoid any duplication of efforts. Given the range of biological, recreation, and cultural studies to be conducted and the study area boundaries, it is expected that most information needs on lands inside the FERC boundary will be met. Recommended additional study efforts or assessments are intended to provide only the necessary information that may not be obtained by the relicensing studies.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan in coordination with adjacent landowners.*
- *Identify and disclose unauthorized uses and develop strategies to address future management and/or eradication.*

The Stewardship Council recommends promoting the protection and enhancement of habitat values by conducting surveys outside the FERC relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection. The planning unit offers a diverse range of wildlife and plant habitat values. Development pressures are present in the region due to the checkerboard of public and private lands surrounding the Watershed Lands. The planning unit's high elevation, rocky landscape provides habitat with a high potential for special status species. Three forest carnivores have been documented in the region and may possibly still occur within the region. These species are sensitive to habitat loss and fragmentation (primarily late successional habitat with open meadow/riparian areas), and disturbance from recreation and/or human presence. Therefore, a wildlife and habitat management plan would be developed. This plan would be coordinated with adjacent landowners such as the USFS to ensure consistent management. Wildlife corridors would be identified and enhanced through the development of buffers to enhance species recovery and reduce the potential impact of habitat fragmentation. Consistent with the forest management plan, harvesting would not occur in areas determined critical and important for special status species or sensitive habitats, such as late successional forest.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan in coordination with noxious weed abatement efforts.*

An inventory of noxious weeds throughout the planning unit would be performed to determine the threat of invasive species. As noxious weeds have been identified in the planning unit, a noxious weed management plan would be developed to eradicate and control them. This plan would be coordinated with the proposed noxious weed abatement effort in Placer and Nevada Counties.

Open Space

Potential Measure:

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

The Stewardship Council recommends preserving open space values through permanent conservation easements. Minimal development is recommended, and the aesthetic quality of the scenic lakes and forests throughout the planning unit would be protected.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measures:

- *Explore the potential to expand and integrate the non-motorized trail network with surrounding USFS lands.*
- *Install additional directional and safety signage for Sterling and Fordyce Lakes.*

The recreation component of the recommendations focuses on assessing recreation opportunities in the Fordyce Lake Planning Unit.¹ Potential recreation improvements would include the expansion and connection of trails throughout the planning unit in coordination with the USFS. Many trails already exist in the area, and right-of-way easements through PG&E lands may be necessary to expand the trail network. Difficult road access limits recreation use in portions of the planning unit. In fact, White Rock and Fordyce Lakes are only accessible by long and rugged roads. Improved directional signage would be placed on Fordyce Lake Road to inform motorists of the recreation opportunities at Sterling and Fordyce Lakes. Past Sterling Lake, signs to Fordyce Lake would warn that passenger vehicles are not recommended. This signage would promote safe public use within these areas. All recreation measures should be coordinated with relicensing efforts and any future FERC license required measures and plans.

Potential Measures:

- *Coordinate with the Tahoe National Forest to monitor OHV use and assess the need for additional OHV trails in the vicinity.*
- *Collect trash and debris from Fordyce Lake and any other locations determined necessary.*
- *Improve OHV trail signage to promote navigation and proper trail use.*

The Fordyce Lake area is a popular OHV destination with a combination of formalized and unauthorized OHV trails. The Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with the Tahoe National Forest to monitor OHV use and assess the need for additional OHV trails in the vicinity. OHV use can in some cases degrade resources through increased erosion, cultural site disturbance, habitat and wildlife disturbance, and debris. The Stewardship Council recommends assessing historic and biological resource impacts from OHV use. Trash and debris would be collected around Fordyce Lake and any other locations determined necessary. Through coordination efforts, proper signage and interpretive features would be installed to promote proper trail use and mark authorized OHV routes and staging areas, including Meadow Knoll and Indian Springs. Erosion prevention and habitat protection measures, such as OHV barriers and signage, would be installed in areas that have experienced impacts. Any impact or change to the

OHV trail networks would be coordinated with adjacent landowners. The Stewardship Council also recommends identifying and disclosing unauthorized uses and develop strategies to address future management and/or eradication.

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 Fordyce Lake Planning Unit has fairly low value timber resources, consisting primarily of lodgepole pine/fir forest, shrub, and sub-alpine forest. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a forest management plan through the evaluation of existing forest inventory data and supplemental information, when appropriate. This baseline information would be used to determine appropriate forest management practices as well as forest monitoring and timber extraction goals. In addition to supporting natural forest development, the forest management plan would promote holistic watershed management, compatible with enhancements in the Stewardship Council recommendations such as the wildlife and habitat management plan and the noxious weeds management plan to ensure consistent and complementary actions. Additionally, snags and downed woody debris would be maintained in forest stands of Timber Management Units (TMUs) under the Salvage management prescription for wildlife habitat and forest regeneration when not a safety, fire, or disease hazard.

Potential Measure:

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

Furthermore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit. Lands have been historically fire-suppressed, and a fuels management plan would aid in the prevention of high intensity fires, promote forest structure and composition, as well as foster natural regeneration in these forests. It should be noted that the 2001 Gap Fire was a catastrophic, stand-replacing fire that destroyed the majority of mature forests on PG&E lands located southwest of the planning unit and along the Interstate 80 corridor. Currently, the USFS is managing adjacent lands for fire management to reduce fire hazard and promote wildlife habitat, recreation, and visual quality. Coordination with USFS management and adjacent landowners would foster a holistic approach to the forest, habitat, and recreation resources in this area.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fire management and response plan in coordination with Nevada and Placer Counties and the USFS.*

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness. The fire management and response plan would be developed in coordination with Nevada and Placer Counties and the USFS. This plan

would include fire prevention measures designed to promote public awareness about fire danger as well as provide the provisions and staff for an appropriate response to fire.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measure:

- *Evaluate the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with adjacent USFS grazing operations.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends investigating the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with the adjacent USFS allotments. Currently, adjacent USFS allotments are unfenced, and it is unknown how often, or even if, grazing occurs on PG&E property. If grazing is reintroduced, cultural resource protection measures will be included. The Stewardship Council recommends evaluating the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with adjacent grazing operations and USFS allotments.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measures:

- *Protect cultural sites with landscape measures and signage, and restrict or formalize recreation use.*
- *Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for the planning unit.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Recommendations promote the protection and discovery of cultural resources in the Fordyce Lake Planning Unit. Due to the prominent Native American and pioneer history in the area, cultural surveys would be performed in areas not previously surveyed, such as areas outside the FERC relicensing study area. These surveys would complement any relicensing studies, which may not include all areas of the planning unit. These surveys would identify cultural resources in the area, and the Stewardship Council recommends avoiding any conflicting use in areas deemed culturally important. Rock art and cultural artifacts have already been identified in the area, and it is likely that additional prehistoric and ethnographic resources have yet to be discovered. Based on the results of cultural resource surveys, a cultural resources management plan would be developed to determine protection measures for cultural and historic sites. Such protection measures could include landscape measures, signage, education, and restricting or formalizing recreation use through the relocation of trails or public access to non-sensitive areas. All cultural resource surveys and protection measures would be conducted in coordination with Native American entities.

Endnote

¹ Relicensing efforts for the Drum-Spaulding Project are expected to begin in 2007 and would likely result in additional recreation studies and an updated Recreation Plan.