

Lake Spaulding Planning Unit

Above all, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with the upcoming relicensing effort to ensure consistency with proposed studies and subsequent actions to avoid any inconsistency or 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 information that may not be obtained by the relicensing studies and that are considered necessary to fully support the LCP.

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.*

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. Due to the great diversity of flora and fauna already identified in previously studied areas in the planning unit, such as special status species, 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. Forest connectivity would be promoted through coordinated protection of lands adjacent to the many USFS California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs). Wildlife corridors would be identified and enhanced through the development of buffers to enhance species recovery and reduce the potential impact of forest 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.*

Additionally, an inventory of noxious weeds throughout the planning unit would be performed to determine the threat of invasive species. As noxious weeds have been previously 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 County.

Potential Measure:

- *Assess the adverse impacts of recreation and agricultural use on habitat.*

Recreation and agricultural use have contributed to negative impacts on both habitat and visual quality around various lakes and on roads in the Grouse Lakes region. The Stewardship Council recommends an assessment of erosion impacts on habitat from recreation activities such as OHV use and shoreline campsites to determine potential restoration needs. Measures would be adopted at roads and recreation areas to reduce detrimental habitat impacts, especially near water courses.

The assessment of adverse impacts would also be conducted in areas with cattle grazing. These habitat enhancement activities would be coordinated with the USFS, PG&E, and FERC as necessary.

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 throughout the planning unit would be protected.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a recreation management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary.*

Recreation uses on lands within the FERC boundary are managed under the existing Recreation Plan for the Drum-Spaulding Project, which may be updated as part of relicensing. However, there is no management guidance for recreation occurring on lands outside of the FERC boundary, which includes approximately 78% of the planning unit. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a recreation management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary. Suggested elements of the recreation management plan include developing a recreation monitoring program, evaluating recreation needs, developing a dispersed recreation use management component, and developing an operations and maintenance program for any facilities developed outside of the FERC boundary. Development of the recreation management plan should be coordinated with relicensing efforts and any future FERC license required measures and plans.

Potential Measures:

- *Support the expansion and integration of the trail network throughout the planning unit, in coordination with the USFS.*
- *Improve trail signage to promote navigation and proper trail use.*
- *Build and connect the trail system between Spaulding, Rucker, and Fuller Lakes.*

Potential recreation improvements would include the expansion, connection, and improvement of hiking trails throughout the planning unit in coordination with the USFS, PG&E, and interested stakeholders to ensure public safety and non-conflictive use with present hydropower operations. Many hiking trails already exist in the area, and right-of-way easements through both USFS and PG&E lands would be necessary to expand and integrate this extensive trail network.

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends development of a trail that connects Lake Spaulding with Fuller and Rucker Lakes. Connecting with the USFS Pioneer Trail, this new trail would allow hikers and anglers a non-motorized access to these neighboring lakes. This trail would promote greater use of the less popular Rucker Lake for angling and camping as well as provide visitors with additional hiking opportunities. The Stewardship Council also recommends improving trail signage in the Lake Spaulding and Grouse Lakes areas. The improved signage,

indicating destination and distance along the trail and at selected landmarks, would not only assist visitors in navigating the extensive trail network, but also promote greater adherence to trail use designations. A large map of the trail network at each trailhead that includes information about the regulations and amenities – fire rings, the number of undesignated campsites, and activities supported – would inform visitors of the recreation opportunities available in the area.

Potential Measure:

- *Investigate the potential for an ADA fishing platform at Fuller Lake.*

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends facility improvements to enhance the recreation experience in the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit. One improvement would be to investigate the potential to install an ADA fishing platform at Fuller Lake. Fuller Lake is popular for shoreline and boat angling, and this fishing platform would be the first in the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit.

Potential Measure:

- *Investigate the potential to re-open the Eagle Mountain Lodge, in cooperation with an interested party, for outdoor recreation and educational opportunities.*

Additionally, the re-opening of the defunct Eagle Mountain Lodge, in coordination with an interested lessee, would be investigated to meet the demand for a winter recreation destination in this area. The facility has the possibility to be used as a recreation lodge with year-round access. Eagle Mountain is located near a river, scenic meadow, and a short distance from Lake Valley Reservoir, and could be used as a starting point for hiking, nature appreciation, mountain biking, and snow sports such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. It is close to Interstate 80 and is the closest snow sport location for Sacramento and Bay Area residents. Also, it would be possible to utilize the site for youth programs for both day and overnight use. In addition to outdoor recreation, educational and interpretive activities could be conducted at the facility and the surrounding environs.

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 promote structural and physical diversity in forests for long-term ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits.*
- *Promote forest connectivity in coordination with adjacent landowners, especially in areas abutting USFS California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers.*

A large percentage of the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit is under the Multiple-Use Timber Management Unit (TMU) category, warranting a measure that promotes sustainable forestry and other values inherent to the planning unit. Under the Stewardship Council recommendations, a forest management plan would be developed through the evaluation of existing forest inventory data and supplemented with additional 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 recommended

enhancements, such as the wildlife and habitat management plan and the rangeland management plan to ensure consistent and complementary actions.

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, the Stewardship Council recommends including harvesting practices and a monitoring program to protect watercourses and lakes and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests. Measures such as maintaining large woody debris near watercourses for wildlife habitat and wider riparian buffers, beyond the thresholds of the California Forest Practice Rules, would be essential to minimize sedimentation and water quality issues. Additionally, snags and downed woody debris would be maintained in forest stands of TMUs under the Salvage management prescription for wildlife habitat and forest regeneration when not a safety, fire, or disease hazard. 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.

Potential Measures:

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

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. This area has 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. 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, adjacent landowners, and fire and vegetation management plans in the area would foster a holistic approach to the forest, habitat, and recreation resources in the vicinity of the planning unit. Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fire management and response plan for the planning unit, especially for lands that are developed or located at the urban interface. The fire management and response plan would include fire prevention measures to promote public awareness about fire danger as well as identify the provisions and staffing needs to carry out an appropriate response to fire.

Potential Measure:

- *Assess the potential to develop a demonstration forest for sustainable forestry research and management.*

The Stewardship Council recommends assessing the potential for the development of a demonstration forest to promote sustainable forest management and research. This demonstration forest would represent forests of the northern Sierra Nevada area and include a variety of forest types found in the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit. Research would focus on developing best management practices focused on such research themes as biodiversity conservation, soil conservation, habitat protection, and fire management consistent with the natural fire regime. Management would also include monitoring, silvicultural practices to promote habitat and biological diversity, and studies related to carbon sequestration. The development of a

demonstration forest would be consistent with the goals and objectives of the forest management plan for the planning unit.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measure:

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

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends evaluating the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with the adjacent USFS Canyon Creek allotment. Although the acreage needed to graze cattle is dependent on available forage and overall allotment conditions, substantial amounts of land are required for grazing at higher elevations. This recommendation would help provide forage resources for cattle in this area. Large portions of the allotment are barren rock, and the forage on PG&E lands could supplement existing grazing resources.

In the event that grazing is extended to the planning unit, a baseline conditions report would be developed to ensure the existence of adequate grazing conditions. This report would describe the current physical and biological conditions of the area, including current land uses and state of improvement. Additionally, a rangeland management plan for grazing could be developed to detail the goals and objectives for agricultural land use. This plan would ensure that grazing use within the planning unit meets the Stewardship Council policy for agricultural uses on Watershed Lands.

Any potential grazing opportunity would not significantly impact cultural resources, habitat or recreation opportunities. In the event that grazing is extended to the planning unit, the rangeland management plan would be coordinated with the cultural resources management plan, and wildlife and habitat management plan.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measures:

- *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.*

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, to identify and protect cultural resources. Petroglyphs have been found in the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit, and the Stewardship Council recommends avoiding any conflicting use in areas deemed culturally important. 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 education, fencing, patrolling, and the relocation of trails and public access to non-sensitive areas. Documentation of cultural sites and development of the cultural resources management plan would be coordinated with Native American entities. Additionally, the cultural resources management plan would be developed in

cooperation with PG&E to ensure compatibility with hydropower operation activities. When developing a plan that affects religious or sacred places, special effort will be undertaken to consult with spiritual religious leaders of the tribes.

Potential Measure:

- *Install an interpretive kiosk about early California history at the Lake Spaulding Day Use Area..*

In the Lake Spaulding Day Use Area, an interpretive kiosk would be installed to inform visitors of the rich, early California history found in the area. This kiosk would provide visitors with information related to pioneer life, the Overland Emigrant Trail, gold mining, and the Donner Party. This kiosk would be constructed in coordination with interested stakeholders, Native American entities, and the historians from the Donner Party State Park in Truckee. Additionally, the development of the early California history kiosk would be coordinated with the cultural resources kiosk in the Bear River Planning Unit to provide a breadth of interpretive information related to cultural resources in the area.