

Bear River 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 wide 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 relicensing studies and 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 relicensing study area to identify biological resources. Due to the diversity of flora and fauna identified in previously studied areas of the planning unit, such as special status species, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a wildlife and habitat management plan. 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 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:

- *Support efforts to restore meadow and riparian areas of Bear Valley in coordination with interested stakeholders.*

The wildlife and habitat management plan would also include measures to support restoration efforts in the riparian and meadow habitats of Bear Valley. The Stewardship Council recommends supporting the restoration efforts of Bear Valley in coordination with interested stakeholders, such as agencies (DFG and USFS) and local non-profit organizations like the Granite Bay Flycasters. Supporting such efforts would help ensure the long-term health and promotion of habitat and diversity in this riparian area. Possible enhancement measures would include the creation of additional stream meanders or oxbows and restoring the riparian corridor with vegetation to afford a diversity of habitats. Similarly, restoration of the montane meadow of Bear Valley would enhance this fragile ecosystem. Restoration could include such activities as removing encroaching trees from the meadow and creating a plan to exclude invasive species and promote native species.

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, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a noxious weed management plan to eradicate and control them. This plan would be coordinated with the proposed noxious weed abatement effort in Placer County.

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. Conservation easements would describe all prohibited uses to maintain open space values, including the level of uses allowed. Recommendations include only minor new development and are therefore not expected to decrease the scenic quality of these biologically and culturally rich lands of the Sierra Nevada.

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 90% 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. The recreation management plan should also coordinate law enforcement and seek to increase patrol of the area to reduce illegal and unauthorized uses. Development of the recreation management plan should be coordinated with relicensing efforts and any future FERC license required measures and plans.

Potential Measure:

- *Identify and disclose unauthorized uses and develop strategies to address future management and/or eradication.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends determining the magnitude of existing unauthorized uses in this planning unit. The Stewardship Council will work with PG&E to identify and disclose unauthorized uses, and develop strategies to address future management and/or eradication of those uses during the development of the disposition packages in Volume III of the LCP.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a day use area with fishing access and a wildlife viewing platform in Bear Valley.*

Based on significant public interest, developing a day use area in Bear Valley is recommended. Although the precise location of the day use area would be determined in coordination with PG&E, adjacent landowners and other interested stakeholders, the Bear Valley area has good road access and would be able to provide a fishing access that meets ADA requirements. The recommended Bear Valley day use area would include picnic tables, parking, restroom facilities, and an ADA fishing platform. Additionally, a wildlife viewing platform would be installed for visitors to enjoy the scenic vistas and special status species found in this area such as the golden eagle, great grey owl, and willow flycatcher. The recommended enhancements would be coordinated with those made during relicensing to avoid a duplication of recreation improvements. Additionally, all recreation enhancements would be developed in close coordination with PG&E to ensure compatibility between hydropower operations and the recreation experience.

Potential Measure:

- *Expand and integrate the trail network in the area to enhance recreation opportunities in coordination with the USFS.*

Another recommended recreation enhancement is the expansion and integration of the area's trail network in coordination with the USFS. The USFS and their partners have proposed the addition of a trailhead, staging area, and associated parking, for the eastern portion of the Pioneer Trail in Bear Valley. This trailhead and staging area would provide additional equestrian access for the Pioneer Trail, a multiple-use trail that serves equestrians, mountain bikers, and hikers. The proposed enhancement would provide increased access for the Pioneer Trail as well as other recreation opportunities in the vicinity. An easement on planning unit lands would be necessary to carry out the development of this proposed trailhead.

Potential Measure:

- *Assess the potential for youth program opportunities.*

The Bear Valley area offers many recreation and educational opportunities for local school and youth programs. The Stewardship Council recommends assessing the potential for youth program opportunities in the planning unit. The recommended Bear Valley day use area, the Sierra Discovery Trail, and the Bear Valley group campground offer ideal day and overnight use opportunities for various activities. Educational activities could include observing and studying nature, wildlife resources, native plants, and California history while the recreation activities could include camping, hiking, fishing, picnicking, and horseback riding.

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 joint history of mining and fire suppression has left the forests of the Bear River Planning Unit densely stocked and vulnerable to pests, diseases, fire, and invasive species. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a forest management plan 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 noxious weeds 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. Timber harvest equipment would be selected to ensure the least residual damage to forest stands and adjacent waterways. In coordination with the forest management plan, sustained timber harvesting would be utilized as a tool to actively enhance habitat where applicable. Silvicultural prescriptions and related harvesting actions would include a management focus on the enhancements of soils, water quality, riparian cover, and biological diversity. For example, in the Blue Canyon THP, a “Group Selection” was used that extracted a large proportion of mature forests. It would be recommended in future THPs that these areas be extracted less heavily or via the “Selection” method that harvests individual trees to minimize the proportion of mature forest removed, fostering natural regeneration and maintaining a larger percentage of habitat for species that depend upon mature forest. Similarly, large snags would be left in forest stands to provide habitat for northern goshawks, other raptors, and species such as the California spotted owl. Large woody debris would be left 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.

All forest extraction areas would be monitored post-harvest to ensure little to no significant detrimental impacts to forests at the stand or landscape level. Any impacts that do occur would be monitored to ensure the long-term health of plant and wildlife species and their associated habitat. Finally, post-harvest monitoring would ensure long-term consistency with the forest management plan.

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 Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan to determine the necessary amount of forest thinning to be achieved through timber harvesting, or other measures to minimize fuel accumulation such as pruning and the design of fire breaks. Fire suppression efforts, similar to that of USFS-managed forests in the Sierra Nevada, require management to reduce the possibility of large, high intensity fires. In some cases, current stands are highly susceptible to severe crown-fires, and an adequate fuels management plan would determine the necessary actions to avoid fire hazards throughout the planning unit, especially in areas with an urban interface or high property values. Forest diversity, regeneration, and structure would also be desired objectives of the fuels management plan. Furthermore, the Stewardship Council recommends that land management be coordinated with the USFS and other fire and vegetation management plans to provide forest connectivity. Currently, the USFS is managing adjacent lands for fire management to reduce fire hazard and improve wildlife habitat and viewshed.

Coordination with USFS management would promote an integrative approach to forest resources in this area.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit in coordination with adjacent landowners to ensure fire preparedness.*

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends developing of 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 designed to promote public awareness about fire danger as well as provide the provisions and staff for an appropriate response to fire.

Potential Measure:

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

The Stewardship Council also 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 Bear River Planning Unit. Research could focus on developing best management practices for themes such 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.

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.*

The historic component of the recommendations would promote the protection and identification of cultural resources in the Bear River Planning Unit. The Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys to identify prehistoric and historic resources outside the relicensing study area. Rock art and cultural artifacts have already been uncovered in the area, and it is likely that additional cultural resources have yet to be found. To protect cultural resources, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a cultural resources management plan in coordination with Native American entities, interested stakeholders, and Federal agencies. The cultural resources management plan would also include an interpretive element that would be coordinated with the recreation management plan to include a one-mile interpretive trail in the recommended Bear Valley day use area and educational signage at non-sensitive cultural sites. The latter measure would be taken only after consultation with archeologists and law enforcement officers to determine the best strategy for protecting cultural sites and ensuring that these artifacts are preserved without threat of disruption or possible damage. Additional measures to protect

cultural resources include the installation of signage, monitoring, and barriers such as boulders and rail fences around sensitive areas. All cultural resource measures should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Potential Measures:

- *Install a cultural kiosk at the Bear Valley day use area to promote Native American culture and history.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Additionally, a kiosk would be installed at the Bear Valley day use area to promote the cultural legacy of Native Americans in the area. Modeled after the interpretive displays found at the Sierra Discovery Trail, this kiosk would contain a display of replica cultural artifacts and rock art, information on Native Americans in the area, and educational panels that demonstrate traditions and rituals. Visitors to the Bear Valley day use area, as well as local school groups and youth, would learn about the cultural footprint of the historic inhabitants of the area. Development of information for the kiosk would be coordinated with Native American entities, cultural resources specialists, and interested stakeholders. Additionally, the development of the cultural resources kiosk would be coordinated with the early California history kiosk in the Lake Spaulding Planning Unit to provide a breadth of interpretive information related to cultural resources in the area.

Agricultural Uses

None recommended.