

Bass Lake Planning Unit

The number of measures recommended are few because numerous actions to enhance cultural resource protection, recreation, and plant and wildlife habitat (and plans that may result in more specific actions) are stipulated in the new FERC License, limiting the potential for additional enhancements. Recommendations are intended to complement the actions and plans implemented as a result of relicensing, as well as to address the protection and enhancement of BPVs on the approximately 150 acres of PG&E lands that are outside the FERC boundary, which may not be addressed in the relicensing process. The limited land base and the prevalence of recreation development and uses provide little potential for sustainable forestry or agricultural uses or enhancements.

Preservation of Historic Values

Cultural resource protection and management at Bass Lake are closely interrelated with recreation and vegetation management; as such, cultural resource protection has or will be addressed in several aspects of the New License or in required plans. However, there is potential for enhancements that increase the interpretive information available to visitors related to Native American culture and history, as well as the history of the area related to logging and hydropower development. Specifically, the Stewardship Council recommends two measures that enhance preservation of historic values through an interpretation and education program and extension of the existing Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP) to cover lands outside the FERC boundary. Development of an interpretation and education program would increase the cultural information available to the public, increasing awareness and fostering protection; the protection provided by the HPMP would be extended to all lands in the planning unit.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop an interpretation and education program to increase information available to visitors on Native American culture and history, as well as historical development in the Bass Lake area.*

Development of an interpretation and education program would increase information available to visitors on Native American culture and history, as well as historical development in the Bass Lake area. Although some interpretive information is available at Bass Lake—at the Way-of-the-Mono Trail, for example—it is not available at sites such as the several shoreline day use areas, some of which contain cultural and ethnobotanical resources. An interpretation plan is not required by the new FERC License, and none has been prepared. Native American cultural themes and historical themes could be developed with direct references to the sites and resources present around the lake. The Rainbow Point recreation area is an example of a site used by the general recreating public that has particular relevance to Native American cultural history and activities, but interpretive information is not provided at the site. A monument near the public boat ramp references the railroad that once crossed the dam and passed along the lake shore en route to a nearby logging camp. The camp was among the largest in existence at the time it operated, in the 1920s, but little other information is available about this facet of local history. Other possible interpretive themes include the history of the lake's creation and hydropower development, dating back to the late 1800s, and the history of resort development and recreation that began in the mid-1900s. The interpretation program could also provide messages related to the threats to Native American cultural resources posed by vandalism or theft and respect for these resources to engender cooperation in their protection.

Potential Measure:

- *Manage lands outside the FERC boundary consistent with the HPMP and other cultural resource protection and enhancement actions developed in FERC relicensing.*

Related to these actions is the protection and enhancement of ethnobotanical resources where the opportunity exists. The relicensing process identified the protection of Native American archeological sites and protection and enhancement of ethnobotanical resources as important issues in the Bass Lake area. Botanists have completed plant surveys with a focus on sensitive plants and those used by Native Americans, as well as developed a list of culturally significant plant species in the Bass Lake area. A HPMP that addresses protection of these resources was approved by FERC in 2005. Plans are underway to create a Native American liaison position that would facilitate oversight and communications with PG&E regarding cultural resource issues. The Cultural Resources Committee consisting of representatives of PG&E, Sierra National Forest (SNF), Native American tribes and organizations, and others meets quarterly to confer on HPMP implementation and all cultural resource matters. The HPMP includes additional ethnographic studies and protection of ethnobotanical resources and other traditional cultural properties.

The Stewardship Council recommends managing lands outside the FERC boundary (which are not covered by the HPMP) consistent with the HPMP and other cultural resource protection and enhancement measures developed in FERC relicensing, including provisions for tribal access to cultural and ethnobotanical resources. Coordination with Native American entities would occur during development of the interpretation and education program and protection and access to ethnobotanical resources outside the FERC boundary.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measure:

- *Extend prescriptions developed in the vegetation management plan and related plans to lands outside the FERC boundary.*

Habitat protection would be enhanced by ensuring that the several existing or in-development plans and actions directed at habitat areas within the FERC boundary also include adjacent areas outside the FERC boundary. Undeveloped forest lands on the west shore (mostly outside the FERC boundary) and a riparian area at the north end of the reservoir (mostly within the FERC boundary) provide the highest habitat values in the planning unit. Much of these lands surround recreation facilities. The largest area of undeveloped forest is in the area surrounding the bald eagle nest site; the existing Bald Eagle and Raptor Management Plan addresses habitat protection for eagles and osprey, both special status species, in that area and elsewhere in the project area. The New FERC License requires a Biological Evaluation that evaluates potential effects on special status species and their habitat before new recreation developments or other new features are constructed, and the SNF may require mitigation. The opportunity exists to extend the habitat protection embodied by these requirements to the portions of the planning unit that are outside the FERC boundary.

To meet this objective, the Stewardship Council recommends extending prescriptions and protections contained in the vegetation management plan (associated with relicensing, and currently in draft form in combination with the related noxious weed management plan and riparian area monitoring plan) to areas outside the FERC boundary. It is expected that the plan, being developed in consultation with SNF, Federal and State wildlife agencies, tribes, and others,

will ensure protection of habitat and viewshed resources and protection of recreation facilities and private properties in the Bass Lake area, particularly from the threat of catastrophic fire. The plan will provide prescriptions for habitat management and will address vegetation treatment (cutting, limbing, or topping trees), gathering of plant materials by Native American for traditional purposes, protection of visually sensitive areas, and USFS notification procedures.

Sustainable Forestry

None recommended.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Enhance public recreation access at the PSEA camp.*

In addition to habitat and cultural resource measures, the Stewardship Council recommends a measure to increase recreation opportunities by enhancing public access at an existing Pacific Service Employees Association (PSEA) camp operated under a lease (as well as by the increase in interpretive facilities recommended above). The PSEA camp at Wishon Cove is the largest in the system of six camps dispersed across the length of the southern Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountains, and is reported to be among the most popular. It provides a unique recreation opportunity in that it provides an option for an overnight stay that is more rustic than the resorts on the lake, yet more developed than the USFS campgrounds. At present, this opportunity is only available to members of the PSEA, which is open only to PG&E employees, retirees, and their families. The Stewardship Council recommends providing access to these facilities for the general public, in conjunction with continued PSEA member's use, to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for the public.

Open Space

Potential Measure:

- *Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection for lands surrounding the Bass Lake shoreline.*

Lastly, to protect open space and aesthetic values of the lands for residents and visitors to this popular and scenic recreation area, the Stewardship Council recommends conservation easements for all parcels, although there is little threat of development at present. The easements would preclude future development and preserve open space on the currently undeveloped lands in the planning unit. These are primarily lands above the west shore of the lake currently managed for wildlife habitat, particularly for bald eagles, and viewshed protection. The surrounding SNF lands are managed similarly, and there are no plans to extend SNF recreation development onto the PG&E lands. Nevertheless, open space is an important value of the lands adjacent to the Bass Lake shoreline in terms of the forested viewshed enjoyed by residents and visitors to the reservoir and travelers on the roads surrounding the lake.

Agricultural Uses

None recommended.