

Willow Creek Planning Unit

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measure:

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

Although surveys for terrestrial and aquatic species were conducted during the 1980s for the Crane Valley Project FERC relicensing, it is likely that surveying was limited to lands within the FERC boundary, which includes only 20% of the planning unit and consists mostly of corridors around access roads, flumes, tunnels, and conduits. Therefore, little specific biological information is available for this planning unit. The Stewardship Council recommends surveying lands outside the FERC boundary for biological resources to develop better baseline information on resources present within the planning unit.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary consistent with the vegetation management plan required by the new Crane Valley Project License.*

The New License for the Crane Valley Project requires PG&E to develop many new management and monitoring plans including a Willow Creek Native Species Monitoring Plan and vegetation management plan. The Willow Creek Native Species Monitoring Plan proposes monitoring of fish in the planning unit portion of Willow Creek, and monitoring of western pond turtles and foothill yellow-legged frogs. Proposed monitoring would also secondarily monitor riparian habitat. The vegetation management plan would address management of vegetation in the project vicinity, the control of noxious weeds, the protection of the valley elderberry longhorn beetle, and the monitoring of project effects on riparian vegetation. It is unknown to what extent this proposed plan will cover lands outside the FERC boundary. Due to the presence of currently unmanaged forest resources, known habitat for a Federally listed species (i.e., valley elderberry longhorn beetle) and potential habitat for other special status species, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a wildlife and habitat management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary as a companion to and consistent with the vegetation management plan required by the New License. The recommended plan should include management of noxious weeds, fuels, protection and monitoring of special status species and their habitat, management of vegetation and forest resources for habitat enhancement, and management of lands along Willow Creek as a riparian buffer.

Potential Measure:

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

Field visits revealed illegal dumping of garbage on access roads off County Road 222. The ease of access from the County Road, accompanied with the lack of public use, likely contribute to this problem. To protect the habitat values of the land (and to promote protection of cultural and aesthetic values) from any potential future illegal dumping, 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.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measure:

- *Evaluate the potential for grazing on the planning unit.*

The Stewardship Council recommends evaluating the potential for grazing on the planning unit. Although grazing is not now occurring within the planning unit, and PG&E has stated that no grazing uses of the property were authorized in the past, grazing may have occurred historically. Due to the presence of numerous roads and project facilities and discontinuity of the parcels, it is unlikely that the planning unit could provide for economically viable grazing without use of adjacent lands. However, there is no grazing allotment on adjacent USFS lands. Further investigation into the feasibility, benefits, and costs of introducing grazing on these lands would need to be completed. Although specific information on sensitive habitats is not available, the necessity to protect potentially sensitive habitats associated with Willow Creek would need to be taken into consideration. This evaluation could occur as a component of the vegetation management plan.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys outside the FERC Project APE to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Conduct an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APE to identify traditional use areas, if PG&E studies proposed within the Crane Valley Project HPMP do not provide adequate coverage of the planning unit.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Although cultural resource surveys were conducted for project relicensing in the 1980s and 1990s, the entire planning unit was not surveyed, as the majority of the lands are located outside the FERC boundary. Ethnographic studies were also conducted for relicensing, and in the 2002 revised Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP), PG&E committed to conducting additional ethnographic studies to identify traditional cultural properties. To develop a better baseline understanding of existing cultural resources, the Stewardship Council recommends surveying lands outside the FERC Project Area of Potential Effects (APE) for cultural resources and conducting an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APE if PG&E studies proposed in the revised HPMP do not provide adequate coverage of the planning unit.

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for lands outside the FERC Project APE.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Assuming that recommended surveys identify cultural sites outside the Crane Valley Project APE, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a cultural resources management plan for lands outside the APE 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 (archaeological 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 consistent with the Crane Valley Project Programmatic Agreement and HPMP. All cultural resources measures would be conducted in coordination with Native American entities, potentially through the Crane Valley Project Cultural Resource Committee.

Potential Measure:

- *Provide signage along County Road 222 near San Joaquin No. 2 Powerhouse regarding the history of the Crane Valley Hydroelectric Project.*

Although the Willow Creek Planning Unit contains numerous hydropower facilities (including roads, flumes, conduits, tunnels, dams, and a powerhouse), there is currently no information presented to the public on the history of these facilities or their purpose. The Stewardship Council recommends providing interpretive signage along County Road 222 near San Joaquin No. 2 Powerhouse regarding the history of the Crane Valley Hydroelectric Project to increase visitors' knowledge of the long history of hydropower in the Willow Creek area and secondarily to explain the purpose and use of project facilities.

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. Development of new recreation sites is not recommended; therefore, recommendations are not expected to decrease the scenic quality of the viewsheds.

Outdoor Recreation

None recommended.

Sustainable Forestry

None recommended.