

## Kerckhoff Lake Planning Unit

### Preservation of Historic Values

#### Potential Measure:

- *Coordinate with the North Fork Mono Tribe to further develop proposal for Mono Indian Village Camp at Smalley Cove; following development of a more detailed proposal, assess feasibility and constraints, and potential conflicts with existing uses, of proposed Mono Indian Village Camp.*

The North Fork Mono Tribe has developed a preliminary proposal that outlines several specific cultural and recreational enhancements for the Smalley Cove area, presented under the overall theme of a Mono Indian Village Camp. The Stewardship Council recommends evaluation of the several components of this facility, and more detailed development of the preliminary proposal and examination of opportunities, constraints, and potential conflicts with existing uses.

The proposed facility would provide for both day use and camping, with a covered patio for eating and gathering, food preparation and storage areas, barbeques, toilets and showers, and group campsites with canvas tents. The village would have re-creations of traditional structures built from native materials and with interpretive signs, as well as cooking pits and a campfire area. The structures would include a round house for ceremonies. Recreation-oriented elements include a traditional Native American game area, a multi-purpose ball field and pow-wow ground at the site of the former ball field, an amphitheater for traditional dances and performances, an archery range, and trails. No details of these elements are provided in the proposal.

Given the potential complexity and magnitude of the proposed development, more detailed development of the proposal and assessment would be required. Information to be further developed includes approximate space and infrastructure requirements and preferences; sizes and potential locations of structures and associated improvements; expected amounts, types, and timing of use; and site management and upkeep requirements. Other topics that should be explored include potential phasing of the project, coordination with existing recreation and grazing uses, and other potential Stewardship Council recommended. With availability of a more detailed proposal, assessment would focus on feasibility of the proposal, likely constraints, and potential conflicts with other area uses and values.

#### Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys outside the FERC Project APE to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Although some information on cultural resources in the vicinity of Kerckhoff Lake exists and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been consulted on protection of cultural resources, in accordance with FERC License conditions, it is uncertain if investigations of cultural resources within the planning unit have been completed outside the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No cultural resource management plan has been prepared. (The exception to this is the area surrounding the Wishon Powerhouse, which is addressed in the Historic Properties Management Plan (HPMP) for the recently relicensed Crane Valley Project.) Given this lack of information and the need to prevent disturbance of cultural resources as a result of new recreation

development, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting a survey to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. Documentation of cultural sites should be coordinated with Native American entities.

**Potential Measures:**

- *Conduct an ethnographic study of lands the planning unit to identify traditional use areas.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends conducting an ethnographic study of the planning unit to identify traditional use areas, including traditional plant gathering locations. Ethnographic uses of the area by the Mono Tribe are known to occur, but specific information has not been compiled, to the best of our knowledge, particularly outside the APE. Also, the North Fork Mono Tribe's Mono Indian Village Camp proposal contains ideas for restoration focused on ethnobotanical resources. These include plants used for basket-making and other traditional skills and plants, fish, and shellfish used for food. The ethnographic study should be coordinated with Native American entities.

**Potential Measures:**

- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for the planning unit.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

The results of the recommended cultural resource surveys and ethnographic study would be used to develop a cultural resources management plan to ensure that cultural resources are adequately protected. The plan would include appropriate measures for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of cultural resources (archeological and historical), and 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 coordinated with Native American entities.

## Outdoor Recreation

Currently, reservoir conditions and the presence of Native American cultural resources act as constraints on the potential for additional recreational use of the planning unit. However, the area may be underutilized. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends small-scale recreation enhancements that make greater use of two distinctive and relatively unused sites whose use would not be dependant on reservoir conditions and would avoid sensitive cultural resources.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop minimal day use access and facilities on the east side of Smalley Cove.*

Opportunities exist for wildlife watching, fishing, picnicking, and canoeing and kayaking on Smalley Cove within the western parcel of the planning unit. The riparian and marsh habitat and relative quiet and seclusion of the cove area contribute to its attractiveness for these activities, and the calm water is more conducive to non-motorized boating than the main body of the lake. Visitors to the Smalley Cove recreation area may be unaware that the cove is just a short walk

(less than a quarter mile) from the existing developed area, as it is not visible from or depicted on signs or maps at the recreation area. This distance would not preclude hand carrying or dolly transport of car-top boats. Boaters could also launch from the upstream unpaved ramp, although strong currents might prevent boaters from returning to the same location to take-out, requiring a carry-out to the Smalley Cove recreation area.

Recognizing these opportunities, a new day use facility at Smalley Cove is recommended to better enable use of the cove and surrounding shoreline area for activities that would be enhanced by the quiet and attractive setting and the calm waters of the cove. Components of this development would include a formalized trail route using existing vehicle tracks (used by grazing lessees), addition of a few picnic tables and grills and limited site hardening, installation of a portable toilet nearby where it can be easily serviced, and a small dock to facilitate canoeing and kayaking and prevent shoreline impacts, if needed. Signage at the existing parking areas at the Smalley Cove recreation area would provide a map to the new site.

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Develop day use and interpretive facilities on hillside lands overlooking Wishon Powerhouse.*

Development of the site on the hillside above the Wishon Powerhouse would focus on interpretive elements with modest day use recreation development that takes advantage of several historic resources at the site and within view. The interpretive potential is embodied in several area features: the surviving remnants of an employee community on the hillside (e.g., rock walls and stairs), built by a predecessor to PG&E in the early 1900s; a view of the original San Joaquin #1 Powerhouse (built in 1896, and burned in the 1980s) and the existing Wishon Powerhouse (built in 1910); and a view of the steep-sided river canyon where it enters the lake and where a series of bridges were built during the hydropower development period, including a wooden suspension bridge lost to a flood. All of these features are part of the pioneering hydropower development of the region at a time when the area was quite remote, accessible only by a long wagon trip on dirt roads from Fresno. The interpretive information that would be the focus of the site would make use of historical information and photographs, available from organizations such as the Central Sierra Historical Society and the Eastern Fresno County Historical Society. Historical photographs are available depicting the area's features as they existed 80-100 years ago, which add to the interpretive potential.

The day use facility at this location would provide basic amenities such as shaded picnic sites, parking, and vault toilets, combined with a substantial interpretive kiosk or signage. Access to the site could potentially use the existing gated road, pending evaluation for safe ingress and egress where the road meets County Road 222. Additional evaluation of potential constraints would be required, including possible safety hazards associated with remnants of the employee village on the site and noise from the Wishon Powerhouse.

Both of the proposed day use recreation enhancements might address the relative scarcity of developed outdoor recreation opportunities in the local communities. The planning unit is situated just a few minutes drive from the communities of Auberry and North Fork, and current recreation use is primarily by local residents. Interpretive components focused on the more than a century-old development of hydropower in the area would provide information currently lacking related to this important aspect of local history.

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Update information on recreation needs at Kerckhoff Lake.*

PG&E filed the original Recreation Plan (Exhibit R) for Kerckhoff Reservoir with FERC in 1977. Some updates to the plan occurred in the 1980s, and FERC has been informed of more recent improvements related to the addition of an on-site caretaker. Some changes have occurred in recreation use at Kerckhoff Lake, such as the closure of the baseball diamond and the advent of personal watercraft as the primary type of boating activity on the lake. Recreation needs and demands may also have changed. Due to these factors and a local tribe's proposal for new facilities, the Stewardship Council recommends updating the existing recreation information prior to development of specific plans for the two new recommended day use areas and, if the proposal moves forward to development, the Mono Indian Village Camp. The update should focus on an evaluation of recreation needs, including ADA facilities and law enforcement, which entails coordination with both Madera and Fresno Counties.

It is not yet known if the proposed Mono Indian Village Camp and the day use area above Wishon Powerhouse would be entirely within the FERC boundaries. Facilities or portions of facilities outside the FERC boundaries would not be under FERC jurisdiction; therefore, a companion to the FERC-jurisdictional recreation plan addressing areas outside the FERC boundary might be required. Alternatively, the FERC boundary could be adjusted in consultation with FERC to include all newly developed recreation sites.

## **Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat**

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*

As is the case for cultural resources, little information is available regarding terrestrial and aquatic resources within the planning unit. The wetland, riparian, oak woodland, and grassland habitats within the planning unit likely provide for a variety of species. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends that habitat enhancement within the planning unit begin with filling this data gap by conducting surveys to identify biological resources and provide needed information for future management. The potential for restoration of ethnobotanical resources and habitat suggested by the North Fork Mono Tribe as part of the Mono Indian Village Camp proposal would be a focus of biological surveys.

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit.*

No information is available on noxious weeds that may occur in the planning unit. However, both the recreation use and grazing activity on the planning unit have the potential to spread noxious weeds throughout the area. Grazing may also, however, help control noxious weeds. Currently, there is no noxious weed management plan for the area, although the plan that will be developed as a result of FERC relicensing of the Crane Valley Project would be expected to address the portion of that project area surrounding the Wishon Powerhouse. To protect native habitat and plants, ethnographic plants, and forage in the grazing lease areas, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit, borrowing from the Crane Valley Project plan where appropriate. The noxious weed

management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat and rangeland management plans.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.*

The Stewardship Council recommends using the biological resource survey data to create a wildlife and habitat management plan. The planning unit may contain habitat for special status species, and the wetland habitat of Smalley Cove has been highlighted as particularly valuable. Once surveys are completed, potential habitat enhancements and restoration opportunities can be identified and developed into a comprehensive plan describing goals and objectives for habitat and species, as well as measures to enhance and protect habitat for both plant and wildlife species. Monitoring of species and habitats would also be developed as a component of the plan. The wildlife and habitat management plan should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed and rangeland management plans.

## **Agricultural Uses**

The Stewardship Council recommends continuing the current grazing operations on the lands surrounding Smalley Cove. This is in recognition of the importance of the leases in maintaining the viability of the grazing operations, which also use Federal and private lands in the area. The supposition in this continuance is that the proposed recreation and cultural enhancements in the Smalley Cove recreation area, and at Smalley Cove, would not conflict with grazing use of the lease areas. Coordination with the lessees, particularly regarding the 20-acre lease area on the east side of Smalley Cove and the area surrounding the Smalley Cove recreation area entrance road, which is associated with the 127-acre lease area, would be necessary to further explore any new uses or development of the planning unit.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the area, including current uses and state of improvement.*

It is unknown if a range assessment has been done on the planning unit, or if grazing practices have been evaluated. An assessment of grazing practices is needed to ensure that key habitats, such as riparian areas, are not degraded. Some evidence of use by cattle of shoreline areas at Smalley Cove was observed during a site visit, although impacts, such as shoreline erosion, appeared to be minor. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the area, including current uses and state of improvement. This report would help determine appropriate grazing practices, regime, and management.

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use that includes goals and objectives and a monitoring and adaptive management strategy, and specifies grazing practices that address soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, and habitat protection.*

Once the recommended baseline conditions report is completed, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a rangeland management plan for grazing use that includes goals and objectives, and a monitoring and adaptive management strategy, and specifies grazing practices that may address topics including soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, habitat protection, and cultural resources management. This plan would ensure that grazing use within the planning unit meets Stewardship Council policy for agricultural use on Watershed Lands. To coordinate potential habitat and recreation enhancements with grazing uses, the rangeland management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat enhancement plan, noxious weed management plan, and evaluation of recommended recreation enhancements to ensure consistency and complementary actions.

## **Open Space**

### **Potential Measure:**

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

The Stewardship Council recommends preserving open space through the application of conservation easements. There appears to be little threat of development at present. However, open space values, which enhance the recreation setting and coincide with habitat values within the planning unit, would be protected with conservation easements. This would ensure the long-term preservation of aesthetic values enjoyed by visitors and travelers in the area.

## **Sustainable Forestry**

None recommended.