

OROVILLE PLANNING UNIT

Feather River Watershed

Existing Conditions & Uses

Overview

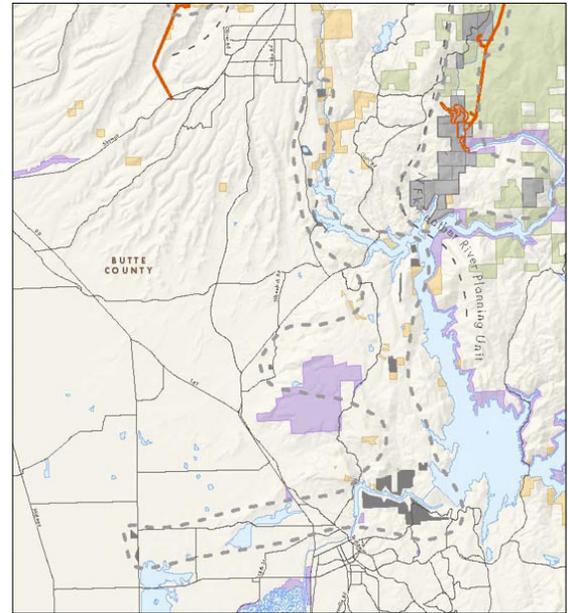
- Small, noncontiguous parcels associated with PG&E facilities; 1,336 acres in Butte County
- No lands are within FERC boundaries
- Associated with Coal Canyon and Lime Saddle hydroelectric projects (FERC-exempt)

The parcels of the Oroville Planning Unit are mostly small, disconnected, and spread over a very large area (approximately 20 x 10 miles). The planning unit is located near Lake Oroville in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Butte County. The parcels generally surround, or provide access to, PG&E's transmission, hydropower, and water diversion facilities.

As shown in Figure FR-19, the parcels are located from north to south along the Miocene Canal, at Kunkle Reservoir, Lime Saddle Powerhouse, and adjacent to the Lime Saddle Recreation Area at Parish Camp (adjacent to Lake Oroville). There are parcels scattered near Goat Ranch and Bloomer Boat-In Campgrounds and near the Spillway Boat Ramp and Day Use Area at Lake Oroville, and one 10-acre parcel surrounds



Oak & pine woodland near the Diversion Pool



Oroville Planning Unit
Butte County

Coal Canyon Powerhouse just east of Highway 70. The majority of the parcels, and the largest contiguous acreage, surround the north and south sides of the Diversion Pool just north of the City of Oroville, bordering the FERC boundary of the Oroville Facilities Hydroelectric Project. Two small parcels are also located along the Western Canal west of Highway 99.

The adjacent Oroville Facilities Hydroelectric Project is managed by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), which has submitted an application for renewal of their FERC License. The Lake Oroville State Recreation Area (LOSRA), located within the Oroville Facilities FERC boundary and adjacent to planning unit parcels, is managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). The land ownership in this area is largely private apart from the lands associated with the Oroville Facilities Project and some parcels associated with the BLM.

The Oroville Planning Unit includes many parcels that contain PG&E facilities. Many of the northern planning unit parcels are crossed by the Miocene Canal, which is part of the West Branch water diversion that provides water to the California Water Service Company (Cal

Oroville Planning Unit

Existing Conditions

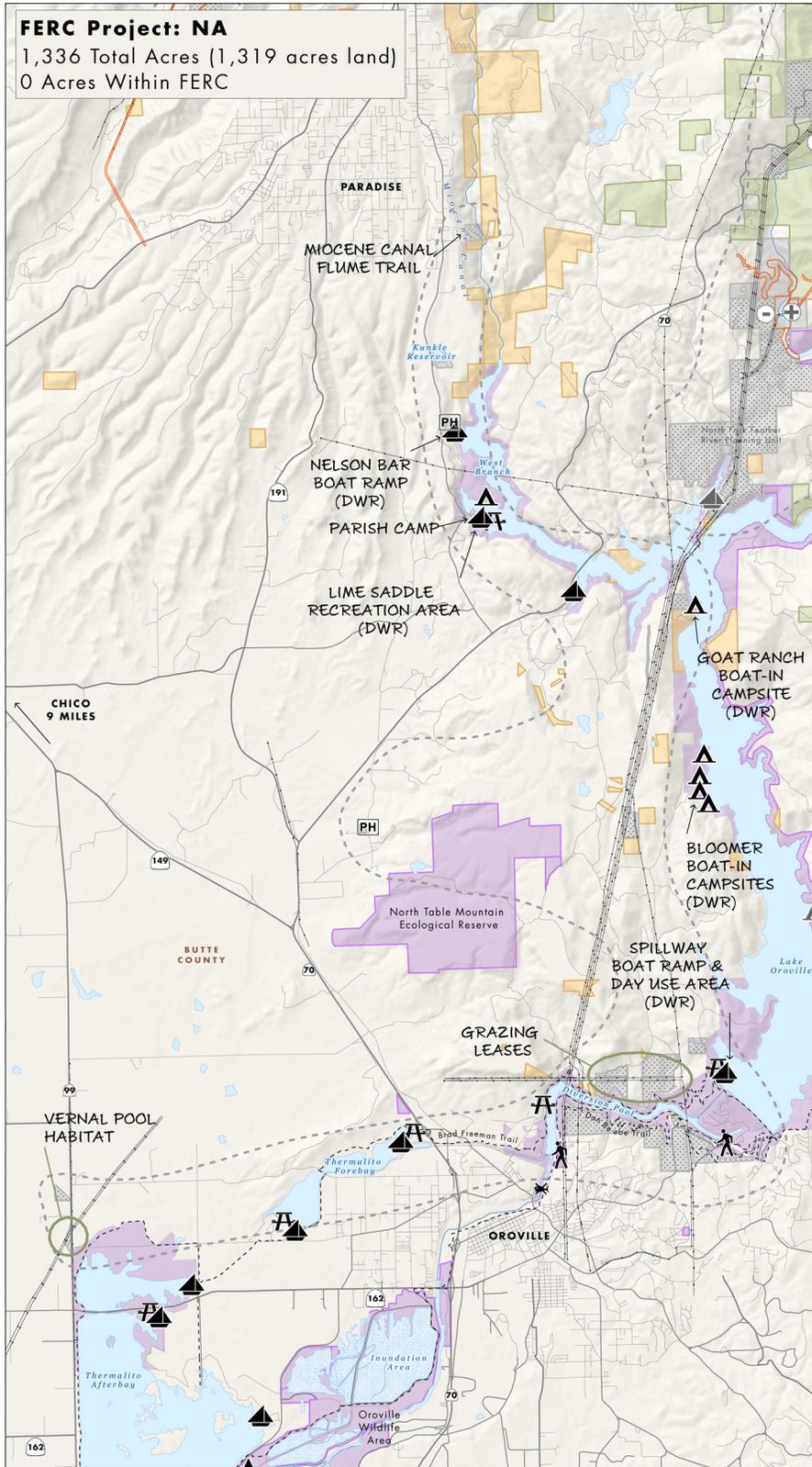


Figure FR-19

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Water) who in turn supplies water to the City of Oroville. Most other parcels are crossed by and provide access to transmission lines.¹ Apart from transmission lines, powerhouses, and water conveyances, the only other facilities are a few old vacated buildings on the Parish Camp parcel near the Lime Saddle Marina. The 2006 Recreation Management Plan, prepared as part of the Oroville Facilities relicensing process, suggests that this property could be transferred to DWR/DPR, potentially for use as additional boat ramp and marina parking.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The Diversion Pool area and the parcels along the Western Canal likely support important habitat for special status plant and wildlife species. In 2005, a new bald eagle nesting territory was established on the south of the Diversion Pool, and ospreys are nesting on the transmission line structures on the northern side of the Diversion Pool. The two small parcels along the Western Canal are listed in the CNDDDB as providing vernal pool habitat. They likely provide habitat for endangered and threatened vernal pool species such as vernal pool fairy shrimp and Butte County meadowfoam. As the Oroville Planning Unit is not part of a FERC Project, it appears that biological surveys have not been conducted to date.

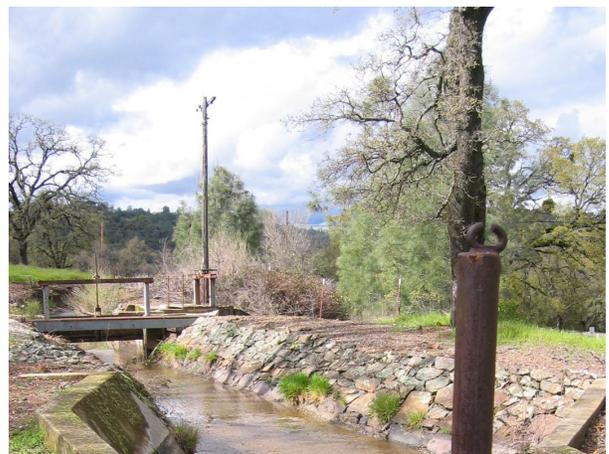
The majority of vegetation in the planning unit consists of a variety of native communities, including mixed oak woodlands, foothill pine/mixed oak woodlands, and oak/pine woodlands with a mosaic of chaparral. Open areas within the woodlands consist of annual grassland species, and open areas in the lower elevations often include vernal pools. Although there is some degree of disturbance in these vegetation types (facilities, dirt roads, natural landslides, etc.), the majority of this area is in a mostly natural state. Yet, numerous noxious weed species occur, primarily in disturbed areas around Lake Oroville.

Open Space

Many of the parcels serve as open space buffers around recreation areas and areas where urban development has encroached over the past 20 years, particularly near the cities of Paradise and Oroville. By remaining undeveloped, planning unit parcels have inherently preserved open space as recreation and urban development has occurred around them, thus improving the recreational, aesthetic, and habitat values of the region.

Outdoor Recreation

The nearby Lake Oroville State Recreation Area provides a multitude of water-based recreation facilities and opportunities, attracting more than 1.3 million visitors annually. In comparison, recreation resources within the planning unit parcels are minimal and all trail-related. The northern most parcel is traversed by Miocene Canal Flume trails, which are listed in the Butte County Regional Transportation Plan. Portions of the parcels around the southern side of the Diversion Pool include trail easements for the Dan Beebe Trail while the Brad Freeman Trail (on State lands) runs adjacent to parcels on the northern side of the Diversion Pool. Both trails provide opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, and horseback riding. The Diversion Pool itself provides opportunities for scenic flatwater boating, and though planning unit parcels do not directly abut the Diversion Pool, the buffer and natural setting they provide is a large part of what



Miocene Canal at Parish Camp

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Trail to Burma Road north of the Diversion Pool

makes the Diversion Pool a significant recreation resource.

Forest Resources

There are no PG&E Timber Management Units (TMUs) on any of the parcels. However, fuel load management is an issue as this area has lost several thousand acres to fire in recent years, and fire is an important factor in the Butte County landscape. On the north side of the Diversion Pool, fuel loading (grass and brush) is being managed in conjunction with authorized grazing use. PG&E is not actively performing any fuel load management activities on the parcels south of the Diversion Pool at this time.

Agricultural Uses

The planning unit includes two PG&E grazing leases (on a total of 365 acres) on the north side of the Diversion Pool that have been on the property for over 25 years. The leased areas are used seasonally (from December through May, weather permitting), do not contain any water features, and are only 70-75% grazable due to the amount of brush and trees on these parcels. These areas provide additional beneficial public value by protecting important open space and agricultural uses so close to the urban area of Oroville. DWR leases the property adjacent to

grazing areas in the planning unit to the same lessees, who let their herd run over the combined property.

According to the most recent lease statements (2003), the lessees have maintained the fences; however, there have been reports of cows on the Brad Freeman Trail, located on adjacent DWR property. Seasonal grazing at the Diversion Pool has been raised as an issue by stakeholders due to trail impacts and the effect of manure on the recreation experience.

Historic Resources

There is little to no information about cultural resources in this planning unit. Native Americans have been in the area for at least 3,000 years, and recent surveys for the Oroville Facilities relicensing found 803 recorded sites in that project area and many more are suspected on surrounding lands. As the area also has a history of mining, and there may be other cultural resources present that relate to mining and settlement, including a pioneer cemetery. The powerhouses at Coal Canyon and Lime Saddle, built in 1907 and 1906 respectively, may qualify for the NRHP, though a formal evaluation has not been conducted.

Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses at the Oroville Planning Unit be preserved and enhanced by focusing on habitat and cultural resources, existing grazing use, and recreation access opportunities. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here, our objective is to preserve unique habitat and open space resources, while also enhancing agricultural uses, recreation opportunities, and cultural resource protection. We recommend this effort be conducted in close coordination with PG&E and adjacent relicensing efforts for the Oroville Facilities Project.

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Objective: Preserve and enhance biological, cultural and agricultural resources, while maintaining open space and enhancing recreation opportunities.

As shown on Table FR-10, the Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for the Oroville Planning Unit. Additional detail and background regarding these potential measures can be found in the Supporting Analysis for Recommendations, provided under separate cover. These measures are intended to be illustrative in nature, not prescriptive, and will be amended, deleted, or augmented over time in coordination with future land owners and managers to best meet the objective for this planning unit.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Objective: Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.

The Oroville Planning Unit provides oak and pine woodlands as well as vernal pools that are habitat for many species, potentially including several special status species. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat and resources found here, the Stewardship Council recommends that baseline studies be developed to gain a clear understanding of the resources, particularly vernal pool habitat and species, and to ensure their protection. Management of the property to preserve and enhance habitat will also include addressing noxious weeds, consistent with recommended measures for the Oroville Facilities Project. We encourage close coordination with DWR, DPR, and other resource-focused organizations working in the region. All planning should be consistent with the fuels and rangeland management plans.



House & Sacramento Valley view at Parish Camp

Open Space

Objective: Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, viewsheds, and agricultural land uses from further development.

This concept would preserve open space by limiting new construction to only potential minor recreation enhancements, as well as through permanent conservation easements. Conservation easements would describe all prohibited uses to maintain open space values, including the level of uses allowed and the requirement to maintain scenic qualities.

Maintaining open space would protect viewsheds within the planning unit and create a buffer from encroaching population growth from the City of Oroville, particularly in the Diversion Pool area.

Outdoor Recreation

Objective: Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional public access and recreation opportunities.

The planning unit currently provides limited trail-based recreation opportunities. As shown in Figure FR-20, the Stewardship Council looks to enhance these opportunities by recommending additional trail access and easements. We

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recommend enhancements focused on trail access at the Miocene Canal, providing additional trail easements at the Diversion Pool, and assessing the potential for recreation and youth program opportunities at Parish Camp.

Sustainable Forestry

Objective: Develop and implement forestry practices in order to ensure appropriate fuel load management.

The larger Oroville area has a continuous fire history, and fuel load management is an important factor in the Butte County landscape. The Stewardship Council recommends that future care and management of the land include developing a long-term vision for fuels management in the area. The fuels management plan should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed and rangeland management plans. We expect that all of these plans would be developed in coordination with adjacent landowners, DWR, DPR, Butte County Safe Fire Council, and lessee management and practices as appropriate.



Fremont's tidy-tips growing off Highway 99

Agricultural Uses

Objective: Preserve and enhance grazing in order to support associated economic benefits, as well as to protect open space and habitat resources.

The planning unit currently provides 365 acres of grazing near the City of Oroville. The Stewardship Council looks to preserve this resource and important economic use as part of the long-term management of the Oroville Planning Unit. To support this effort, we anticipate a baseline conditions report will be required to describe current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the area. From this, specific determinations can be made to identify and manage grazing practices in balance with other uses and values of the property. We encourage close coordination of these efforts with DWR and DPR.

Preservation of Historic Values

Objective: Identify cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.

There is little information about the existence of cultural resources within the Oroville Planning Unit; however there is potential such resources exist on the lands. The Stewardship Council aims to support an increased understanding of these resources and ensure they are appropriately protected. To meet this objective, we recommend that cultural resource studies be conducted as necessary to understand and protect any resources found at the Oroville Planning Unit. Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities.

Endnote

¹ A major transmission line corridor crosses the land west of Lake Oroville over the planning unit parcels near Goat Ranch and Bloomer Boat-in Camps. Transmission lines also cross the southern Western Canal parcel.

Table FR-10 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept

Planning Unit Objective: Preserve and enhance biological, cultural and agricultural resources, while maintaining open space and enhancing recreation opportunities.		
Beneficial Public Value	Objective	Potential Measures to Preserve and/or Enhance BPVs – Not Requirements*
Protection of the Natural Habitat of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants	Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection. • Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit consistent with the proposed invasive species management plan for the adjacent Oroville Facilities FERC Project. • Assess and implement measures to protect vernal pool habitat and species at Western Canal parcels.**
Preservation of Open Space	Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, viewsheds, and agricultural land uses from further development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher value of open space protection. • Protect viewsheds and provide buffers from encroaching population growth.
Outdoor Recreation by the General Public	Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional public access and recreation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In coordination with the Oroville Facilities Recreation Management Plan, provide an easement for a mountain bike/hiking trail on the south side of the Diversion Pool.** • Assess flume trail access at Miocene Canal.** • Assess the Parish Camp site for recreation use and the potential for youth program opportunities.**
Sustainable Forestry	Develop and implement forestry practices in order to ensure appropriate fuel load management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a fuels management plan for all urban interface areas to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.
Agricultural Uses	Preserve and enhance grazing in order to support associated economic benefits, as well as to protect open space and habitat resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the area, including current uses and state of improvement. • Develop a rangeland management plan for the 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, habitat protection, and cultural resources management.
Preservation of Historic Values	Identify cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess old powerhouses for historic value and eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP. • Conduct surveys in enhancement areas to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. • Incorporate cultural resource protection measures in the conservation easements to protect any cultural resources found in the future. • Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.

* This is a set of recommended possibilities for the preservation and enhancement of BPV's, and is not intended to be a set of requirements for future land management.

** Denotes site specific measure.

Oroville Planning Unit

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*
- *Assess and implement measures to protect vernal pool habitat and species at Western Canal parcels.*

Little specific data are available within the planning unit regarding terrestrial, botanical, and aquatic resources. Despite this lack of data, habitats within the planning unit likely provide for a variety of species. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and provide needed information for future management decisions. Based on currently available information, the parcel with the highest potential for habitat enhancement seems to be the southern Western Canal parcel adjacent to Highway 99, which needs to be further assessed for vernal pool habitat and associated special status species. Another area with potential to be protected is the area around the Diversion Pool with its oak woodland, deciduous forest habitat, and related aesthetic and recreational values. Other locations, especially ones that may experience minor physical improvements and/or are close to urban areas (especially at the Diversion Pool and at Miocene Canal, Lime Saddle, and Kunkle Reservoir locations) would also be assessed for their biological resources and respective habitat values and enhancement opportunities.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit consistent with the proposed invasive species management plan for the adjacent Oroville Facilities FERC Project.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends development of a noxious weed management plan in coordination with the invasive species management plan that is proposed for the Oroville Facilities Hydroelectric Project to eradicate existing populations of noxious weeds where possible and implement preventative measures to minimize the spread of weeds in the future.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Assess flume trail access at Miocene Canal.*

Recreation enhancements include assessing access to the Miocene Canal Flume trails, as well as preserving the landscape near existing and recommended recreation facilities by maintaining the natural character, and thus the viewsheds, of the larger Lake Oroville State Recreation Area (LOSRA). Other recreation enhancements focus on supporting proposed Protection, Mitigation, and Enhancement measures for the Oroville Facilities Hydroelectric Project.

Potential Measures:

- *In coordination with the Oroville Facilities Recreation Management Plan, provide an easement for a mountain bike/hiking trail on the south side of the Diversion Pool.*
- *Assess the Parish Camp site for recreation use and the potential for youth program opportunities.*

The first of two enhancements is providing an easement for a new mountain bike/hiking trail on the south side of the Diversion Pool. It would provide another trail for mountain bikers, helping to reduce existing conflicts with equestrians on portions of the Dan Beebe Trail. The trail would be in proximity to and easily accessible from the City of Oroville, and would provide more trail opportunities for the local population. The other enhancement is located at the Parish Camp site near the Lime Saddle Marina. The Stewardship Council recommends assessing the site for potential uses, including youth program opportunities, and recreation uses that could complement existing uses on adjacent land. Providing for recreation or youth program use at Parish Camp potentially could require the removal of any remaining cabins and other facilities.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measures:

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

To appropriately address grazing operations, the development of a baseline conditions report is recommended. This report would detail the current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the grazing lease areas north of the Diversion Pool and summarize the conditions in preparation for development of a rangeland management plan. The rangeland management plan would include goals and objectives and an adaptive management strategy, and may address topics including soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, habitat protection, and cultural resources management. It would also address resolution of any conflicts with recreation users in the area, potentially by adding appropriate fencing. These measures would maintain existing beneficial agricultural use close to the urban area and simultaneously provide open space protection.

Sustainable Forestry

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan for all urban interface areas to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.*

The larger Oroville area has a continuous fire history, and fuel load management is an important factor in the Butte County landscape. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan for all urban interface areas in coordination with the Butte County Safe Fire Council, DPR, and the California Department of Water Resources (DWR).

Apart from fuel load management close to the urban areas, the extent of forest resources in the planning unit is not sufficient to warrant additional management plans focused on forest resources.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measures:

- *Assess old powerhouses for historic value and eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP.*
- *Conduct surveys in enhancement areas to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Incorporate cultural resource protection measures in the conservation easements to protect any cultural resources found in the future.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

The Stewardship Council recommends assessing the 100-year-old powerhouses at Coal Canyon and Lime Saddle for their historic value and possible eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP and surveying for cultural resources in other areas that are recommended for enhancement. Such areas include those with current uses, such as the grazing lease parcels on the north side of Diversion Pool where cultural resources are likely to exist. The Stewardship Council also recommends including the identification and protection of any cultural resources by precluding development in the planning unit and by defining cultural resource protection language in permanent conservation easements. For example, if any cultural resources were found during ground-disturbing activities, these measures would describe the process for protecting them. The NRHP eligibility evaluation, cultural resource surveys, and development of cultural resource protection measures in conservation easements should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Open Space

Potential Measures:

- *Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher value of open space protection.*
- *Protect viewsheds and provide buffers from encroaching population growth.*

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. Maintaining open space would protect viewsheds within the planning unit and create a buffer from encroaching population growth from the City of Oroville, particularly in the Diversion Pool area.

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