

# NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER PLANNING UNIT

## Feather River Watershed

### Existing Conditions & Uses

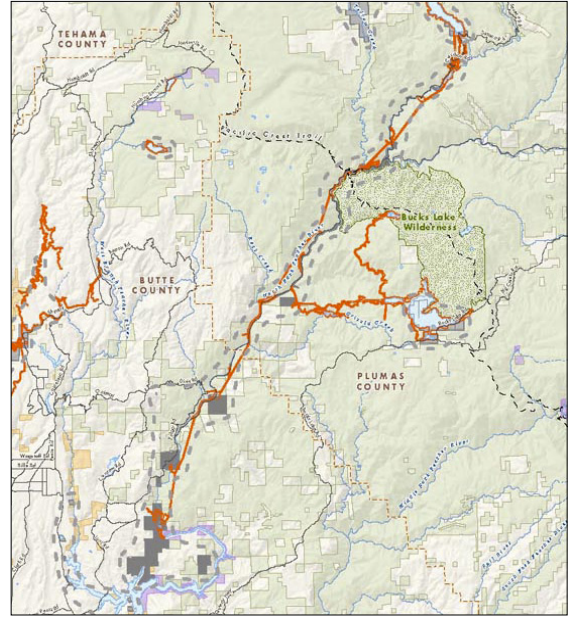
#### Overview

- Historic and scenic North Fork Feather River Canyon with four small reservoirs within a 30-mile river reach
- 5,614 acres in Plumas and Butte Counties; 5,128 acres outside FERC boundaries and 486 acres inside FERC boundaries
- Planning unit includes lands that are part of the Upper North Fork Feather River Project [UNFFR] (FERC #2105), License Application submitted in October 2002; the Rock Creek-Cresta Project (FERC #1962), New License issued in October 2001; the Poe Project, (FERC #2107), License Application submitted in December 2003; and the Bucks Creek Project (FERC #619), Amended License issued April 1988

The most distinguishing characteristic of the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit is the scenic river and the canyon through which it flows. The lands are primarily within the river canyon, with parcels extending over a distance of 33 miles. Portions of four FERC-licensed hydropower projects overlay parts of the planning



Feather River & railroad from Highway 70



North Fork Feather River Planning Unit  
Plumas & Butte Counties

unit. Elevation within the planning unit ranges from about 3,000 feet at Belden Forebay at the upstream end to about 900 feet at the downstream end, where the Feather River enters Lake Oroville. The parcels are generally within or adjacent to the floodplain of the river, and the lands are therefore primarily riverbank or steep canyon terrain.

The stretch of the Feather River within the planning unit includes four small reservoirs that divert water to downstream powerhouses, with bypassed river reaches extending six to nine miles in length below each reservoir (see Figure FR-17). The upstream three-fourths of the planning unit is very accessible via Highway 70, a Federally-designated Scenic Byway, and a USFS road that follow the river. Paved and unpaved roads provide access to parts of the lower quarter of the unit, but access is more difficult than to upstream areas.

PG&E ownership of the river channel and banks (flood channel) is complete through most of the middle portion of the planning unit (i.e., Rock Creek Reservoir and bypass reach, and Cresta Reservoir), but is scattered at the upper end (i.e., the Belden reach) and in the lower third of the planning unit, downstream of Cresta Dam. Most



# NF Feather River Planning Unit Existing Conditions

- PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Retention
  - PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Disposition
  - BIA
  - BLM
  - BOR
  - DOD
  - NPS
  - Other/NGO
  - State
  - USFS
  - Federal Wilderness
  - Boat Launch
  - Campground
  - Dam
  - Day Use
  - Feature of Importance
  - Fishing
  - Fish Barrier Dam
  - Gate
  - Lodging
  - Non-Motorized Boating
  - Parking
  - Powerhouse
  - Private Camp
  - Ranch
  - Trailhead
  - Whitewater Put-In/Take-Out
  - FERC Boundary
  - Stream / River
  - Intermittent Stream / River
  - Primary Roads
  - Secondary Roads
  - OHV Roads
  - Trail
- All symbols may not appear on the map

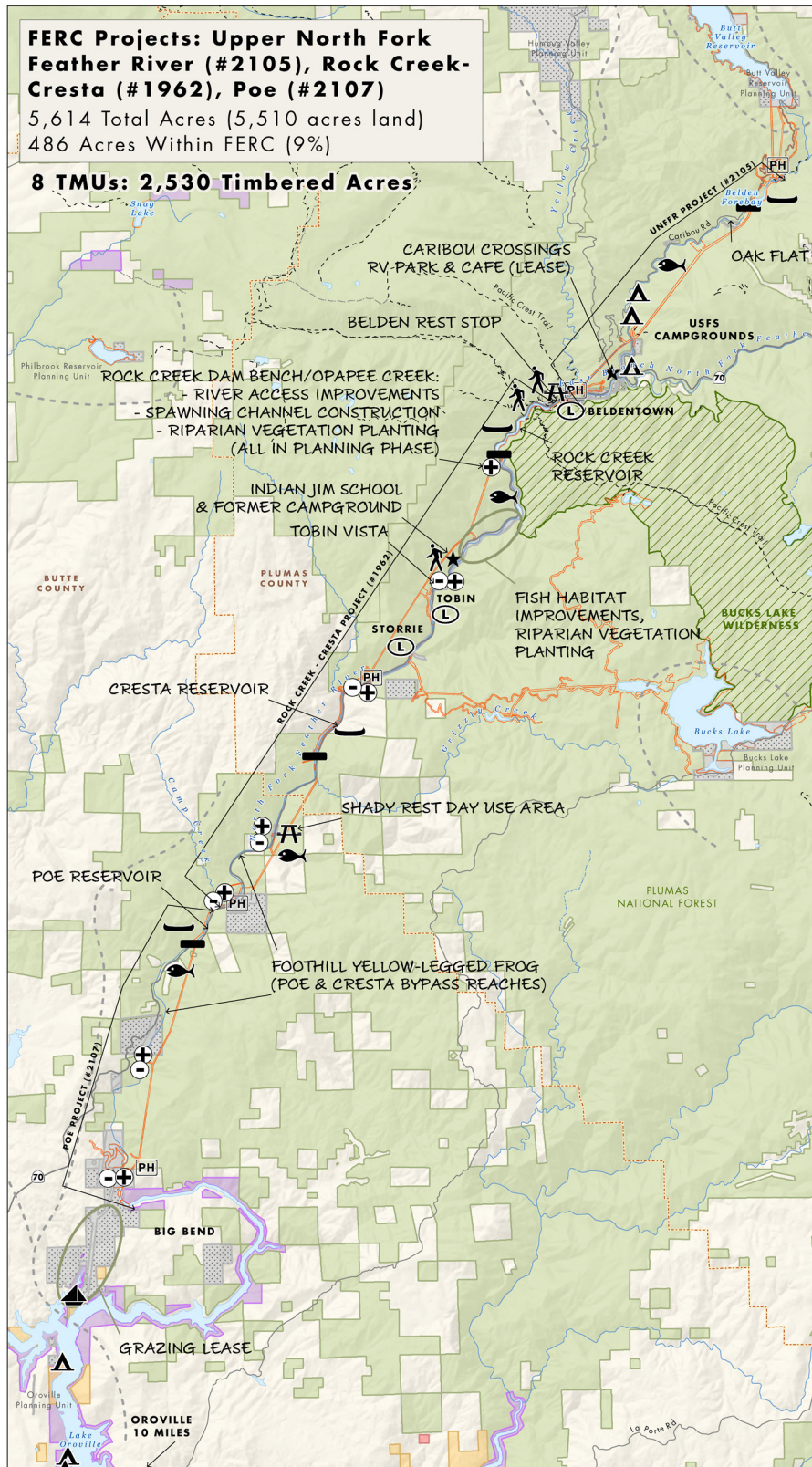
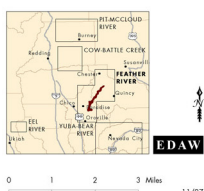


Figure FR-17

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of the non-PG&E lands in the canyon and the lands surrounding the planning unit are public lands owned by the USFS and administered by the Plumas National Forest.

Two of the four FERC Projects within the unit – the UNFFR Project at the upper end and the Poe Project at the lower end – are in the post-License Application phase of relicensing, and it is anticipated that new licenses will be issued in the next few years. In both cases, PG&E has proposed or agreed to actions that will improve aquatic habitat and recreation conditions in the planning unit.<sup>1</sup> Pulse and recreation flows have been implemented for several years, and improvements to recreation sites, tributary spawning channels, and riparian vegetation have been planned and partially implemented. New interpretive displays on Maidu history and culture have been installed at the PG&E day use area in the canyon. Several actions are planned at the Rock Creek Dam/Opapee Creek bench immediately below Rock Creek Dam, including construction of vehicle access and parking for whitewater boaters, planting of riparian vegetation, and, potentially, construction of a spawning channel.<sup>2</sup> PG&E has committed to partial funding for the recreation access improvements, identified as the top-priority site in the 2003 River Access Management Plan, and Plumas County has unsuccessfully applied for State grant funds to match those dollars.<sup>3</sup>

### Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The river corridor contains important riparian vegetation and wildlife habitat and supports a coldwater fishery. The lower half of the river corridor supports special status amphibian species, and the entire planning unit is mapped as critical habitat for the California red-legged frog by the USFWS. Bald eagles nest and forage near the Poe Powerhouse at the southern end of the planning unit. The USFS has mapped California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) adjacent to some of the northern areas of the unit. The planning unit contains several special status plant species, particularly those

associated with serpentine geologic features. These unique rock outcrops and the associated soils occur at the upstream end of the planning unit near Belden Forebay, and at the lower end of the planning unit near Bardee's Bar and the Poe Powerhouse.<sup>4</sup> Several other sensitive plant species not associated with serpentine have also been found near Poe Reservoir, Bardee's Bar, and Poe Powerhouse.

### Open Space

More than three-fourths of the land area within the planning unit is contained in three large blocks at the southern end of the planning unit, including over 2,600 contiguous acres near the Poe Powerhouse in the Big Bend area. These primarily forested lands provide scenic open space settings for boaters and others visiting the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area and for travelers on the Highway 70 Scenic Byway.

### Outdoor Recreation

Recreation use of the river and reservoirs is generally light to moderate. The highest recreation use occurs on the Belden reach at the upper end of the planning unit, which is stocked with trout and where three small USFS campgrounds are located. Whitewater boating has increased in recent years on the Rock Creek and Cresta reaches due to FERC license required recreation flow releases during the summer and



Swimming in the Feather River at Belden Bridge

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Kayaking on the Feather River

early fall. Recreation facilities in the planning unit are few and include two PG&E rest stop/day use areas (Shady Rest and Belden Rest Stop) and a commercial RV camp and café (Caribou Crossings). Anglers, boaters, and swimmers also use several informal and unimproved river and reservoir access sites. In addition to the USFS campgrounds, three rustic private resorts with rental cabins are on adjacent lands. Five leased recreation home sites are located on planning unit lands in the Belden and Caribou Crossings areas. The Pacific Crest Trail crosses the Feather River at Belden, and the Belden Rest Stop serves as a trailhead for this and other USFS trails.

On the Rock Creek reach, a short distance upstream from Tobin Vista near the middle of the planning unit, are the Indian Jim School and former Indian Jim Campground. The planning unit boundary in this area divides the land between the riverbank and Highway 70 approximately evenly, with a narrow strip of land next to the road in USFS ownership. The school is on USFS land under a Special Use Permit to the Plumas Unified School District, but is not among the District's regularly used school sites. Adjacent to the Indian Jim School, the USFS operated the Indian Jim Campground (also referred to as the James Lee Campground) before the facility was severely damaged by floods during the 1990s. Part of the infrastructure remains, such as the entry road and some campsite spurs. Although officially no longer in service, the site is used occasionally for informal

camping and serves as a trailhead for the USFS Chambers Creek Trail, which climbs a ridge to the west.

### Forest Resources

Portions of the larger parcels in the Big Bend area and other smaller upstream parcels are included within eight PG&E Timber Management Units (TMUs), which contain a combined total of about 2,500 timbered acres. Forests are composed of mixed conifers and hardwoods, dominated by oaks, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and incense-cedar. Most of these forest resources are managed by PG&E under a Sustainable Timber Management prescription, which emphasizes timber extraction while protecting and promoting water quality, wildlife and fisheries habitat, soils, carbon sequestration, and cultural resources. The remaining TMUs are managed under a Salvage prescription, which are managed for uses other than sustained timber production, with management activities restricted to mitigating for emergency forest and watershed health issues. Emergency salvage harvesting may follow events such as a fire or insect attack. Two of the largest TMUs at the southern end of the planning unit, in the Big Bend area, burned in 2001 and have been salvage logged. Some burned areas have been replanted with over 600,000 conifer seedlings.



Bucks Creek Powerhouse

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### Agricultural Uses

Grazing occurs on several hundred acres in the Big Bend area, which are also in the 2001 burn area, under a PG&E grazing lease. There are no agricultural uses on the canyon parcels upstream from the Big Bend area.

### Historic Resources

Few cultural resources have been identified on planning unit lands despite the presence of historic highway and railroad bridges and tunnels, rustic resorts that were originally built as railroad camps, and other historic features in the Feather River Canyon. The planning unit is within the ancestral territory of several Native American tribes including the Mountain Maidu and Konkow Maidu. Maidu archeological sites and ethnographic use areas exist in the canyon and nearby, although more prominent cultural sites are associated with adjacent upstream planning units (such as Butt Valley and Lake Almanor) and other upstream lands and waters.

The remains of the Eby Stamp Mill, dating from the gold mining era, have been relocated to the Belden Rest Stop. A small historic cemetery is located on the hillside above the rest stop. The former PG&E recreation camp at Caribou Village on Belden Forebay is eligible for the NRHP. The camp is maintained by PG&E, but is on USFS land. A Heritage Properties Management Plan (HPMP) has been prepared for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project area. A similar plan is anticipated for the UNFFR Project area as part of New License conditions, based on cultural resource studies conducted for relicensing of the project. A Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) was submitted with the Poe Project License Application. Upon approval, this plan will guide management of cultural resources within the Project's cultural resource study area.



Highway 70 bridge at Storrie

### Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses at the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit be preserved and enhanced by focusing on habitat and cultural resource protection and enhancement opportunities, management of forest resources, and potential for additional recreation facilities. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here, our objective is to protect and enhance grazing, habitat and cultural resources, while also enhancing recreation facilities and opportunities, as well as management of forest resources. We recommend this effort be conducted in close coordination with PG&E, the USFS, and FERC relicensing efforts for the area.



Slack water & riparian habitat at Tobin

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**Objective: Preserve and enhance biological, cultural, and agricultural values, as well as enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management.**

As shown on Table FR-9, the Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for the North Fork Feather River 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.

The recommended measures are intended to complement actions agreed to by PG&E during FERC Project relicensing proceedings and, in some cases, assist in the implementation of actions proposed in completed FERC Project plans. When available, final license conditions for the UNFFR and Poe Projects would be incorporated into plans for this planning unit.



Rock Creek Reservoir & Dam

### Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

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

Due to its location, the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit provides important riparian vegetation and wildlife habitat that supports several special status plant and amphibian species. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat and resources found here, and the recreational experience that is interconnected with this natural environment, the Stewardship Council recommends that baseline studies and plans be developed to gain a clear understanding of the resources (particularly outside the FERC boundaries where little information is currently available). These studies will likely be followed by management plans to ensure implementation of preservation and enhancement measures for specific resources. Management of the property to preserve and enhance habitat will also include addressing noxious weeds. We encourage close coordination with the USFS and other resource-focused organizations working in the area. Habitat measures should be considered in conjunction with the fuels, forest, and rangeland management plans and should be consistent with relevant FERC license required plans.

### Open Space

**Objective: Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources and viewsheds.**

This concept would preserve open space by limiting new construction to additional recreation facilities at already developed sites, 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.

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### Outdoor Recreation

**Objective: Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional recreation opportunities and enhance the recreation experience.**

The few recreational facilities within the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit provide for light to moderate recreation use, primarily access to the river for a variety of recreation activities. As shown in Figure FR-18, the Stewardship Council looks to enhance recreation opportunities by recommending day use and camping facilities, as well as recreation setting and concession enhancements. We recommend enhancements focused on providing day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements to Tobin Vista and Rock Creek Dam bench, improving river access at Tobin Vista, and redeveloping the undamaged portion of the former Indian Jim Campground as a day use area. The Stewardship Council also recommends enhancing the recreation setting at Poe Powerhouse by cleaning up debris, and evaluating the Caribou Crossing concession for resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition to identify needed improvements. We encourage close coordination of these measures with PG&E, USFS, Plumas County, and the concession lessee.



Poe Dam

watershed management, fuels management, and fire management and response. The fire management and response, fuels, and forest management plans should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed, wildlife and habitat, and rangeland management plans as well as relevant FERC license required plans. We expect that all plans would be developed in coordination with adjacent landowners, relevant county plans, and USFS management and practices as appropriate.

### Sustainable Forestry

**Objective: Develop and implement forestry practices in order to contribute to a sustainable forest, preserve and enhance habitat, as well as to ensure appropriate fuel load and fire management.**

The planning unit provides about 2,500 acres of forest resources surrounding development and recreational facilities along the Feather River Canyon, a historically fire-prone area. The Stewardship Council recommends that future care and management of the land include developing a long-term vision for forest management in the area, addressing silvicultural practices, holistic

### Agricultural Uses

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

There is one grazing lease within the planning unit for several hundred acres in the Big Bend area. The Stewardship Council looks to preserve this resource and important economic use as part of the long-term management of the North Fork Feather River 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

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made to identify and manage grazing practices in balance with other uses and values of the property.

### Preservation of Historic Values

#### **Objective: Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.**

Cultural resource studies conducted for the FERC Projects have not included the majority of the planning unit; therefore, little is known about cultural resources within the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit. 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 to understand the resources found in the North Fork Feather River Planning Unit (particularly outside the FERC cultural resource study areas where less information is available), and that appropriate management plans be developed and implemented. Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities. Development of the cultural resources management plan should be consistent with existing and anticipated cultural resource plans for the FERC Projects.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Actions for Belden Forebay and the Belden reach contained in the 2004 UNFFR Project Settlement Agreement include increased minimum stream flows and pulse flows, recreation test flows, improved fishing and boating access, and funding of a river ranger. Recreation improvements proposed by PG&E for Poe Reservoir and the Poe bypass reach contained in the 2003 Poe Project Final License Application include an improved trail to the Poe Reservoir beach site on the Cresta Powerhouse parcel; day use facilities and signage at Bardee's Bar below Poe Reservoir; and a vault toilet, trash receptacle, and graded parking on the river near Poe Powerhouse. The new license issued in 2001 for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project includes requirements for similar actions on the Project reservoirs and bypassed reaches.

<sup>2</sup> The spawning channel will not be built until the channel currently under construction at a nearby site is deemed successful.

<sup>3</sup> Construction of the spawning channel and riparian vegetation planting will be implemented in conjunction with the recreation improvements. Efforts continue by Plumas County and others to develop funding for the improvements.

<sup>4</sup> California lady's slipper, Stebbin's monardella, and Feather River stonecrop are special status plant species associated with serpentine known to occur in the upstream Belden and Caribou areas, while dissected-leaf toothwort has been found near Bardee's Bar, and Butte County calycadenia has been found near the Poe Powerhouse.



Feather River & Hwy 70 tunnel at Grizzly Dome

Table FR-9 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept

Planning Unit Objective: Preserve and enhance biological, cultural, and agricultural values, as well as enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management.		
Beneficial Public Value	Objective	Potential Measures to Preserve and/or Enhance BPVs – Not Requirements*
Protection of the Natural Habitat of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants	<b>Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC boundaries to identify biological resources and enable their protection.</li><li>• Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.</li><li>• Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries.</li></ul>
Preservation of Open Space	<b>Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources and viewsheds.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.</li></ul>
Outdoor Recreation by the General Public	<b>Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional recreation opportunities and enhance the recreation experience.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements to complement planned river access improvements at Rock Creek Dam bench.**</li><li>• Improve river access at Tobin Vista in accordance with the 2003 River Access Management Plan; add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements.**</li><li>• Redevelop Indian Jim Campground as a river-side day use area, in cooperation with the USFS.**</li><li>• Clean up debris in the river and on riverbank at Poe Powerhouse river access site.**</li><li>• Evaluate Caribou Crossings concession regarding resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition; implement needed improvements in cooperation with lessee.**</li></ul>
Sustainable Forestry	<b>Develop and implement forestry practices in order to contribute to a sustainable forest, preserve and enhance habitat, as well as to ensure appropriate fuel load and fire management.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate existing timber inventory data and supplement as appropriate.</li><li>• 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.</li><li>• Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.</li><li>• Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness.</li></ul>
Agricultural Uses	<b>Preserve and enhance grazing in order to support associated economic benefits, as well as to protect open space and habitat resources.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the grazed area, including current uses and state of improvement.</li><li>• Develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use that includes goals and objectives, 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.</li></ul>
Preservation of Historic Values	<b>Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.</li><li>• Conduct an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify traditional use areas.</li><li>• Develop a cultural resources management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries or APEs consistent with the existing and anticipated cultural resource plans for the FERC Projects.</li><li>• Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.</li></ul>

\* 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.

# NF Feather River Planning Unit Recommended Concept

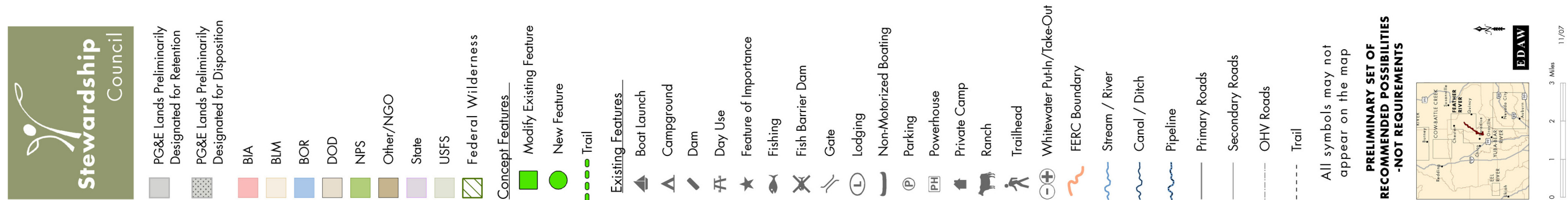
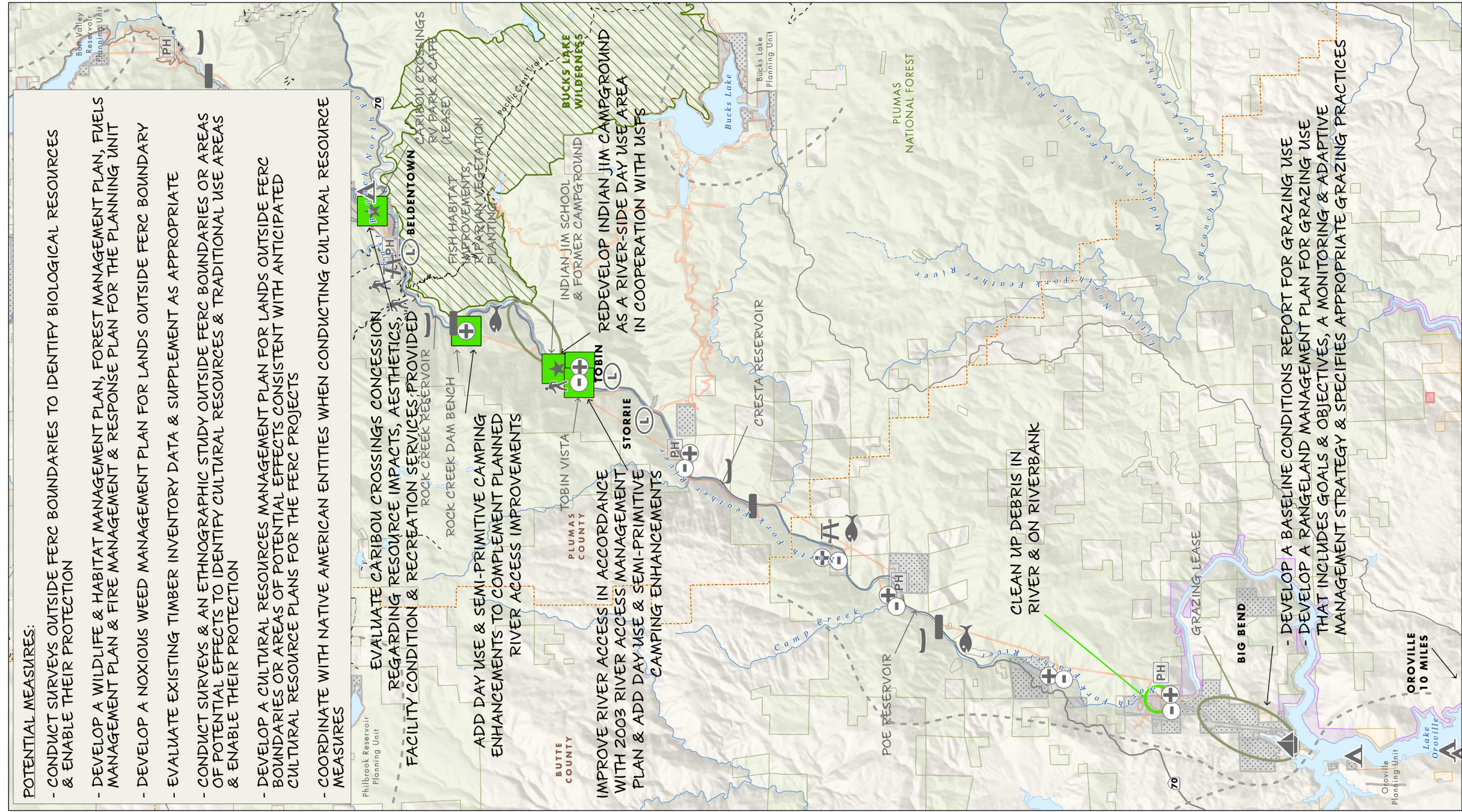


Figure FR-18

## North Fork Feather River Planning Unit

The recommended measures are intended to complement actions agreed to by PG&E during FERC Project relicensing proceedings and, in some cases, assist in the implementation of actions proposed in completed FERC Project plans. When available, final license conditions for the UNFFR and Poe Projects would be incorporated into plans for this planning unit.

### Outdoor Recreation

#### Potential Measure:

- *Add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements to complement planned river access improvements at Rock Creek Dam bench.*

Improvement of river access sites is focused on two priority sites identified in the 2003 River Access Management Plan that are used primarily for whitewater boating. Development of new facilities at these sites would increase opportunities for riverside day use recreation. The recommended measures for Rock Creek Dam bench include development of semi-primitive campsites, and interpretive and day use improvements to take advantage of the attractive, partially wooded site and the potential spawning channel. The measures are also intended to complement the planned access and parking improvements. Camping sites are at a premium on the Rock Creek reach during whitewater release weekends, and the site currently receives informal camping use. The interpretive improvements would augment the new interpretive panels installed at Shady Rest and Belden Rest Stop in the initial phase of the 2002 River Corridor Interpretation Plan prepared for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project. Potential new interpretive sites and panels are items for discussion identified in the “future phase” of that plan.

#### Potential Measure:

- *Improve river access at Tobin Vista in accordance with the 2003 River Access Management Plan; add day use and semi-primitive camping enhancements.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends camping and day use enhancements at the Tobin Vista site to complement planned vehicle entry and egress and planned river access improvements for whitewater boaters. Improvements at Tobin Vista are identified in the 2003 River Access Management Plan as a second priority after the Rock Creek Dam bench but, due to the high costs of the Rock Creek Dam bench improvements, are not covered by the existing funding commitments. The site is heavily used, particularly for informal camping, during weekends when whitewater releases are made.

#### Potential Measure:

- *Redevelop Indian Jim Campground as a river-side day use area, in cooperation with the USFS.*

Redevelopment of the decommissioned Indian Jim/James Lee Campground is intended to take advantage of the site’s potential for use as a scenic day use area. Although at risk for flooding during high flows, the site is very attractive with large trees providing shade, and a large gravel bar providing river access during normal flow conditions. Few such flat, shady sites exist along the river within the planning unit. Day use at the site could complement the development of a visitor center or similar education facility at the adjacent Indian Jim School, which has been discussed as a possible future use of the facility by the USFS and others. The site also has

potential for use by youth programs with the recommended improvements, and the school may have potential for this use as well. Plumas County representatives have indicated that organized youth activities, such as rafting trips, have occurred on the Rock Creek reach, and the recommended enhancements could support such uses. Another attraction is Granite Creek, which empties into the Feather River at the site and was recently enhanced as a trout spawning site under the Rock Creek-Cresta License. Due to flood risk, permanent structures such as restrooms may not be feasible, and the site may need to be closed during winter and spring high flow periods. Before any measures could be implemented, clarification of the extent of PG&E ownership would be needed. Also, given that part of the site is known to be in USFS ownership, collaboration with the USFS would be required in planning any future enhancements. All measures in the Rock Creek-Cresta Project area would require reviews and coordination with the Ecological Review Committee established by the 2001 License.

#### **Potential Measure:**

- *Evaluate Caribou Crossings concession regarding resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition; implement needed improvements in cooperation with lessee.*

Evaluation of the Caribou Crossings commercial recreation facility is intended to ensure that biological resources are protected and recreation visitor needs met. The evaluation would focus on potential resource impacts, aesthetics, and facility condition, to be followed by needed improvements as indicated by the evaluation. The concession is situated directly on the bank of the river, with recreational vehicle (RV) sites located mere steps away from the water. Use of these sites increases the potential for impacts to the river and riparian habitat. The concession provides desired services, and during a summer weekend visit to the planning unit was found to be one of only a few places for canyon visitors to purchase food or beverages. The facility provides campers an alternative to the three nearby USFS campgrounds, which recent data indicate are frequently full during the peak season, and do not provide showers nor electrical or sewage hookups for RVs. Needed improvements would be implemented by the lessee in cooperation with PG&E or other future easement holder.

#### **Potential Measure:**

- *Clean up debris in the river and on riverbank at Poe Powerhouse river access site.*

Although no enhancements are recommended for the informal recreation sites near the Poe Powerhouse beyond those proposed in the Poe Project License Application, site users would also benefit from removal of rebar and other man-made debris seen in the river and on the riverbank. The debris is unsightly and poses a possible hazard to anglers, swimmers, and boaters.

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

#### **Potential Measure:**

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

Recent terrestrial and aquatic habitat data are available for much of the planning unit as a result of relicensing studies conducted for three FERC Projects that overlay the planning unit. However, because most of the lands in the planning unit are outside the FERC boundaries, data are not available for many areas, particularly for the large parcels in the downstream third of the unit. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of lands outside the FERC

boundaries to identify biological resources and thus gain a broader knowledge of the wildlife, plants, and habitat to enable their protection.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries.*

Several species of noxious weeds have been documented in the planning unit in relation to three of the hydropower projects. In the Rock Creek-Cresta Project area, PG&E conducts annual weed surveys, monitors known populations, and has prepared a Noxious Weed Management Plan. Development of a similar plan has been agreed to by PG&E for the UNFFR Project area, and a noxious weed management plan is likely to be a condition of the Poe Project License. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a noxious weed management plan for portions of the planning unit not included in the FERC license required plans to eradicate existing populations of noxious weeds where possible, and implement preventative actions to minimize the spread of weeds in the future. The noxious weed management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat, fuels, forest, and rangeland management plans.

**Potential Measure:**

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

The Stewardship Council recommends using biological resource survey data to develop a wildlife and habitat management plan. The planning unit contains habitat for several special status species, and recommended surveys may reveal additional special status plants and wildlife. Once surveys are completed, potential habitat enhancements and restoration opportunities can be identified and developed into a comprehensive plan describing habitat and species goals and objectives, as well as measures needed to enhance and protect habitat for both plants and wildlife. Monitoring of species and/or 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, rangeland, forest, and fuels management plans. The plan would be consistent with completed or proposed wildlife plans for the three FERC Projects, such as the bald eagle management plans for the UNFFR and Poe Projects and the Transmission Line Right-of-Way (ROW) Wildlife Plan for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project.

## **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 Stewardship Council recommends developing a forest management plan for the planning unit through the evaluation of existing forest inventory data and supplemental information, when appropriate. In addition to supporting natural forest development, the forest management plan would promote holistic watershed management, supporting the enhancement of other BPVs over the long term. The forest management plan would be compatible with the FERC license required vegetation management plans and fuels management plans that address lands within the FERC boundaries. Coordination with the USFS (Plumas National Forest) would be required in

development of the plan to foster consistency with management of the surrounding USFS forestlands. The forest management plan should also be coordinated with relevant county plans.

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. In addition to utilizing PG&E's uneven-age selection harvest system, harvesting practices and a monitoring program would be included to protect watercourses and lakes and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests. Post-harvest, a monitoring plan would be developed to ensure that forest management and the proposed harvesting schedule would be consistent with the forest management plan, promoting natural forest development in perpetuity. Monitoring of stream sediment loads, revegetation, and noxious weeds is particularly important in regard to the large Timber Management Units (TMUs) in the Big Bend area that burned in recent fires.

**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 occurrence of several large fires, each burning thousands of acres of forest, in and near this planning unit in recent years, underscores the fire threat. Management of fuels is very important in reducing fire risk. Fuel load management is particularly important in the Belden TMU, which is adjacent to a private resort and summer home developments and includes PG&E leases for recreation homesites. The anticipated UNFFR Project vegetation management plan and Poe Project fuel treatment plan will each likely contain fuel load reduction measures; however, these plans would only apply to lands within the FERC boundaries. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries consistent with measures in those existing or proposed plans to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard. Development of the fuels management plan should be coordinated with relevant county plans, as well as the forest, wildlife and habitat, noxious weeds, and rangeland management plans.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness.*

To increase fire preparedness and enhance fire prevention, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a fire management and response plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries consistent with, and as companions to, the existing and anticipated fire management and response plans developed for the FERC Projects. The fire management and response plan would include fire prevention measures designed to promote public awareness about fire danger and provide the provisions and staff for an appropriate response to fire.

## **Agricultural Uses**

**Potential Measures:**

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

- *Develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use that includes goals and objectives, 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.*

Grazing would continue in the area of the existing grazing lease at Big Bend. To enable the protection of resource values in that area, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a baseline conditions report that describes current agricultural, physical, and overall biological conditions of the grazed area, including current uses and state of improvement. This baseline information would be used to develop a rangeland management plan for grazing use in the planning unit that includes goals and objectives, 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. Erosion control and monitoring of sediment loads and noxious weeds are particularly important given that the lease area is within two TMUs that burned in a 2001 fire. The rangeland management plan should be developed in conjunction with the wildlife and habitat, noxious weed, fuels, and forest management plans to ensure consistency among the plans.

## **Preservation of Historic Values**

### **Potential Measures:**

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

Cultural resource surveys conducted for FERC Project relicensing have not included the majority of the lands in the planning unit, most of which are outside the FERC Project Areas of Potential Effects (APEs). Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of lands outside the FERC Project APEs 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 outside the FERC Project APEs to identify traditional use areas.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

An ethnographic study was done in 2001 for the UNFFR Project APE, but no ethnographic studies were done for the Rock Creek-Cresta or Poe Projects. Contacts made by PG&E with local tribes regarding ethnographic use areas in the Poe Project area did not result in the identification of any such areas. However, because most of the planning unit is outside the FERC Project APEs, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting an ethnographic study of lands outside the FERC Project APEs to identify traditional use areas. The ethnographic study should be coordinated with Native American entities.

**Potential Measures:**

- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for lands outside the FERC boundaries or APEs consistent with the existing and anticipated cultural resource plans for the FERC Projects.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

If new cultural resources are identified, this information would be used to develop a cultural resources management plan 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 (archeological 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 coordinated with Native American entities, and should be consistent with plans required by FERC Project licenses, including the final Heritage Properties Management Plan (HPMP) to be prepared for the UNFFR Project and the Cultural Resource Inventory and Management Plan prepared for the Poe Project in 2001.

## **Open Space**

**Potential Measure:**

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

Lastly, the Stewardship Council recommends preserving scenic open space values contained in canyon and foothill parcels through permanent conservation easements. These are particularly important for preserving the viewshed for Feather River Canyon visitors and travelers, as well as for visitors to the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area, just below the Big Bend area.