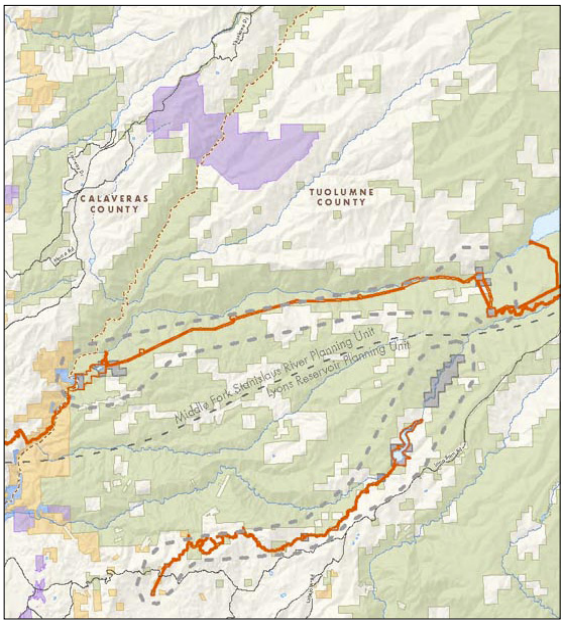
Existing Conditions & Uses

Overview

- Steep, forested slopes of the Middle Fork Stanislaus River provide a scenic setting for fishing and boating
- 515 acres in Tuolumne County; 297 acres outside the FERC boundary and 218 acres inside the FERC boundary
- Part of the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project (FERC #2130); expected issuance of a New License in 2007

The Middle Fork Stanislaus River (MFSR) Planning Unit is characterized by the steep slopes of the canyon of the MFSR. Located at an approximate elevation range of 1,100 to 5,000 feet, the planning unit is comprised of six parcels: three at the east end of the MFSR below Beardsley Lake and three near the MFSR confluence with the mainstem Stanislaus River, upstream from New Melones Reservoir (see Figure SR-3). The western parcels (near Stanislaus Forebay) are approximately 45 miles east of Stockton, and the easternmost parcels (by Spring Gap facilities) are 5.5 miles from the town of Strawberry on Highway 108. The eastern three parcels within this planning unit are remote

Middle Fork Stanislaus River from the footbridge



Middle Fork Stanislaus River Planning Unit
Tuolumne County

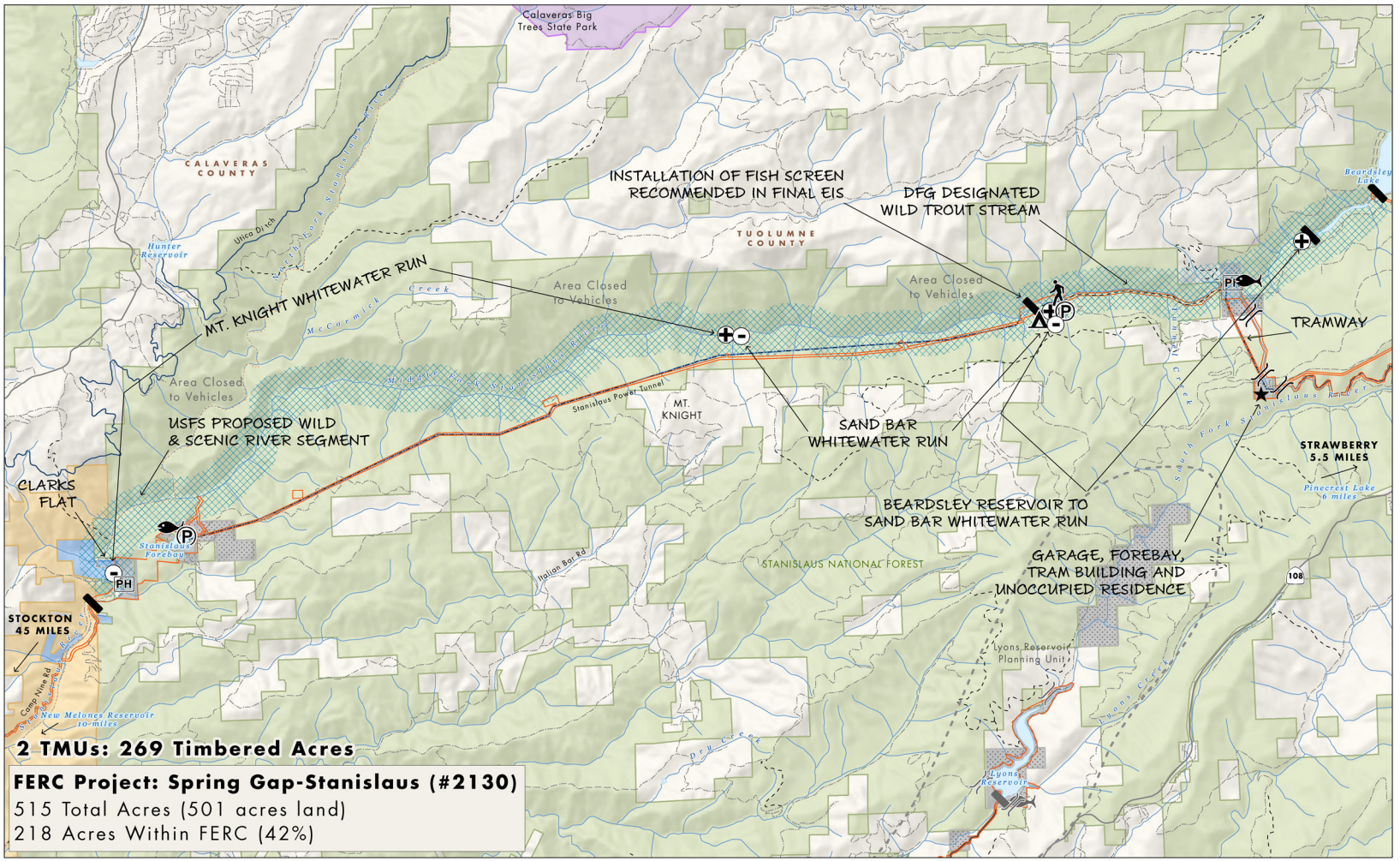
and currently closed to vehicular access by the general public. The planning unit contains PG&E facilities such as dams, forebays, powerhouses, powerlines, penstocks, canals, and various other associated structures.

Flow from the North Fork Stanislaus River enters the MFSR approximately 2 miles upstream of the Stanislaus Powerhouse, creating the mainstem Stanislaus River. The area of the Stanislaus River just upstream of Stanislaus Powerhouse (to the north of the planning unit boundary) has been found to be suitable by the USFS for Wild and Scenic River designation with a classification of Wild.[1] The planning unit is bounded by USFS, Bureau of Reclamation, and private lands.

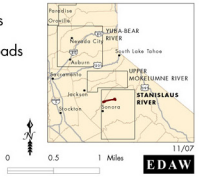
Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The MFSR shoreline is characterized by bedrock outcrops and boulders, with riparian vegetation forming a narrow, discontinuous band. The Stanislaus Forebay, penstock, and powerhouse area is dominated by a patchy network of montane hardwood-conifer forest, blue oak-foothill pine woodland and mixed chaparral. Sierra mixed conifer forest and ponderosa pine forest are the dominant plant communities by

Middle Fork Stanislaus 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
All symbols may not appear on the map
Parking
Powerhouse
Private Camp
Ranch
Trailhead
Whitewater Put-In/Take-Out
FERC Boundary
Stream / River
Canal / Ditch
Pipeline
Highly Valued Stream
Primary Roads
Secondary Roads
OHV Roads
Trail



Stewardship Council

Figure SR-3

Spring Gap Forebay, penstock, and powerhouse. Smaller amounts of montane and mixed chaparral are present as well. Biologists documented four special status plants in the greater relicensing study area during 2001 studies; however, none of these were located on MFSR Planning Unit parcels.[2] Noxious weeds including yellow star-thistle were, however, detected in the vicinity of the Stanislaus Powerhouse, Stanislaus Forebay, and access road.

The planning unit provides suitable habitat for a variety of special status species. Surveys were conducted during the relicensing efforts that documented foothill yellow-legged frogs breeding at three sites on the MFSR in the Sand Bar Diversion Dam reach. The Stanislaus mule deer herd winters in the vicinity of Stanislaus Forebay, penstock, and powerhouse, and otters were observed along the MFSR near Spring Gap Powerhouse during relicensing surveying.

Osprey, a special status raptor, has been observed by the Sand Bar whitewater put-in and Stanislaus Forebay. The behavior of birds observed at Stanislaus Forebay indicated that nesting could occur in the vicinity, but no nests were observed during relicensing surveys. No spotted owls were detected during field surveys; however, USFS spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) are located adjacent to Spring Gap Powerhouse south of Beardsley Lake. The entire area south of the Spring Gap Forebay and the majority of the area east of Spring Gap Forebay have been designated by the USFS as Old Forest Emphasis, meaning that management emphasizes protecting and increasing the highest quality late successional landscapes.

During relicensing studies, evidence of a large colony of Yuma myotis bats was identified at Spring Gap Powerhouse, and a smaller number of bats roosted in a building by the Spring Gap Powerhouse. Since these studies were conducted; however, bats have not been sighted at either building. Small numbers of bats were also found to be roosting at the Spring Gap Forebay and Stanislaus Powerhouse during relicensing studies. Other bat species were identified within the planning unit during relicensing studies, including several special status species.

Open Space

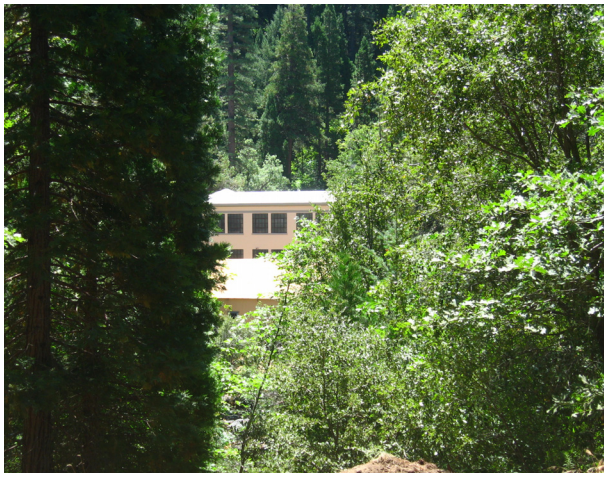
This area provides open space and viewshed values for anglers and whitewater boaters along this reach of the MFSR.

Outdoor Recreation

A scenic section of the MFSR and the Stanislaus Forebay provides a forested, natural setting for water-based outdoor recreation. The MFSR provides several Class IV and V whitewater runs (Beardsley Afterbay to Sand Bar Run, Sand Bar Run, and Mount Knight Run). There are no recreation facilities available near Stanislaus Powerhouse; however, fishing occurs along the MFSR in this area. A gate has been installed by PG&E at the Stanislaus Powerhouse to preclude public access due to operational and public safety concerns.

The Stanislaus Forebay is a low use local fishing area. The fishery is maintained entirely by fish diverted from the MFSR. This area is only authorized for fishing access; camping, boating, and swimming are not authorized uses. PG&E maintains a parking area at the forebay and used to have a portable restroom onsite; however, the restroom was removed because of vandalism. As a part of the relicensing process, FERC

Stanislaus Forebay



Spring Gap Powerhouse

recommended in their Final EIS that a fish screen be installed at the entrance to the Stanislaus power tunnel leading to the Stanislaus Forebay to reduce fish entrainment. DFG manages the MFSR for wild trout, and entrainment of wild trout represents a loss to an important and popular fishery. Installation of a fish screen would reduce the number of fish in the Stanislaus Forebay over time.

There are no developed recreation facilities by Spring Gap Powerhouse, and little dispersed recreation occurs due to the difficult, walk-in only access and steep topography. Under an agreement between PG&E and the USFS, motorized access to the powerhouse is only allowed for operational purposes and is not available to the public because the road is not built to current road standards. Fishing access is provided on both USFS and planning unit land along the MFSR near Spring Gap Powerhouse via a four mile trail along the MFSR between Beardsley Afterbay and Sand Bar Campground. This segment of the MFSR was designated by DFG as a Wild Trout Stream due to the excellent rainbow and brown trout fisheries and is valued by anglers for its remoteness and scenic beauty.

Forest Resources

The MFSR Planning Unit contains 269 timbered acres in two PG&E Timber Management Units (TMUs), one at each end of the planning unit. PG&E has been managing both TMUs under a Multiple-Use designation where sustained timber production is accepted, but protection and uses of other resources and facilities may preclude harvesting. Most of the area has experienced wildfires of varying sizes in the historic past. Fire suppression during the last 80 years has generally resulted in less frequent but more intense fires, less plant diversity, denser tree and brush understories, and less herbaceous vegetation.

Agricultural Uses

No grazing leases currently exist within the planning unit. The USFS Juniper grazing allotment includes the western portion of the planning unit, and the eastern portion of the planning unit is partially contained within the USFS Rushing grazing allotment.

Historic Resources

Cultural resources are numerous in the vicinity of the planning unit. The Central Sierra Miwok Tribe were the most recent Native American occupants of this area. Over the past four decades, 16 archaeological resource investigations have been conducted within the FERC cultural resource study area and 42 cultural resource sites have been identified. These cultural resources, though not all within the planning unit, include prehistoric traces such as lithic scatters and milling sites and historic

Spring Gap tram cable structure

Old tram line to Spring Gap Powerhouse

remnants such as prospect pits, roadways, and campsites. One of the NRHP-eligible sites within the planning unit is the historic tramway, which was used to transfer people and materials approximately 2,000 feet up the steep slope from the Spring Gap Powerhouse to the Spring Gap Forebay. Now defunct, the tram base and tram operations house are located in the southeastern parcel of the planning unit. The larger Spring Gap subsystem development, including the Spring Gap Forebay, penstock, and powerhouse, has also been identified as potentially eligible as a National Register historic district. The remnants of the historic powerhouse by the present day Stanislaus Powerhouse are also NRHP eligible.

Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses at the MFSR Planning Unit be preserved and enhanced by focusing on preserving biological and cultural resources while enhancing recreation resources. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here, our objective is to enhance recreation experiences and forestry management in addition to preserving and enhancing biological and cultural resources.

Objective: Preserve and enhance biological and cultural resources, enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management, and evaluate the potential for grazing opportunities.

As shown on Table SR-2, the Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for the MFSR 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 MFSR Planning Unit provides forest, aquatic, and riparian habitat for special status species ranging from frogs to birds and bats. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat and

Stanislaus Powerhouse penstock

resources found here, the Stewardship Council recommends that baseline studies and plans be developed to gain a clear understanding of the resources (particularly outside the FERC boundary 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, Tuolumne County, Central Sierra Partnership Against Weeds, and other resource-focused organizations working in the area. Habitat preservation and enhancement measures should be consistent with any future FERC license requirements and all planning should be considered in conjunction with the fuels and forest management plans.

Open Space

Objective: Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources and the recreation setting.

This concept would preserve open space by limiting new development to minor additional recreation facilities, 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.

Remnants of the old Stanislaus Powerhouse

Manzanita growing near Stanislaus Forebay

Outdoor Recreation

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

The MFSR Planning Unit provides primarily fishing opportunities for local users, and scenic opportunities for whitewater boating. As shown in Figure SR-4, the Stewardship Council looks to enhance these opportunities by recommending additional study and management of recreation in addition to an evaluation of providing fishing-related enhancements. We recommend enhancements focused on an assessment of providing fish stocking and day use facilities at Stanislaus Forebay in addition to monitoring OHV use, installing interpretive signage at Spring Gap Powerhouse, and assessing recreation demand and preferences to determine if other recreation facilities are desired and needed within the planning unit.

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 management.

The MFSR Planning Unit contains 269 acres of timber in an area subjected to 80 years of fire suppression that has resulted in suboptimal forest conditions. 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 watershed management, and fuels management. The fuels and forest management plans should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed and wildlife and habitat management plans. We expect that all of these plans would be consistent with relevant future FERC license required plans and should be developed in coordination with adjacent landowners and USFS management and practices as appropriate.

Agricultural Uses

Objective: Identify potential grazing opportunities in order to enhance agricultural resources and related economic benefits.

The planning unit is predominantly steep, consists of disconnected parcels, and has extensive areas of hydroelectric facilities; however, there is some potential for grazing in coordination with existing adjacent grazing allotments. The Stewardship Council looks to enhance agricultural opportunities and associated important economic uses as part of the long-term management of the MFSR Planning Unit. To support this effort, we recommend evaluating grazing potential in coordination with adjacent USFS allotments. If grazing is determined to be feasible in the planning unit, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a rangeland management plan.

Preservation of Historic Values

Objective: Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection, as well as to support opportunities for public education.

Old tram line to Spring Gap Powerhouse

Though several studies have previously been conducted within the MFSR Planning Unit, these studies have focused on areas within the FERC cultural resource study area; however, there is a high likelihood cultural resources are present outside of previously studied areas. 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 at the MFSR Planning Unit (particularly outside the FERC cultural resource study area where less information is available), that appropriate management plans be developed and implemented, and that opportunities to support public education regarding cultural resources be considered. Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities. Development of the cultural resources management plan should be consistent with any relevant future FERC license required plan.

Endnotes

[1] This 1.5-mile segment of the Stanislaus River goes from the confluence of the Middle and North Forks of the Stanislaus River to Clark Flat.
[2] As part of relicensing activities, PG&E conducted plant field surveys during the spring and summer of 2001 to provide coverage for all areas within the FERC boundary, as well as along access roads to project facilities and within water fluctuation zones within river reaches downstream of project facilities.

Stanislaus Forebay tunnel & secondary spill channel

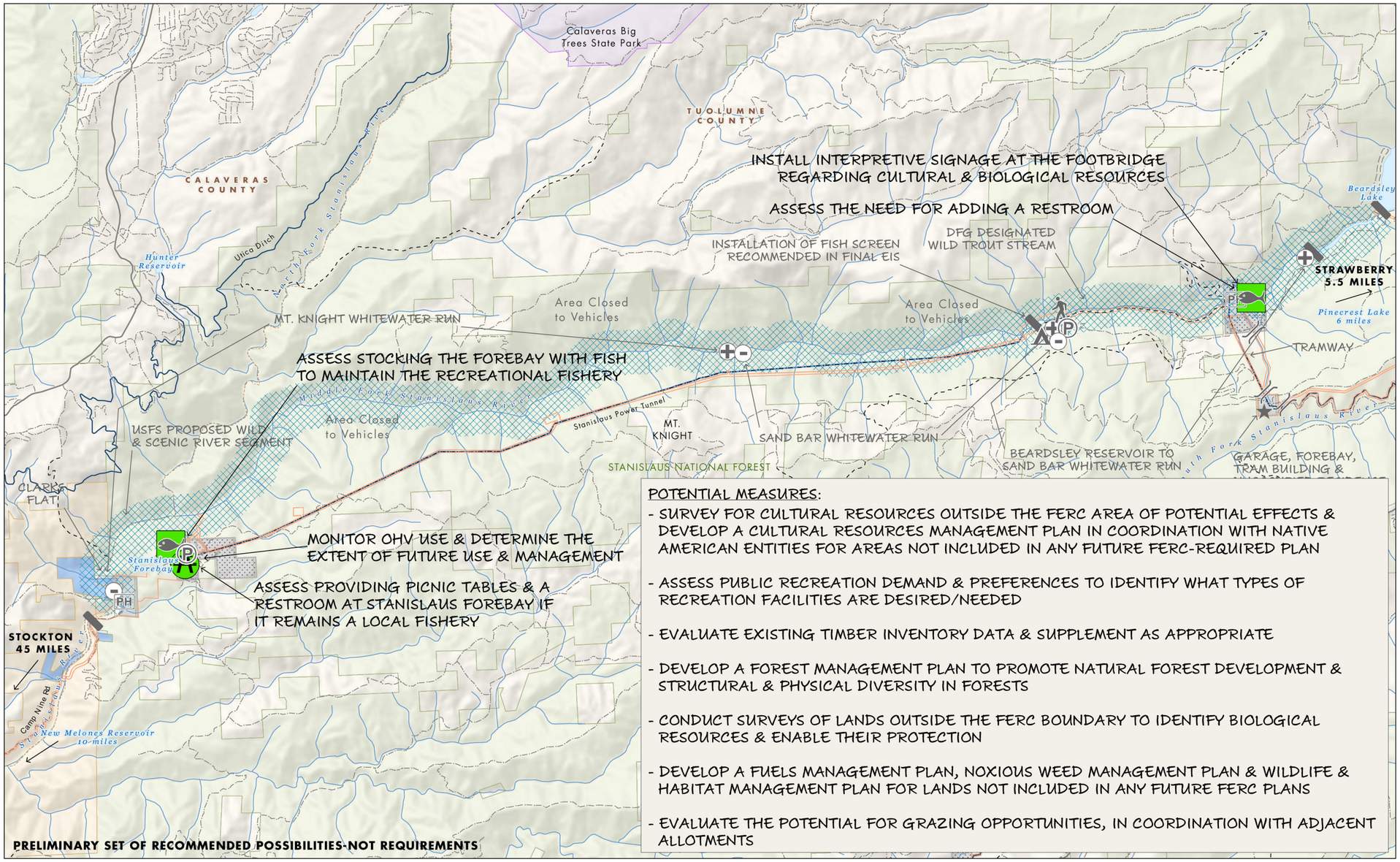
Table SR-2 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept

Planning Unit Objective: Preserve and enhance biological and cultural resources, enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management, and evaluate the potential for grazing 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.**	• Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC boundary to identify biological resources and enable their protection. • Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit. • Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands not included in any future FERC-required noxious weed management plan.
Preservation of Open Space	**Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources and the recreation setting.**	• Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.
Outdoor Recreation by the General Public	**Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional recreation and educational opportunities.**	• Assess public recreation demand and preferences to identify what types of recreation facilities are desired/needed. • Monitor OHV use at Stanislaus Forebay and determine the extent of future use and management.** • Assess stocking Stanislaus Forebay with fish to maintain the recreational fishery.** • Assess providing picnic tables and a restroom at Stanislaus Forebay if it remains a local fishery.** • Install interpretive signage regarding cultural and biological resources at the footbridge by Spring Gap Powerhouse.**
Sustainable Forestry	**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 management.**	• 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. • Develop a fuels management plan for lands not included in any future FERC-required fuels management plan to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit.
Agricultural Uses	**Identify potential grazing opportunities in order to enhance agricultural resources and related economic benefits.**	• Evaluate the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with adjacent USFS grazing allotments.
Preservation of Historic Values	**Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection, as well as to support opportunities for public education.**	• Conduct surveys outside the FERC Project APE to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. • Develop a cultural resources management plan for areas not included in any future FERC-required plan. • 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.*

Middle Fork Stanislaus River Planning Unit
Recommended Concept



POTENTIAL MEASURES:

- SURVEY FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE FERC AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS & DEVELOP A CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN IN COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICAN ENTITIES FOR AREAS NOT INCLUDED IN ANY FUTURE FERC-REQUIRED PLAN
- ASSESS PUBLIC RECREATION DEMAND & PREFERENCES TO IDENTIFY WHAT TYPES OF RECREATION FACILITIES ARE DESIRED/NEEDED
- EVALUATE EXISTING TIMBER INVENTORY DATA & SUPPLEMENT AS APPROPRIATE
- DEVELOP A FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN TO PROMOTE NATURAL FOREST DEVELOPMENT & STRUCTURAL & PHYSICAL DIVERSITY IN FORESTS
- CONDUCT SURVEYS OF LANDS OUTSIDE THE FERC BOUNDARY TO IDENTIFY BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES & ENABLE THEIR PROTECTION
- DEVELOP A FUELS MANAGEMENT PLAN, NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN & WILDLIFE & HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR LANDS NOT INCLUDED IN ANY FUTURE FERC PLANS
- EVALUATE THE POTENTIAL FOR GRAZING OPPORTUNITIES, IN COORDINATION WITH ADJACENT ALLOTMENTS

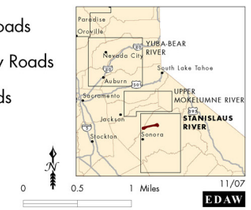
PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Retention
PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Disposition
BIA · DOD · State
BLM · NPS · USFS
BOR · Other/NGO · Federal Wilderness

Concept Features: Modify Existing Feature · New Feature · Trail

Existing Features: 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 · Canal / Ditch · Pipeline · Highly Valued Stream
Primary Roads · Secondary Roads · OHV Roads · Trail

All symbols may not appear on the map



Stewardship Council

Figure SR-4

Middle Fork Stanislaus River Planning Unit

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Assess public recreation demand and preferences to identify what types of recreation facilities are desired/needed.*

Although the License Order for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project has not yet been issued, FERC's Final EIS has recommended focusing recreation improvements at locations other than those within the MFSR Planning Unit, such as Pinecrest Lake, which receives a high number of visitors. Since FERC's Final EIS recommends enhancements and a recreation implementation plan only for the Pinecrest Lake area which does not include the planning unit, a limited evaluation of public recreation demand and preferences would be the first step in assessing what types of facilities are in demand and would be used by the public within the planning unit. This would consist of interviewing a small sample of anglers, OHV users, and whitewater boaters and eliciting their opinions about existing and recommended facilities. In addition, opportunities for recreation enhancement that may have been identified in the past should be reconsidered in light of the measures recommended by the Stewardship Council, including fish stocking at Stanislaus Forebay. Ongoing illegal uses, safety issues, monitoring challenges, and difficult access would be taken into account when considering enhancement measures and ongoing management would be necessary for maintenance and potential patrol of any new facilities.

Potential Measures:

- *Assess stocking Stanislaus Forebay with fish to maintain the recreational fishery.*
- *Assess providing picnic tables and a restroom at Stanislaus Forebay if it remains a local fishery.*

FERC's Final EIS recommends the installation of a fish screen at the intake to the Stanislaus power tunnel to protect fisheries within the MFSR. FERC acknowledges that this measure will, over time, cause a decline in the Stanislaus Forebay fishery, a local fishing spot. The Stewardship Council recommends assessing fish stocking at Stanislaus Forebay, in consultation with DFG, to preserve recreational fishing at this site (providing fish for put-and-take angling). As the forebay is remote and currently receives low recreation use, the demand for such recreation opportunities would first be assessed. If determined to be in high enough demand, stocking would be performed adaptively to determine the species and number of fish to stock in the forebay. Stocking of coldwater fish such as trout would require continuous stocking, while stocking of warmwater fish such as bass and bluegill could potentially be self-sustaining. While unlikely, there is concern, however, with stocking warmwater predator fish in the case that they get out of the forebay. Consultation with DFG would be required to determine the appropriate species for stocking in the forebay as well as establishing bag limits. If Stanislaus Forebay is stocked and continues to be a local fishing area, the Stewardship Council recommends assessing opportunities to enhance the Stanislaus Forebay area with picnic tables and a restroom. It would need to be determined if such facilities could be reasonably maintained given the forebay's remote location and history of vandalism.

Potential Measure:

- *Monitor OHV use at Stanislaus Forebay and determine the extent of future use and management.*

The Spring Gap-Stanislaus Final License Application noted that OHV use was one of the main recreation uses at Stanislaus Forebay. The extent of OHV use in the area is unknown; thus, the Stewardship Council recommends monitoring OHV use at the Stanislaus Forebay and determining if enhancements or restrictions are warranted. Enhancements may include adding staging areas, designating trails, or adding signage to inform recreationists of appropriate trails and roads for their use. Ongoing management would be necessary for maintenance and potential patrol of these new facilities. Alternately, if monitoring indicates that OHV use is detrimental to biological or cultural resources, OHV use may be further controlled or even restricted from the area.

Potential Measure:

- *Install interpretive signage regarding cultural and biological resources at the footbridge by Spring Gap Powerhouse.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends installing interpretive signage at the existing footbridge that crosses the MFSR to increase public awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of historic resources, including the historic tramway and metal shop. The history of flooding in the Stanislaus River Canyon would also be featured on interpretive signs including photos illustrating the canyon's environment prior to flooding. The USFS's Central Stanislaus Watershed Analysis noted that interpretive opportunities are very few in this area and possible opportunities exist with Wild and Scenic characteristics of the MFSR. Installing interpretive signage by the MFSR footbridge would take advantage of this opportunity.

Preservation of Historic 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.*

Planning unit lands outside the FERC Project Area of Potential Effects (APE) were not included in cultural surveys conducted during the relicensing process. The APE only included lands within the FERC boundary and in the immediate vicinity of Spring Gap Forebay and Powerhouse and Stanislaus Forebay and Powerhouse. There is a high likelihood of cultural sites outside the APE; therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys outside the APE to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. Documentation of cultural sites should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Potential Measures:

- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for areas not included in any future FERC-required plan.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Assuming that recommended surveys identify cultural sites within the planning unit, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a cultural resources management plan for those areas within the planning unit that are not included in any future FERC license required plan. A cultural resources management plan would be developed 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. Additional security measures would also be explored to protect resources from vandalism and trespassing, as well as promote general safety in this remote area. The plan would include working with local tribes to maintain access for gatherings. Development of the cultural resources management plan should be coordinated with Native American entities and should be consistent with any future FERC license required plan.

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 current and recommended recreation uses, as well as areas of biological and cultural importance. Forest management practices would protect late successional trees and areas of biological and cultural importance, particularly in areas adjacent to USFS spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs). This plan should be developed in conjunction with the fuels, noxious weed, and wildlife and habitat management plans.

Due to the presence of USFS spotted owl PACs on adjacent lands, steep slopes, and hydroelectric facilities in much of the planning unit, minimal timber harvesting would be implemented. 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.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan for lands not included in any future FERC-required fuels management plan to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit.*

Management of fuels is very important in reducing fire risk in this high fire hazard area. FERC's Final EIS recommends that a fuels treatment plan be developed by PG&E for Stanislaus National Forest lands within the FERC boundary. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a fuels management plan for lands not included in any future FERC license required plan. The fuels management plan would ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit. Coordination with adjacent landowners and USFS management would foster a holistic approach to the forest, habitat, and recreation resources in this area. This plan should also be consistent with any future FERC license required plan.

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. Recommendations include only minor additions of recreation facilities and are not expected to decrease the scenic quality of the viewsheds.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys of lands outside the FERC boundary to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.*

Though many biological resource studies were conducted for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project relicensing, often these studies focused only on resources within the FERC boundary. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys outside the FERC boundary to identify biological resources and enable their protection. The Stewardship Council also recommends using biological resource survey data to create a wildlife and habitat management plan. The planning unit contains habitat for several special status species including foothill yellow-legged frog and osprey, as well as potential habitat for special status plants. Recommended surveys may reveal additional special status plants and wildlife.

Once recommended 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 plant and wildlife species. 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, forest, and fuels management plans. The recommended

wildlife and habitat management plan would include measures to protect late successional habitat for the spotted owl, particularly adjacent to USFS spotted owl PACs. This measure would provide consistency with adjacent USFS management.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands not included in any future FERC-required noxious weed management plan.*

The Final EIS for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project recommends development of a noxious weed management and monitoring plan to control and contain the spread of noxious weeds and plant diseases that are the result of project activities. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a noxious weed management plan for lands not included in any future FERC license required noxious weed management and monitoring plan to eradicate existing populations of noxious weeds, including yellow star-thistle, where possible and implement preventative measures to minimize the spread of weeds in the future. This plan would also provide for consistency in management of noxious weeds with adjacent management and should be coordinated with the USFS, Central Sierra Partnership Against Weeds, and the Tuolumne County noxious weed programs. This plan should be developed in conjunction with fuels, forest, and wildlife and habitat management plans and should be consistent with any future FERC license required plan.

Agricultural Uses

Potential Measure:

- *Evaluate the potential for grazing opportunities within the planning unit, in coordination with adjacent USFS grazing allotments.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends evaluating the potential for grazing on planning unit lands in coordination with adjacent USFS grazing allotments. The planning unit is predominantly steep, consists of disconnected parcels, and has extensive areas of hydroelectric facilities; however, there is some potential for grazing within this planning unit in coordination with adjacent grazing allotments. Consideration would need to be taken to avoid any conflicts between grazing, hydroelectric operations, recreation uses, and sensitive biological and cultural resources. If grazing is determined to be feasible within the planning unit, a rangeland management plan should be developed 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, and habitat protection.