

Many local proposals in Stewardship Council plan

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By Larry Mitchell--Staff writer

In the hills and mountains east of Chico, the Stewardship Council has plans to improve recreation and environmental protection.

The council recently released its draft plan for 141,000 acres of land owned by PG&E.

Proposals by the council include such things as cultural centers, new trails, camping facilities, conservation easements, habitat improvement and more public access to lakes and streams.

The council was formed as the result of a court settlement of PG&E's bankruptcy several years ago. Because of concern the power company might sell some of its land to developers, the bankruptcy court ruled that 141,000 acres of the company's land must be protected permanently for public benefit. The Stewardship Council was formed to decide how that land should be used.

After many public meetings and a lot of analysis, the council has produced a draft plan for the land, which stretches from Shasta County to Kern County. Public input is being taken on the proposals through Aug. 18. After that, a final plan will be written. It is expected to be adopted by the council before the end of the year.

The draft plan includes proposals for land PG&E owns around its hydroelectric projects in various watersheds up and down the state. Closest to Chico, Paradise and Oroville is the Feather River watershed, which the plan divides up into a number of "planning units."

In virtually all the planning units of the Feather River watershed, proposals are made to protect open space, manage wildlife and habitat, promote cultural and historical resources, and manage forests and, in some cases, agriculture in environmentally sound ways.

The following are some specific proposals in the draft plan for individual planning units in the Feather River watershed:

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LAKE ALMANOR:

Extend the Lake Almanor Recreation Trail from its northern end to the Chester area; look into making a parking area and wildlife viewing platform at the south edge of Last Chance Marsh; and make Camp Almanor and its cabins (which are now just for PG&E employees and their families) open to the public.

Explore the possibility of arranging for Maidu people to use a cluster of parcels along Highway 89 for growing willows, oaks and grasses that are important to their culture.

Look into the potential for creating a Maidu Cultural Center near highways 89 and 147. This would be a place where Indians and non-Indians could learn the Maidu language and arts and crafts and where the tribe could hold traditional celebrations and festivals.

MOUNTAIN MEADOWS RESERVOIR:

Explore adding public access and a day-use area on the north shore of Mountain Meadows Reservoir and evaluate the possibility of enhancing the existing boat launch.

Look into building a wildlife viewing platform or boardwalk near Westwood.

BUTT VALLEY RESERVOIR:

Develop a simple outdoor amphitheater at Ponderosa Flat Campground and arrange for a campfire interpretive program, covering topics such as Indians' use of the area, development of hydroelectric power and wildlife in the region.

Look into using solar power to heat proposed showers at the two campgrounds.

HUMBUG VALLEY:

In conjunction with local Indian groups, develop an educational and interpretive plan relating to the area's rich natural and cultural resources.

Look into the possibility of developing a demonstration site and educational loop trail for visitors.

Explore the possibility of making Yellow Creek Campground a base camp for youth group activities.

PHILBROOK LAKE:

Close unauthorized trails used by off-highway vehicles and revegetate ground.

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Install fishing platform accessible to people with disabilities.

Improve the existing boat ramp.

Install interpretive signs regarding local history and natural resources.

DEER CREEK:

Enhance the informal camping area by designating suitable campsites and install barriers to keep vehicles out.

Fix signs at Devil's Den trailhead.

Consider installing toilets.

BUTTE CREEK:

Explore obtaining seasonal access to the Centerville Powerhouse area, enabling boaters and anglers to get to the creek.

Attempt to restore seasonal access for boaters and anglers to west side of creek via Helltown Road.

Look into providing a parking area and put-in and take-out sites for boats.

Open the PG&E cabins at DeSabra Reservoir to the public.

Fix up the group picnic area near DeSabra

Reservoir and build a family picnic area north of the Skyway.

NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER:

Develop semi-primitive campsites at Rock Creek Dam bench.

Improve river access at Tobin Vista and add day-use and semi-primitive camping facilities.

Redevelop Indian Jim Campground as a day-use area.

Evaluate Caribou Crossings concession. Consider making improvements.

Clean up debris in river and on bank at Poe Powerhouse access site.

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OROVILLE:

Assess possibility of making the flume trail accessible at the Miocene Canal.

Provide easement for a mountain bike/hiking trail on south side of the diversion pool.

Assess the potential of the Parish Camp site for recreation and youth programs.

Look into the historic value of the 100-year-old powerhouses at Coal Canyon and Lime Saddle and consider their possible inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

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