

## Introduction

The Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council (Stewardship Council) has prepared this Land Conservation Plan (LCP) Volume II as a companion document to Volume I. As further described in Chapter 1 of Volume I, the Stewardship Council prepared the LCP as a series of three volumes:

- **Volume I: The Land Conservation Framework** establishes the overall framework for the LCP, including legal requirements, the planning process, methodologies, public involvement, and discussion of relevant regulatory processes.
- **Volume II: Planning Unit Concepts** documents existing conditions and presents management objectives, potential measures, and conceptual plans to preserve or enhance the beneficial public values (BPVs) of the more than 140,000 acres of lands referred to as the Watershed Lands and Carrizo Plain (collectively known as the Watershed Lands).
- **Volume III: Disposition Packages** will encompass a series of real estate transaction packages that will detail the specific land conservation and/or disposition requirements for each parcel or parcel cluster.

As described in Chapter 2 of Volume I, the Stewardship Council organized the Watershed Lands into 11 watersheds and 47 separate planning units for purposes of developing and implementing the LCP. Watershed and planning unit locations are shown in Figure 1 and listed in Table 1.

As detailed in Volume I, the primary goal of the LCP is the preservation and enhancement of the following BPVs:

- Protection of the Natural Habitat of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants
- Preservation of Open Space
- Outdoor Recreation by the General Public

- Sustainable Forestry
- Agricultural Uses
- Preservation of Historic Values

While the preservation and enhancement of these BPVs are the key consideration in developing the recommendations contained in this volume, other factors are also required as elements of the planning process. This includes, for example, honoring FERC license requirements, ensuring the continued ability of hydroelectric and water delivery facilities to operate, honoring existing agreements for economic uses, and the preservation and enhancement of public access. Chapter 2 of Volume I includes a detailed summary of the required elements of the LCP.

## Purpose of Volume II

The purpose of Volume II is to present management objectives and conceptual plans to preserve and/or enhance the BPVs within each of the 47 planning units. The planning unit concepts described and illustrated in this volume present the Stewardship Council's recommendations for future land conservation of the Watershed Lands, and are intended to support future regulatory approvals (for land transactions/encumbrances) consistent with these recommendations.

For each planning unit, the Stewardship Council has identified an overall management objective, as well as objectives to preserve and/or enhance specific BPVs relevant to the planning unit. These objectives will guide future land conservation plans and will be referenced in future real estate transactions for specific parcels (Volume III of the LCP). Volume II also identifies a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for each planning unit. 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 each planning unit. Extensive community input and coordination with future land stewards (donee



Figure 1 Statewide Watersheds and Planning Units Map

organizations) will precede implementation of the Stewardship Council's recommendations, and the disposition packages created for Volume III will fully describe the actual preservation and/or enhancement measures to be undertaken or overseen by future land stewards.

Volume II satisfies the requirements of Section 12(a)(2) of the Stipulation by identifying, at a programmatic level, objectives to preserve and/or enhance the BPVs of the Watershed Lands. This Volume also partially fulfills Section 12(a)(8) by identifying potential preservation/and or enhancement measures that would contribute to these objectives, however these measures will not be finalized until completion of Volume III.

The planning unit recommended concepts contained in this volume are the outcome of an extensive and open planning process through which the Stewardship Council sought input from a diverse group of agencies, organizations, stakeholders, and interested parties. Refer to Chapter 3 of Volume I for more information on the planning process, and Chapter 5 of Volume I for an overview of the Stewardship Council's outreach efforts.

## **Organization and Contents of Volume II**

Volume II is organized by watershed (presented geographically from the north to the south), and by planning unit (also presented north to south). Each planning unit discussion includes a map which depicts the existing conditions within the planning unit, and a narrative description of the existing conditions within the planning unit, with an emphasis on each of the BPVs. The existing conditions summary discusses all six BPVs to provide a complete picture of the current state of the planning unit.

Following the existing conditions summary, each planning unit concept details the Stewardship Council's recommendations for future land management. The explanation of the recommendations begins with an overall objective for the planning unit, followed by

an objective for each BPV and a summary of the rationale behind the Stewardship Council's recommendations. More detail on the analysis that supports the recommendations, as well as the supporting data sources, is included under separate cover in the *Supporting Analysis for Recommendations*, a supplemental document to Volume II.

Each planning unit also includes a table that summarizes the objectives and lists potential measures that would contribute to meeting these objectives. To accompany the narrative and tabular recommendations, the Stewardship Council prepared a Recommended Concept map for each planning unit that shows the specific location of potential preservation and enhancement measures (where applicable), and lists potential measures that are not location specific. The Recommended Concept map also illustrates the location of anticipated lands where PG&E will retain fee title (those lands will be protected with a conservation easement or some other legal mechanism), and lands that will likely be available for donation to qualified donees (see Appendix 5 of Volume I for a list of specific legal parcels).

The recommendations for each planning unit range from very specific recommendations to broad, general recommendations, in part due to the varying levels of available information. The availability of data relevant to the Watershed Lands varied considerably across geography. This was related to the accessibility of background material and how recently it had been updated, particularly for FERC-related data. With the exception of the field visits and personal communication with community members, the planning process did not include collecting original data or conducting comprehensive field assessments of the land. This type of effort will likely be undertaken as needed during the development and implementation of Volume III.

## **Beneficial Public Values Overview**

The preservation and enhancement of the BPVs were a primary focus of the planning effort. The

**Table 1 Watershed Location and Acreage**

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Location (Counties)</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
Pit-McCloud River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fall River Valley</li><li>• McArthur Swamp</li><li>• Fall River Mills</li><li>• Hat Creek</li><li>• Lake Britton</li><li>• Tunnel Reservoir</li><li>• Pit River</li><li>• Iron Canyon Reservoir</li><li>• Lake McCloud</li></ul>	Shasta	38,223
Cow-Battle Creek Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Burney Gardens</li><li>• Kilarc Reservoir</li><li>• Cow Creek</li><li>• Battle Creek</li></ul>	Shasta, Tehama	11,085
Feather River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lake Almanor</li><li>• Mountain Meadows Reservoir</li><li>• Butt Valley Reservoir</li><li>• Humbug Valley</li><li>• Philbrook Reservoir</li><li>• Deer Creek</li><li>• Butte Creek</li><li>• Bucks Lake</li><li>• North Fork Feather River</li><li>• Oroville</li></ul>	Tehama, Butte, Plumas, Lassen	53,185
Eel River Planning Unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eel River</li></ul>	Mendocino, Lake	7,446
Yuba-Bear River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fordyce Lake</li><li>• Lake Spaulding</li><li>• Bear River</li><li>• Narrows</li><li>• Lower Drum</li><li>• Chili Bar</li></ul>	Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Yuba	18,629

**Table 1 Watershed Location and Acreage**

<b>Watershed</b>	<b>Location (Counties)</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
Upper Mokelumne River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Blue Lakes</li><li>• Lower Bear Area</li><li>• North Fork Mokelumne River</li></ul>	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras	7,096
Stanislaus River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kennedy Meadows</li><li>• Middle Fork Stanislaus River</li><li>• Lyons Reservoir</li><li>• Merced River</li></ul>	Tuolumne, Mariposa, Merced	1,867
Willow Creek Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bass Lake</li><li>• Manzanita Lake</li><li>• Willow Creek</li><li>• Kerckhoff Lake</li><li>• Auberry Service Center</li></ul>	Madera, Fresno	2,197
Kings River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wishon Reservoir</li><li>• Kings River</li></ul>	Fresno	1,461
Kern-Tule River Planning Units: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doyle Springs</li><li>• Kern River</li></ul>	Tulare, Kern	692
Carrizo Plain Planning Unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carrizo Plain</li></ul>	San Luis Obispo	655
<b>TOTAL ACREAGE</b>		<b>142,536</b>

Source: PG&E 2007

Note: All acreage estimates are approximate. All estimates have been rounded up to the nearest one acre, and totals may reflect minor rounding errors.

following section provides an overall context for the BPVs on the Watershed Lands, and gives a programmatic overview of typical preservation and enhancement measures that are recommended in the specific planning unit concepts.

### Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The Watershed Lands support a staggering array of plants and animals. Habitats include river systems, vernal pools, montane meadows, wet meadows, dry meadows, riparian and wetland habitats, mixed conifer forests, riparian forests, oak woodlands, montane chaparral, aspen groves, fens, grasslands, and sub-alpine meadows and forests.

The Watershed Lands support 78 Federally listed, California listed, and at-risk species documented in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). The CNDDB indicates there are 145 at-risk species occurring within one mile of the parcels, and Watershed Lands have the potential to support literally hundreds of at-risk species. Moreover, Watershed Lands provide habitat for abundant and common species representative of interior California. The unique habitats and wildlife within the Watershed Lands attract the citizens of California to these lands primarily for recreation and sightseeing.

The most commonly recommended measures for habitat protection and enhancement include:

- Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection.
- Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit.
- Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.

### Open Space

Most of the Watershed Lands are located in mountainous, rural, or undeveloped areas. The landscape surrounding the Watershed Lands has not, until recently, experienced development pressure. As the state population increases and

people move in greater numbers to rural areas, undeveloped lands will experience increased development pressure and impacts from recreation. Open space exists on all Watershed Lands absent of roads, structures, and PG&E facilities. Nearly all 140,000 acres of the Watershed Lands are currently considered open space.

Development pressure is highest in areas close to urbanized or developed communities. In particular, development pressure has been recognized within the Yuba-Bear River, Pit-McCloud River, and Feather River Watersheds. While these are not the only areas where open space has been greatly reduced in recent years, these lands have more immediate threats from the surrounding landscape.

The primary open space enhancement measure recommended for all Watershed Lands states:

- Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher value of open space protection for planning unit lands.

Additional open space recommendations include measures such as removing obsolete buildings or fences and utilizing existing recreation facilities to the greatest extent possible. Conservation easements will restrict or eliminate future development and protect the scenic quality of the lands.

### Recreation

Outdoor recreation occurs on nearly all of the Watershed Lands and is an important use in many areas. On some lands, PG&E has provided numerous developed recreation facilities, often in cooperation with Federal and State agencies that administer adjacent public lands. Other areas lack developed facilities, but are accessible for more primitive recreation. A few areas serve as gateways to adjacent Federally designated Wilderness Areas, where visitors can experience the most primitive sort of recreation.

Recreation activities that occur on Watershed Lands are as diverse as the lands themselves. With the presence of hydroelectric development

on most of the planning units, water-based recreation is foremost in many areas, both on the flat-water of reservoirs and forebays and on flowing water in rivers, creeks, and (in a few cases) canals. Activities like camping are enhanced by water-based recreation opportunities such as boating, swimming, and fishing.

The most commonly recommended measures for recreation enhancement include:

- Add, enhance, or manage recreation facilities/access within the planning unit.
- Provide new signage or enhance existing signage within the planning unit.
- Create use areas for education or create interpretive programs within the planning unit.
- Conduct recreation studies and/or monitoring of recreation use within the planning unit.
- Develop a recreation management plan.

### Sustainable Forestry

Of the more than 140,000 acres of Watershed Lands, over 52,000 acres are forested. These lands are covered predominately by the following forest types: mixed conifer forest, lodgepole pine/fir forest, and central oak woodlands.

The Watershed Lands contain 139 Timber Management Units (TMUs); most of which are managed under Multiple-Use and Sustainable Timber Management prescriptions. Under the Multiple-Use prescription, sustained timber production is balanced with the goal of protecting and using other resources and facilities in the TMU, which may preclude timber harvesting as the primary focus. Under the Sustainable Timber Management prescription, the principal activity is timber production with an emphasis on protecting water quality, wildlife and fisheries habitat, soils, carbon sequestration, and cultural resources.

There are three other timber management prescriptions used to manage TMUs on the Watershed Lands including: Salvage, Salvage/Stand Improvement, and Recreation and

Sustainable Timber Management. Under the Salvage prescription, management activities are restricted to mitigating for watershed and forest health issues, including emergency salvage harvesting following insect attack or a catastrophic event. Under the Salvage/Stand Improvement prescription, lands are primarily managed for uses other than sustained timber production, but may require entry to reduce fuel loads, remove hazard trees, and improve aesthetics. In areas managed under the Recreation and Sustainable Timber Management prescription, forest management in designated recreational areas is limited to fuel reduction, hazard tree removal, and improving aesthetics while sustainable timber management is emphasized outside of designated recreational areas.

In the LCP, the management of forest resources on Watershed Lands will be guided by the following definition for sustainable forestry as approved by the Stewardship Council:

“the practice of managing dynamic forest ecosystems to provide ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits for present and future generations.”<sup>1</sup>

Sustainable forestry also includes active management of forest ecosystems through practices such as thinning, hazard tree removal, and fuels reduction.

Sustainable forestry enhancement measures commonly recommended for planning units with forest resources include:

- Evaluate existing timber inventory data and supplement as appropriate.
- Develop a forest management plan to promote wildlife habitat and structural and physical diversity in forests for long-term ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits.
- Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit to ensure fire preparedness.

## LCP Volume II

### Planning Unit Concepts

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- Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.
- Evaluate the potential for grazing opportunities, in coordination with adjacent grazing operations (or USFS/BLM grazing allotments).

#### Agricultural Uses

There are a total of 13,083 acres of land leased for agricultural uses within the Watershed Lands. The majority of these lands are utilized for cattle grazing; however, lease activities also include horse grazing, row crops, aquaculture, and a tree farm. Agricultural uses are primarily located in the northern portion of the State, within the Pit-McCloud River, Cow-Battle Creek, and Feather River Watersheds. These watersheds represent 88 % (11,550 acres) of the total agricultural use. The largest contiguous agricultural area is located at McArthur Swamp in the Pit-McCloud River Watershed. This 6,000-acre grazing area has a long history of grazing and currently supports more than 1,000 head of cattle.

Enhancement measures for agricultural resources focus on improving current agricultural practices and identifying additional areas suitable for agricultural use. The majority of recommended measures were specific to cattle grazing, as it is the dominant agricultural use on the Watershed Lands. The most commonly recommended measures for agricultural protection and enhancement include:

- 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 grazing use that includes goals and objectives and a monitoring and adaptive management strategy, and specifies grazing prescriptions that address soil and water conservation, erosion control, pest management, nutrient management, vegetation management, and habitat protection.

#### Preservation of Historic Values

The Watershed Lands are replete with cultural resources that reflect the State's long and varied history. Various sites within the Watershed Lands have been determined eligible for listing with the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and, in certain cases, have been nominated as Historic Districts. In some watersheds, remnants of the 19th century mining boom are found in historic mining and railroad towns, trails, and lands transformed by hydraulic mining. In others, pioneer history is found in the form of homesteads, historic towns, and gravesites.

In the majority of the Watershed Lands, the imprint of Native American culture and history is evident, and Native American communities remain active on many of the Watershed Lands. For Native Americans, cultural resources may include traditional gathering and ceremonial sites, ethnobotanical areas for plant collection, springs and water sources, tribal origin locations, and geologic features. Spiritual places throughout the Watershed Lands continue to be places of significant importance to Native American people. The presence of Native American culture and history continues to be an integral component of the living historic landscape of the Watershed Lands and throughout California.

Recommended measures were developed to promote the long-term protection and enhancement of cultural resources on Watershed Lands. The most commonly recommended measures for cultural resource enhancement include:

- Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.
- Develop a cultural resources management plan or extend existing plans into adjacent areas.

- Incorporate cultural resource protection measures in conservation easements to protect any cultural resources found in the future.
- Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.

### **Endnote**

<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Administration Code, Department of Natural Resources, NR 44.03

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