



RECOMMENDATION FOR ADDITIONAL FEE TITLE RETENTION BY PG&E AND POSSIBLE DONATION OF ADDITIONAL LANDS TO CALFIRE AT THE NORTH FORK MOKELOMNE RIVER PLANNING UNIT

BACKGROUND

Five organizations originally submitted land stewardship proposals seeking a donation of watershed lands in the North Fork Mokelumne River planning unit: Amador County, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE), and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

At its May 11, 2011 meeting, the Stewardship Council Board of Directors (Board) recommended the USFS as the prospective fee title donee for approximately 358 acres within 3 parcels (parcels 959-961) in the North Fork Mokelumne River planning unit. The donation of approximately 98 acres within parcel 960 is moving forward. The donation of lands in parcels 959 and 961 cannot move forward due to the Federal Power Act, Section 4(e) issue.

At the same meeting, the Board also recommended the BLM, as the prospective fee title donee for approximately 837 acres within 13 parcels (parcels 963-968, 972, 983, 995, 1005, 1007, 1008, and 1009). These land donations cannot move forward due to the Federal Power Act, Section 4(e) issue.

At its December 2, 2010 meeting, the Board recommended CAL FIRE as the prospective fee title donee for approximately 1,070 acres within 9 parcels (parcels 974-982) located in Amador and Calaveras Counties.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on an evaluation of the Land Stewardship Proposals and follow-up discussions with CAL FIRE, Stewardship Council staff has developed the following recommendations, which were endorsed by the Watershed Planning Committee:

Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to retain fee title to approximately 1,258 acres further described as: approximately 837 acres within 13 parcels (parcels 963-968, 972, 983, 995, 1005, 1007, 1008, and 1009) previously recommended to the BLM; approximately 77 acres within parcel 959, previously recommended to the USFS; and approximately 344 acres within 11 parcels (parcels 969-971, 984, 985, 988, 990, 991, 996, 997 and 1006).

This acreage is in addition to the approximately 859 acres originally designated to be retained by PG&E within the planning unit.

The Proposed LCCP for PG&E retained lands being presented to the Stewardship Council Board for conditional approval on November 19, 2014 encompasses 859 acres. If the Board approves of the recommendation for PG&E to retain the additional parcels identified here, parcels addressed in this recommendation (approximately 1,258 acres) will be included in the LCCP presented for Board approval.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to receive fee title to approximately 195 acres available for donation within two parcels (961 and 962). [Note: In the event acreage in parcel 961 is not transferred to CALFIRE, the Watershed Planning Committee recommends the lands be retained by PG&E. If these lands are recommended to be retained by PG&E, they would be incorporated in the LCCP pertaining to PG&E retained lands to be presented for Board action on November 19, 2014.]

The Proposed LCCP for lands to be donated to CAL FIRE being presented to the Stewardship Council Board for approval on November 19, 2014 encompasses 1,115 acres and includes Parcel 962 (approximately 1 acre); it does not include Parcel 961 (approximately 194 acres). Parcel 961 would be the subject of a separate LCCP if donated to CAL FIRE.

DESCRIPTION OF LANDS RECOMMENDED FOR DONATION TO CAL FIRE

Parcel 961 consists of approximately 198 acres, all of which are available for fee title donation with the exception of four acres located within FERC Project boundaries for the Summit Spillway Channel. The property is split by the Mokelumne River, with the north side located in Amador County and surrounded by the Eldorado National Forest. The property on the south side of the river is located in Calaveras County and surrounded by Stanislaus National Forest and Sierra Pacific Industries property. The majority of the property is heavily wooded and steeply sloped.

Parcel 962 consists of approximately one acre and is available for fee title donation. It is located to the east of Parcel 977, which has previously been recommended for donation to CAL FIRE, in the Tiger Creek Regulator Reservoir area. This parcel is adjacent to Sierra Pacific Industries' land on the north, south, and east. The parcel is rocky with little vegetation. There is no formalized road access. Consistent with the requirements of the Settlement Agreement, all lands within the parcel will be subject to a conservation easement.

The 2010 staff recommendation to the Board for the donation of certain lands to CAL FIRE outlined several benefits for the development of a Demonstration State Forest at the North Fork Mokelumne planning unit. A summary of these benefits excerpted from the 2010 recommendation is provided below. Staff believes these benefits would apply to the donation of parcels 961 and 962 to CAL FIRE.

CAL FIRE has expressed interest in acquiring fee title for the establishment of a new Demonstration State Forest to be incorporated into their existing Demonstration State Forest program which supports monitoring, adaptive management and research on best forest management practices. Development and management of a Demonstration State Forest would achieve several of the recommended potential measures identified under the sustainable forestry objective for the planning unit and align with the overall management objectives identified under the sustainable forestry BPV. Additionally, Demonstration State Forests are managed for a variety of recreation and habitat management objectives compatible with the BPVs. CAL FIRE proposes to achieve the following objectives:

- *Establish a Demonstration State Forest that would encompass all the lands donated to them within the North Fork Mokelumne River Planning Unit.*
- *Develop a program of sustainable forestry research focused on demonstrating and implementing best management practices focused on watershed protection, increasing*

timber inventories and standing biomass, as well as silviculture methods that maintain a closed canopy forest.

- *Develop a comprehensive, multi-resource management plan and a sustained yield plan. The management plan would include biological resources including water quality and watershed function, as well as recreation and cultural values.*
- *Develop a program of ecosystem monitoring and adaptive management.*
- *Implement habitat protection and restoration in the context of a working forest landscape.*
- *Pursuit of educational and recreational activities. These activities could potentially include a rustic campground, tours and hikes, displays, self-guided tours and/or science camps similar to activities implemented on other Demonstration State Forests. Activities would be intended to take advantage of the features of a working forest to demonstrate the effects of different types of management on forest structure.*
- *Develop a program to protect cultural and historic resources.*