

BUTT VALLEY RESERVOIR PLANNING UNIT

Feather River Watershed

Existing Conditions & Uses

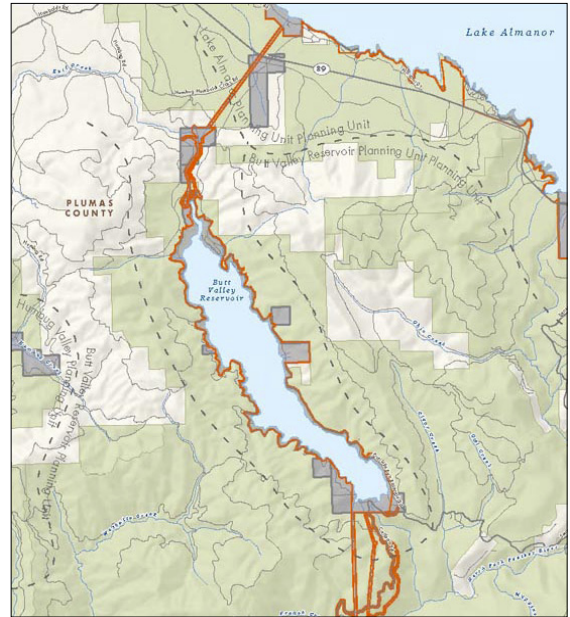
Overview

- Scenic reservoir in Plumas County surrounded by steep, forested terrain that provides camping and trophy trout fishing opportunities in a primarily undeveloped setting
- Nearly 2,500 total acres; 358 acres outside the FERC boundary and 2,106 acres inside the FERC boundary (including the reservoir)
- Part of the Upper North Fork Feather River (UNFFR) Project (FERC #2105); License Application submitted October 2002; License expired October 2004

The Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit is located in Plumas County, approximately four miles from Lake Almanor and the community of Prattville. The central feature of the planning unit is Butt Valley Reservoir, which is five miles long, one mile wide, and covers 1,600 surface acres at full pool. The reservoir is located on Butt Creek, a tributary of the North Fork Feather River, at an elevation of 4,140 feet and is surrounded by steep, forested terrain. PG&E provides two campgrounds, a boat launch, and a day use area.



Butt Valley Reservoir



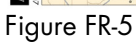
Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit
Plumas County

The reservoir is popular with anglers and campers seeking a relatively undeveloped setting. The reservoir area is surrounded almost entirely by the Plumas National Forest, except for a small private inholding.

Water from Lake Almanor flows through the Prattville Tunnel into the Butt Valley Powerhouse, at the north end of the Butt Valley Reservoir (see Figure FR-5). Other hydropower infrastructure in the planning unit includes the Butt Valley Dam at the south end of the reservoir, and portions of two penstocks supplying downstream powerhouses.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit provides forest, riparian, and aquatic habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic species. There are three bald eagle and three osprey nesting territories at the reservoir. Two California spotted owl Protected Activity Centers (PACs) are located adjacent to the planning unit on Plumas National Forest lands.¹ Mammal species in the area include mule deer, black-tailed deer, and black bear. Two USFS sensitive plant species have been found at the reservoir, starry clarkia and



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Quincy lupine. Noxious weeds have been found in the same area as sensitive plant species. Butt Valley Reservoir supports a trophy rainbow and brown trout fishery, as well as a population of Sacramento perch, a special status species.²

Open Space

Due to lack of development, steepness of the area, and limited recreation facilities, open space values are found throughout the planning unit. The undeveloped western shoreline of the reservoir provides an attractive backdrop to the reservoir for users of the three developed recreation areas on the eastern shoreline (see Figure FR-5). The viewshed of the reservoir does, however, include a 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line, which runs south from the Butt Valley Powerhouse along the eastern shoreline.

Outdoor Recreation

Butt Valley Reservoir provides opportunities for camping, boating, swimming, picnicking, duck hunting, and fishing. Fishing is the most popular activity due to opportunities to catch trophy rainbow and brown trout. Bank fishing is especially popular at the northern end of the reservoir, near Butt Valley Powerhouse, because trout congregate there, waiting to feed on small fish transported from Lake Almanor through the Prattville Tunnel.

PG&E owns and operates the three developed recreation sites at the reservoir, all on the eastern shoreline: Ponderosa Flat Campground, Cool Springs Campground, and Alder Creek Day Use Area (DUA) and Boat Launch. All three sites are currently approaching or are at capacity during the summer recreation season. Ponderosa Flat Campground has 61 campsites and an overflow camping area with 20 campsites; recommended improvements include a shower and ADA accessibility enhancements.³ Cool Springs Campground currently has 30 campsites; recommended improvements include a non-heated outdoor shower and retrofitting one campsite to be ADA accessible. The Alder Creek

DUA and Boat Launch site offers three picnic sites, a paved parking area, a toilet, and concrete boat ramp. Recommended improvements for this site include new parking areas for 10 to 20 additional vehicles and modifying the boat ramp and one parking space to be ADA accessible. Shoreline access improvements are recommended in the 2005 UNFFR Final EIS to formalize dispersed access in the powerhouse area, and the 2002 Draft Recreation Management Plan prepared by PG&E proposes a trail linking the three developed recreation sites and the powerhouse area.

Boating on the reservoir is generally fishing related, but canoes and kayaks are also used. Motorized pleasure boating is rare due to Plumas County ordinances that limit boat speed to 25 mph, and prohibit waterskiing and personal watercraft use. Pleasure boating is also constrained by stumps within the reservoir. There are boating restriction zones at the north end of the reservoir below the powerhouse and at the south end of the reservoir near the dam. Shoreline recreational use at the reservoir is generally limited to the powerhouse area and eastern shoreline (see Figure FR-5). The western shoreline is accessible only by boat or via gated USFS and PG&E roads, which limit use.

Forest Resources

Forest resources include Sierran mixed conifer and montane riparian forest vegetation types.



Alder Creek Boat Launch

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Exposed tree stumps by Butt Valley Dam

There are some scattered mature trees and one 15-acre plantation within the one Timber Management Unit (TMU) for the planning unit, which consists of 706 timbered acres. Four sites at the Butt Valley Dam were reforested in 1997 using local or native seed stock as part of the Butt Valley and Lake Almanor Seismic Remediation Project. The TMU is managed under a Multiple Use prescription by PG&E; although sustained timber production is an important management component, protection and uses of other resources and facilities may preclude sustained timber management as the highest and best use of the unit.

Agricultural Uses

No agricultural uses occur in this planning unit; its lands have low potential for agriculture or grazing allotments due to steep topography and lack of forage.

Historic Resources

The Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit contains many cultural sites, both prehistoric and historic. The reservoir is within the ancestral territory of the Maidu people. When constructed, the reservoir inundated botanical gathering and hunting areas, and other cultural resources. In addition to Native American sites, remains from the settlement era are also present. The valley was formerly the locale of the Miller ranch and a community called Buttville that had a hotel,

store, saloon, and a Chinese settlement. The community supported gold mining activities in the North Fork and Seneca Mining Districts. A small pioneer-era cemetery containing the gravesites of members of the Miller family is nearby, but outside the planning unit.

Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses in the Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit be preserved and enhanced by focusing on the habitat values, forest resources, cultural resources, and popular recreation opportunities available. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here, our objective is to enhance opportunities for recreation, preserve cultural resources, preserve and enhance habitat, and contribute to the maintenance of a healthy forest. We recommend this effort be conducted in close coordination with PG&E and in a manner consistent with the upcoming FERC License Order.

Objective: Preserve and enhance biological resources, enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management, and preserve cultural resources.

As shown on Table FR-3, the Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for the Butt Valley Reservoir 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.

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Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

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

The Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit provides forest, riparian, and aquatic habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic species. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat 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 recommend close coordination with the USFS and other resource-focused organizations working in the area. Management plans should be consistent with the fuels and forest management plans as well as UNFFR Project plans and the USFWS Biological Opinion for the project.

Open Space

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

The undeveloped shoreline lands in this planning unit provide natural viewsheds that are integral the recreation setting enjoyed by visitors, and serve to protect habitat and cultural values as well. This concept would preserve open space by limiting new construction to minor additions of 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.



Cool Springs Campground

Outdoor Recreation

Objective: Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional public access, educational and recreation opportunities, and enhance the recreation experience.

Butt Valley Reservoir is a popular recreation destination, primarily for water-based recreation such as boating, swimming, and fishing. Several developed recreation facilities in the planning unit support camping, fishing, picnicking, and boating. As shown in Figure FR-6, the Stewardship Council looks to enhance recreation opportunities by recommending modest improvements to existing recreational facilities as well as the creation of several new facilities and programs. We recommend enhancements focused on interpretive opportunities, enhancement of campground facilities using renewable energy technology, development of an outdoor amphitheater, and implementation of dust control measures to enhance the recreation experience as well as visitor safety.

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South shoreline & water intake near the dam

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 Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit contains over 700 timbered acres, consisting of Sierran mixed conifer and montane riparian forest vegetation types. 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 forest and fuels management plans should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed and wildlife and habitat management plans as well as with relevant FERC license required plans. We expect that all of these plans would be developed in coordination with adjacent landowners, relevant county plans, and USFS management practices as appropriate.

Preservation of Historic Values

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

Numerous prehistoric and historic cultural resources are known to be present in the Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit and the local Maidu community considers the area to be of great cultural importance. 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 Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit (particularly outside the FERC relicensing study area where less information is available), and that opportunities to support public education regarding cultural resources be considered. If determined necessary, a cultural resources management plan would be developed and would be consistent with any future FERC license required plans for the UNFFR Project. Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities.

Endnotes

¹ Spotted owl PACs are located near the Butt Valley Dam and along the east shore of the reservoir.

² Proposals in FERC's UNFFR Final EIS would protect these biological resources. These proposals include an interagency bald eagle management plan, vegetation and invasive weed management plan, and plan for the protection of threatened, endangered, proposed for listing, and sensitive species.

³ Proposed modifications to the Ponderosa Flat Campground in the UNFFR Final EIS include: a non-heated outdoor shower, retrofitting 4 campsites and associated facilities to be ADA accessible, and providing an ADA accessible swimming area and an ADA accessible fishing access trail and pier or platform. Based on recreation monitoring, future proposed enhancements to the campground include a new primitive camping area and a group RV campsite.

Table FR-3 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept

Planning Unit Objective: Preserve and enhance biological resources, enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management, and preserve cultural resources.		
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 outside the relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection. • Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit, consistent with the USFWS Biological Opinion for the UNFFR Project. • Develop a noxious weed management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary.
Preservation of Open Space	Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, viewsheds, 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 public access, educational and recreation opportunities, and enhance the recreation experience.	• Develop a campfire interpretive program with topics such as Native American use of the area, special status species, and the history of hydropower development. • Develop a simple outdoor amphitheater at Ponderosa Flat Campground.** • Implement dust control measures for the Prattville-Butt Reservoir Road in conjunction with the USFS and Plumas County.** • Assess the potential to use solar energy to heat the proposed showers in the two campgrounds.**
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 consistent with adjacent management and the proposed UNFFR vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan. • Develop a fuels management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard consistent with the proposed UNFFR vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan.
Agricultural Uses		None proposed.
Preservation of Historic Values	Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.	• Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify cultural resources and enable their protection in coordination with Native American entities.

* 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.

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Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit
Recommended Concept

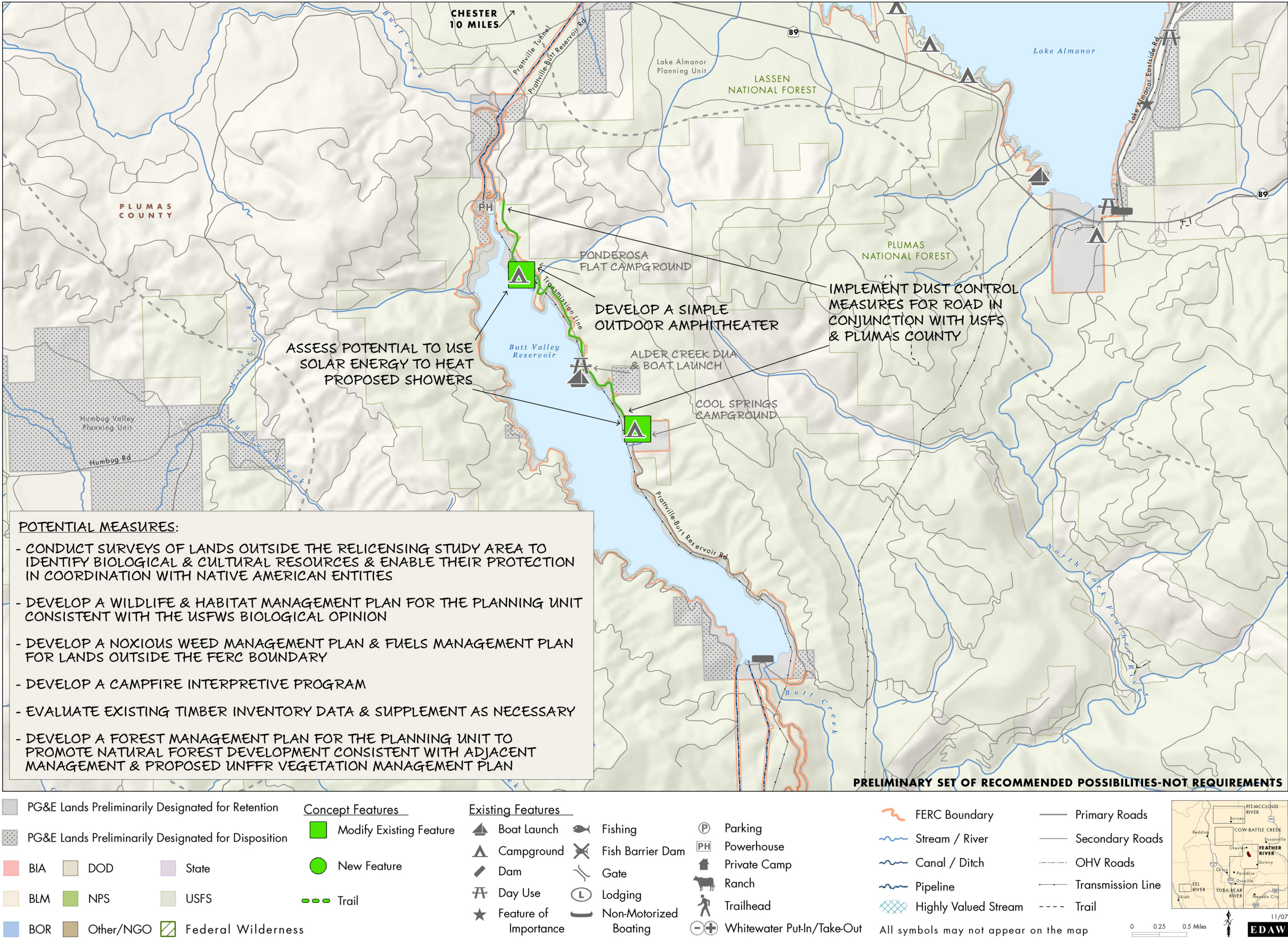


Figure FR-6

Butt Valley Reservoir Planning Unit

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a campfire interpretive program with topics such as Native American use of the area, special status species, and the history of hydropower development.*

The Stewardship Council recognizes opportunities to provide new recreation facilities and interpretation opportunities, as well as enhance safety as complementary measures to those already recommended as part of the UNFFR Project relicensing. The UNFFR Final EIS recommends creating an interpretation and education plan, including improvements such as signs, kiosks, and brochures on a variety of topics. However, the interpretation and education program does not include any live interpretation, such as interpretive talks. Recognizing the rich cultural history of the area and the large nighttime audience from the two campgrounds, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a campfire interpretive program that would focus on giving interpretive talks and demonstrations on topics such as Native American use of the area, history of hydropower development, and special status species in Butt Valley. Facilitators could include USFS rangers, local Native Americans, historians, archeologists, and biologists.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a simple outdoor amphitheater at Ponderosa Flat Campground.*

In conjunction with developing this program, the Stewardship Council recommends the installation of a simple outdoor amphitheater for talks and demonstrations at the Ponderosa Flat Campground. Providing such an interpretive program and facility would increase visitor education on a range of topics, foster stewardship for natural and cultural resources, and teach visitors how to interact with and protect natural and cultural resources. Development of the campfire interpretive program should be coordinated with development of the UNFFR interpretation and education plan for consistency.

Potential Measure:

- *Implement dust control measures for the Prattville-Butt Reservoir Road in conjunction with the USFS and Plumas County.*

The Prattville-Butt Reservoir Road, maintained by Plumas County, provides the only vehicle access to the recreation facilities and the shoreline. As it is gravel, it can be very dusty, creating a potential driving hazard. To reduce this potential safety hazard and enhance the recreation setting for users, the Stewardship Council recommends implementing road dust control measures in conjunction with Plumas County and with the USFS, as the road crosses Plumas National Forest lands. The priority for this measure would be from the upstream end of the reservoir to Cool Springs Campground, the road section with the highest use.

Potential Measure:

- *Assess the potential to use solar energy to heat the proposed showers in the two campgrounds.*

Additionally, PG&E has agreed in the UNFFR Project Settlement Agreement to install two non-heated outdoor showers, one at each campground. Though it can be warm at the reservoir in the summer, the air temperature is not always warm enough to enjoy a non-heated shower. Therefore the Stewardship Council recommends investigating the use of solar energy to heat the proposed showers to extend the seasonal use for the showers and provide a more enjoyable recreation experience. An ancillary benefit would be the potential to educate the public about renewable energy resources through interpretive information near the shower facilities. Efforts related to this management Measure would be coordinated with UNFFR Project recreation development plans resulting from relicensing.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measures:

- *Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit, consistent with the USFWS Biological Opinion for the UNFFR Project.*

To identify biological resources and enable their protection, biological surveys would be conducted outside the relicensing study area. The surveys may reveal additional special status plants and wildlife and habitat. Once surveys are completed, potential habitat enhancements, consistent with the USFWS Biological Opinion for the UNFFR Project, would be identified and developed into a comprehensive plan describing habitat and species goals and objectives, as well as measures to enhance and protect both wildlife and plant 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 other plans related to vegetation management, such as the noxious weed plan and fuels management plan.

Potential Measure:

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

The UNFFR Final EIS notes that noxious weeds have been found in the same vicinity as sensitive plants at Butt Valley Reservoir. Although a vegetation and invasive weed management plan is recommended in the Final EIS, it would not apply to lands outside the FERC boundary.

Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends development of a noxious weed management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary. Such a plan would include baseline surveys and monitoring of noxious weeds and common invasive weeds (not listed as noxious), in addition to strategies for the management and eradication of noxious weeds. This plan should be developed in conjunction with UNFFR Project efforts to ensure management consistency.

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 consistent with adjacent management and the proposed UNFFR vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan.*

A forest management plan would be developed to promote natural forest development and structural and physical diversity in forests for long-term ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits. In support of this plan, existing timber inventory data would be evaluated and supplemented as appropriate. The forest management plan would be developed to be consistent with the fuels treatment requirements of any future FERC license required vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan, as recommended by FERC in the Final EIS. Management would be coordinated with relevant county plans, as well as USFS management prescriptions for the adjacent Plumas National Forest to the extent possible to support forest connectivity and management consistency and foster a consistent approach to forest resources in this area. Increasing forest connectivity would benefit such species as osprey, bald eagle, and the California spotted owl.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan for lands outside the FERC boundary to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard, consistent with the proposed UNFFR vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan.*

A fuels management plan would also be developed for the portion of the planning unit outside the FERC boundary to promote forest regeneration and prevent fuels build-up. Most of the over 350 acres of the planning unit outside the Project boundary are forested. Although fire is an historic component of the ecosystem in the area and aids in forest regeneration, a fuels reduction plan would reduce both unnatural fire severity and intensity. Together, both management plans would promote healthy ecosystem functioning and the maintenance of wildlife habitat. Like the recommended forest management plan, the recommended fuels management plan would be coordinated with relevant county plans and consistent with the fuels treatment requirements of any future FERC license required vegetation management plan and fire prevention and response plan, as recommended by FERC in the Final EIS.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measure:

- *Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify cultural resources and enable their protection in coordination with Native American entities.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends surveys on planning unit lands outside the FERC relicensing study area to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. This measure would be coordinated with Native American entities. If determined necessary, a cultural resources management plan would be developed to identify protection and enhancement measures for these resources, consistent with the historic properties management plan (HPMP) to

be finalized after issuance of the New License. Many cultural sites have already been identified, and these proposed recommendations would provide the measures necessary to ensure the long-term protection of cultural resources in the planning unit.

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. It does not include development of any new sites and is therefore not expected to decrease the scenic quality of the viewsheds.

Agricultural Uses

None recommended.