FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20426
March 16, 2021

OFFICE OF ENERGY PROJECTS

Project No. 2997-031 – California
Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project
South Sutter Water District

VIA FERC Service

Subject: Scoping Document 2 for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project

To the Parties Addressed:

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission) is currently reviewing the license application filed on July 1, 2019, by South Sutter Water District (South Sutter) for relicensing the 6.8-megawatt Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2997) under the Traditional Licensing Process.[1] The 6.8-megawatt project is located on the mainstem Bear River in Yuba, Nevada, and Placer Counties, California. The project, with the proposed project boundary modifications, would occupy a total of 2,674 acres. No federal or tribal lands occur within or adjacent to the project boundary or along the Bear River downstream of the project.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Commission staff intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue a new license for the project. To support and assist our environmental review, we are conducting scoping to ensure that we identify and analyze all pertinent issues, and we have the information we need, to ensure the EA is thorough and balanced.

Our preliminary review of the scope of environmental issues to be addressed in our EA was contained in Scoping Document 1 (SD1), which was issued on February 11, 2019. We requested comments on SD1 to hear the views of all interested entities on the scope of issues that should be addressed in the EA. Based on written comments we received during the scoping process, we have updated SD1 to reflect our current view of issues and alternatives to be considered in the EA. ***Key changes from SD1 to SD2 are identified in bold, italicized type.***

[1] On October 25, 2019 and December 30, 2019, South Sutter filed amendments to its license application, which include revisions to proposed measures and supporting information on proposed changes to project facilities.

The enclosed SD2 supersedes SD1. SD2 is issued for informational use by all interested entities; no response is required. If you have any questions about SD2, the scoping process, or how Commission staff will develop the EA for this project, please contact Quinn Emmering at (202) 502-6382 or quinn.emmering@ferc.gov. Additional information about the Commission's licensing process and the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project may be obtained from our website, http://www.ferc.gov.

Enclosure: Scoping Document 2

SCOPING DOCUMENT 2

CAMP FAR WEST HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

CALIFORNIA

PROJECT NO. 2997-031

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Office of Energy Projects
Division of Hydropower Licensing
Washington, DC

March 2021

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Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project No. 2997-031

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (Commission or FERC), under the authority of the Federal Power Act (FPA),[2] may issue licenses for terms ranging from 30 to 50 years for the construction, operation, and maintenance of non-federal hydroelectric projects. On July 1, 2019, South Sutter Water District (South Sutter) filed an application for a new license for the existing Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2997).[3] The 6.8-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric project is located on the mainstem Bear River in Yuba, Nevada, and Placer Counties, California (Figure 1). The project, with the proposed project boundary modifications, would occupy a total of 2,674 acres. No federal or tribal lands occur within or adjacent to the project boundary or along the Bear River downstream of the project.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969,[4] the Commission's regulations, and other applicable laws require that we independently evaluate the environmental effects of relicensing the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project as proposed, and also consider reasonable alternatives to the licensee's proposed action.[5] At this time, we intend to prepare an environmental assessment (EA) that describes and evaluates the probable effects, including an assessment of the site-specific effects, if any, of the proposed action and alternatives. The EA preparation will be supported by a scoping process to ensure identification and analysis of all pertinent issues.

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[2] 16 U.S.C. § 791(a)-825(r).

[3] The Commission issued the current license for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project with an effective date of July 1, 1981, for a term of 40 years and an expiration date of June 30, 2021.

[4] 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4370(f).

[5] The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued a final rule on July 15, 2020, revising the regulations under 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500 – 1518 that federal agencies use to implement NEPA (see Update to the Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 85 Fed. Reg. 43,304). The Final Rule became effective on September 14, 2020, and applies to any NEPA process begun after September 14, 2020. An agency may also apply the regulations to ongoing activities and environmental documents begun before September 14, 2020, which includes the proposed Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. Commission staff intends to conduct its NEPA review in accordance with CEQ's revised regulations.

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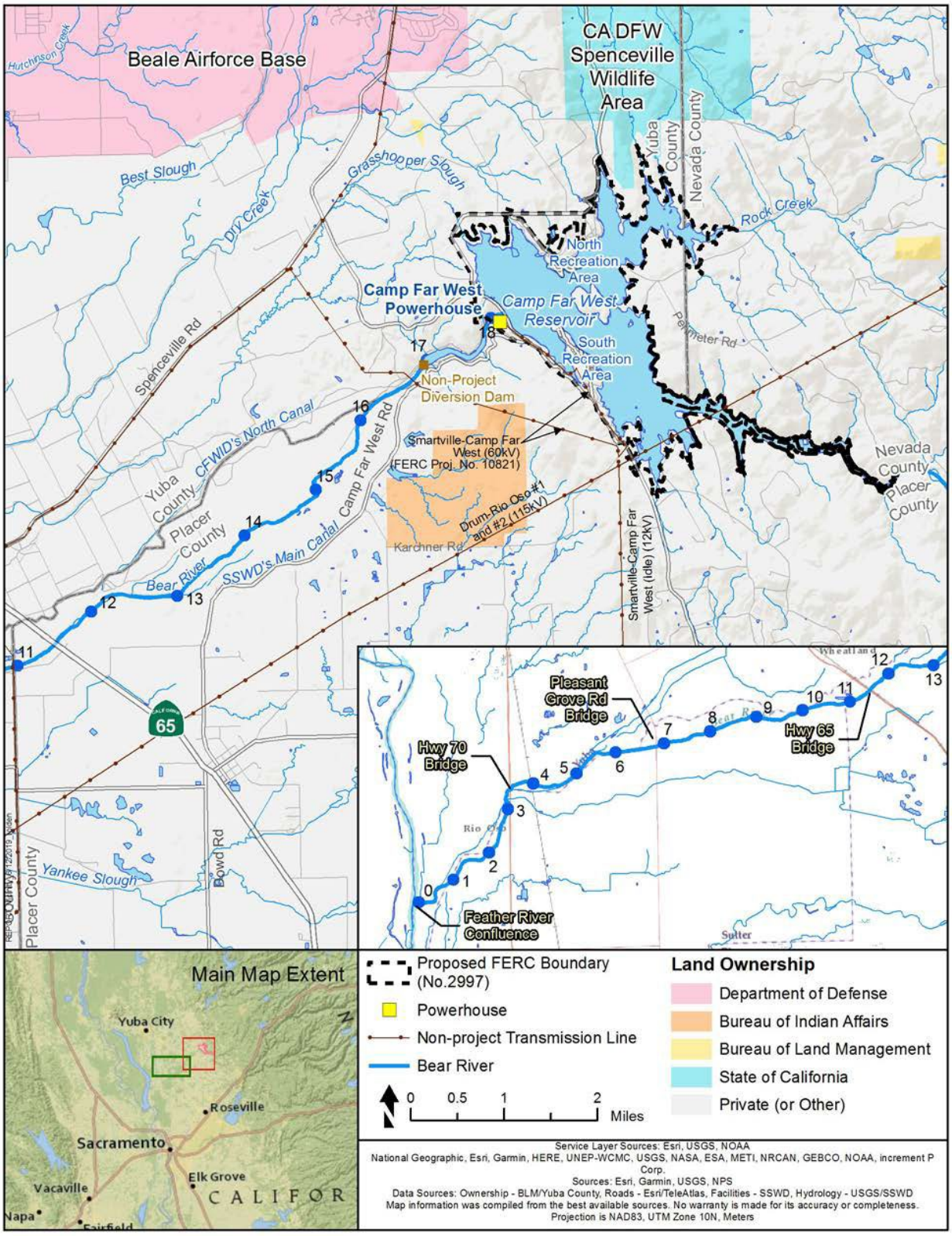

Figure 1. South Sutter Water District's Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project and project vicinity.

2.0 SCOPING

This Scoping Document 2 (SD2) is intended to advise all participants as to the proposed scope of the EA. This document contains: (1) a description of the scoping process and schedule for the development of the EA; (2) a description of the proposed action and alternatives; (3) a preliminary identification of environmental issues; (4) a proposed EA outline; and (5) a preliminary list of comprehensive plans which are applicable to the project.

2.1 PURPOSES OF SCOPING

Scoping is the process used to identify issues, concerns, and opportunities for enhancement or mitigation associated with a proposed action. In general, scoping should be conducted during the early planning stages of a project. The purposes of the scoping process are as follows:

- invite participation of federal, state and local resource agencies, Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the public to identify significant environmental and socioeconomic issues related to the proposed project;
- determine the resource issues, depth of analysis, and significance of issues to be addressed in the EA;
- identify reasonable alternatives to the proposed action that should be evaluated in the EA;
- solicit, from participants, available information on the resources at issue; and
- determine the resource areas and potential issues that do not require detailed analysis during review of the project.

2.2 SCOPING COMMENTS

Commission staff issued SD1 on June 9, 2020, to enable resource agencies, Indian tribes, and other interested parties to more effectively participate in and contribute to the scoping process. In SD1, we requested clarification of preliminary issues concerning the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project and identification of any new issues that need to be addressed in the NEPA document. We revised SD1 after reviewing comments filed during the scoping comment period, which ended on July 9, 2020. This SD2 presents our current view of issues and alternatives to be considered in the NEPA document. ***To facilitate review, key changes from SD1 to SD2 are identified in bold, italicized type.***

Written scoping comments were received from the following agencies and entities:

Commenting Entity	Filing Date
United Auburn Indian Tribe	7/6/2020
California Department of Fish and Wildlife	7/7/2020
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service	7/7/2020
Foothills Water Network	7/9/2020
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	7/9/2020
Robert and Stacey Bussell	7/10/2020
South Sutter Water District	8/17/2020

All comments received are part of the Commission's official record for the project. Information in the official file is available for review on the Commission's website at https://www.ferc.gov using the "eLibrary" link. At this time, the Commission has suspended access to the Commission's Public Reference Room due to the proclamation declaring a National Emergency concerning COVID-19, issued by the President on March 13, 2020. For assistance, please contact FERC at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov, (866) 208-3676 (toll free), or (202) 502-8659 (TTY).

2.3 ISSUES RAISED DURING SCOPING

The issues raised by participants in the scoping process are summarized below. We revised SD1 to address only those comments relating directly to the scope of environmental issues. Further, we do not address recommendations for license conditions, such as protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures, as these recommendations will be addressed in the NEPA document or any license order issued for the project. We request final terms, conditions, recommendations, and comments in the Ready for Environmental Analysis notice issued concurrently with this scoping document. Finally, we do not address comments or recommendations that are administrative in nature or outside of the Commission's authority for relicensing the project.

General Comments

Comment: The Foothills Water Network (FWN) requests that staff prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) due to groundwater concerns within the project boundaries.

Response: *Based on our initial review of the project and what constitutes significant actions under NEPA regulations,[6] staff have ascertained that an EA is appropriate at this time. If during the EA preparation we identify more complex issues, or if our analysis indicates that relicensing the project would significantly affect the quality of the human environment, then an EIS would be prepared. We note that stakeholders will also have an opportunity to comment on the draft EA for the project.*

Project Operations

Comment: *The Bussells comment that private property at 8800-8900 McCourtney Road would become inundated with water from the project reservoir if the proposed pool raise of the project reservoir is implemented. The Bussells allege that heavy rain already causes water levels to rise 10 feet higher than the project reservoir's high-water line and persist for several days at this location. Therefore, they state that South Sutter inspect McCourtney Road and underlying culverts to withstand higher water levels. South Sutter states that under no circumstances are reservoir levels 10 feet higher in certain areas due to rain events, that water drainage issues on these properties are not its responsibility, and it does not own or have jurisdiction over the roadway.*

Response: *The license application does not indicate that project-related inundation occurs on McCourtney Road. Because no evidence or documentation of alleged inundation of private property occurring as a result of project operations is provided staff conclude that the issue does not warrant consideration in the EA.*

Cumulative Effects

Comment: *NMFS notes South Sutter's entrance into the "Bear Agreement" with the California Department of Water Resources requires South Sutter to release water from the project in order to implement water quality control objectives outlined in the Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. Therefore, NMFS requests that staff extend the geographic scope for cumulative effects to water resources, aquatic resources, and threatened and endangered species include the Feather River downstream of the Bear River confluence, the Sacramento River downstream of the Feather River confluence, and the San Francisco Bay Delta. Additionally, NMFS comments that it supports Commission staff analyzing the effects of the non-project diversion dam including entrainment, fish passage, hydrologic, and geomorphic effects of the diversion dam in the EA.*

[6] 40 C.F.R. § 1508.27

Response: *As noted in section 1.0, Commission staff will conduct its NEPA review in accordance with CEQ's new regulations. Under the new regulations, NEPA documents will no longer differentiate between direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of a proposed action. Accordingly, we have removed the discussion of cumulative effects from section 4.0 of the scoping document. Consistent with CEQ's revised regulations, the EA will consider and evaluate effects from the proposed action and alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed action or alternatives. Staff's environmental analysis will evaluate the effects of South Sutter's project proposal and project alternatives on water resources, aquatic resources, and threatened and endangered species downstream of the project. However, there is insufficient information at this time to determine to determine to what extent project operations may affect any downstream resources and to what extent non-project actions and facilities (e.g., non-project diversion dam) might interact with project-related effects.*

Comment: *FWN comments that the construction of the proposed Centennial Reservoir by the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) upstream of the Camp Far West Reservoir could limit opportunities for fisheries improvements. FWN comments that the EA should evaluate the impacts of the potential construction and operation of the Centennial Reservoir on South Sutter's current and proposed operations. FWN also comments that the EA should analyze the proposed construction of Centennial Reservoir as an alternative under NEPA.*

Response: *As discussed above, CEQ's new regulations no longer differentiate between direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of a proposed action. Further, as described in South Sutter's FLA, NID's project has not undergone either state or federal environmental review (i.e., CEQA or NEPA); NID has not obtained necessary permits to construct, maintain or operate the project; NID has not funded the project; and NID has not put forward sufficient engineering or operation details of the project. Therefore, the project is not reasonably foreseeable and there is insufficient information to include as part of our environmental analysis.*

Geologic and Soil Resources

Comment: *NMFS comments that because operation and maintenance of the project will continue to block downstream transport of all coarse gravel necessary for salmonid spawning, as well as significant amounts of large woody material (LWM), additional sediment/LWM surveys and new sediment augmentations should be addressed during the scoping process and in the EA.*

Response: *As noted above, proposed and recommended PM&E measures are not addressed in SD2, but will be analyzed in the EA. However, staff have modified*

section 4.2.1 to include potential effects of the project on sediment and LWM transport necessary for salmonid spawning and aquatic habitat.

Aquatic and Fisheries Resources

Comment: FWN notes that South Sutter, as part of the West Placer Groundwater Sustainability Agency, is preparing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) as required by the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). FWN also notes that the project is located within the boundaries of the North American Groundwater Subbasin, which is classified as a high priority basin and shows declining groundwater levels. FWN comments that the EA should include information from the SGMA process and that the nexus between project operations and groundwater levels requires a "hard look" by the Commission.

Response: Section 4.2.2 has been modified to include potential effects of project operations on groundwater levels. However, we note that FWN provided no information or data as to how the project could potentially affect groundwater levels to establish a nexus with the project. Also, it's unclear when South Sutter's GSP may be completed to include any information from the plan in the EA as recommended by FWN.

Comment: FWS, California DFW, and FWN comment that because operation and maintenance of the project could affect adult escapement of salmonids, juvenile outmigration, and benthic macroinvertebrates in the Lower Bear River downstream of the project an aquatic resource monitoring plan should be addressed during the scoping process and in the EA.

Response: As noted above, proposed and recommended PM&E measures are not addressed in scoping, but will be analyzed in the EA. However, staff have modified section 4.2.3 to include potential effects of the project on adult escapement of salmonids, juvenile outmigration, and benthic macroinvertebrates in the Lower Bear River.

Comment: NMFS comments that the EA should discuss how the project and associated facilities, operations, and maintenance are consistent with NMFS' Final Recovery Plan for Sacramento River Winter-run Chinook Salmon, Central Valley Spring-run Chinook Salmon, and California Central Valley Steelhead.

Response: Because NMFS's plan is included on the Commission's list of approved comprehensive plans, staff will consider the extent to which the project is consistent with the plan in the EA. We note the plan is listed under section 7.0, Comprehensive Plans of this SD2.

Terrestrial Resources

Comment: ***FWS comments on section 3.2.3 Proposed Environmental Measures, that the first bullet point under terrestrial resources indicates that nest buffers for bald eagles would only be implemented in the event that vegetation management is required during the breeding season.***

Response: ***The bullet point FWS references is a proposed measure described in South Sutter's FLA under section 3.3.4.4.2, Effects of Proposed Project Operations and Maintenance. Staff interprets that the proposed measure would apply to all nesting bird species and is separate from the proposed plans developed specifically for protecting nesting bald eagles and great blue herons. We have added a footnote to section 3.2.3 of this SD2 for clarification.***

Threatened and Endangered Species

Comments: ***NMFS anticipates that the Commission will need to consult with NMFS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the following species: Central Valley (CV) spring-run Chinook Salmon evolutionary significant unit (ESU) (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha), California CV (CCV) Steelhead distinct population segment (DPS) (Oncorhynchus mykiss), Southern DPS of North American (NA) Green Sturgeon (Acipenser medirostris), CV fall/late fall-run (fall-run) Chinook Salmon ESU, and their critical or essential fish habitat.***

Response: ***Following issuance of the EA, which will serve as our biological assessment, staff will request concurrence on our determination of effects of the project on listed species and/or initiate formal consultation with NMFS, if necessary.***

Comment: ***NMFS comments that for anticipated ESA consultation, NMFS and FERC must have a shared understanding of the environmental baseline under the ESA, as described in the ESA Consultation Handbook (FWS 1998), for the relicensing of FERC projects. NMFS adds that because the effects of the new license will be added to the environmental baseline to determine the total effect on listed species, it is crucial to understand the effects of all past activities (including effects of past project operation), and the current, ongoing effects of the project that form the environmental baseline. Only then can the effects of the proposed licensing action be evaluated during ESA consultation. NMFS also comments that it is incorrect to conflate the ESA environmental baseline with a NEPA "no-action alternative"— in the ESA context the effect of the actions will be added to the baseline, while in NEPA, the no-action alternative will be compared against the action alternatives.***

Response: ***The EA will address the environmental baseline and any effects to federally listed species based on current ESA regulations.***

***Comment**: NMFS comments that staff's NEPA analysis should not simply describe current operations and facilities of the project as the "no-action alternative" without analysis of the environmental effects of the "no-action alternative"— i.e. a description of the current project does not analyze the current effects of the project.*

***Response**: The EA will describe and discuss how any ongoing effects of continued operation and maintenance of the project, proposed modifications to project operations and facilities as well as any proposed and recommended PM&E measures affect environmental resources, including any federally listed species, in the project-affected area.*

Recreational Resources

***Comment**: The Bussells comment that a nearby casino and planned, future developments in the cities of Lincoln and Roseville will spur increased recreational use at the project reservoir and purchases of land surrounding the project reservoir. Further, the Bussells comment that because the project's North Shore Recreation Area is open year-round, but the project's South Shore Recreation Area is only open seasonally, creating traffic backups as more vehicles attempt to access the North Shore area when the South Shore area is closed. In response to the Bussell's comments, South Sutter argues the casino and future development in the cities of Lincoln and Roseville are miles away from the project, and none of the developments are located on the project reservoir.*

***Response**: Staff note that the EA will analyze the adequacy of existing project recreational access and facilities to meet current and future recreational demand.*

Land Use

***Comment**: The Bussells state that parties, fights, and other activities (e.g. littering, fires, and theft) occur in an area called "the cliffs at Camp Far West Lake" (cliffs), and that deaths have occurred there. The Bussells also state that individuals park their vehicles along McCourtney Road when going to the cliffs area, and access the cliffs area through private property and an area without fencing along the road. The Bussells indicate they contacted Placer County to request that the county install "Park Off Pavement" signs at this location along McCourtney Road. The Bussells comment that Placer County would not install "No Parking" signs unless South Sutter requested the county to install "No Parking" signs.*

***Response**: Based on the Bussell's description of the location of the cliffs area, and staff's review of South Sutter's license application, we conclude that the cliffs area is the inactive Dairy Farm Mine (mine). We note that the license application indicates*

the inactive mine is mostly located on privately-owned property, and it identifies no parties, fights, or deaths having occurred in the project area including the mine site. Further, we note that the Bussells acknowledge that individuals park along McCourtney Road, a public roadway (Placer County Road No. C6037), to access the cliffs area through private property. As such, staff conclude a clear nexus to the project has not been identified related to this issue, because: (1) South Sutter does not control parking or access along McCourtney Road to the private property; (2) the Bussell's comments do not indicate the alleged activities occurred at the portion of the inactive mine that is within the project boundary; and (3) the license application does not indicate the alleged activities occurred anywhere within the project boundary. Therefore, staff will not consider this issue in the EA.

Comment: The Bussells allege that several unidentified property owners, whose lands adjoin the reservoir, have undertaken various construction-related projects and other activities on project property (e.g., dumping excavated materials into the reservoir, installing water conveyance and storage facilities, constructing boat launch ramps) The Bussells comment that these activities could lead to the destruction of Indian artifacts. The Bussells conclude these allegations provide evidence that the project needs to have a shoreline management plan. In response to the Bussell's comments, South Sutter states that the Bussells fail to provide evidence or specify which property owners have undertaken the alleged activities on project property. Additionally, South Sutter comments that the allegations fail to substantiate the need for a SMP, and do not explain why the standard land-use article in the current project license (Article 33) would not adequately cover the alleged issues.

Response: Staff note that the license application does not identify any unauthorized use of project lands or waters, specifically associated with the project's reservoir shoreline. Staff also note that: (1) South Sutter owns 94.8% of the area within the project boundary, around the project reservoir; (2) portions of the project boundary extend 100 feet or more beyond the reservoir shoreline; and (3) certain non-project lands owned by South Sutter extend beyond the project boundary. Further, staff note that the current project license contains standard Article 33 which authorizes South Sutter to grant permission for certain types of use and occupancy of project lands and waters and to convey certain interests in project lands and waters for certain other types of use and occupancy (i.e. Article 33 allows South Sutter to enter agreements with private individuals for use of project land and water). Additionally, staff note that not all of the activities the Bussells allege were claimed to have occurred on the reservoir shoreline, nor was evidence provided that the alleged activities occurred within the project boundary as opposed to other non-project lands owned by South Sutter. As such, based on the types of alleged activities, the existing authorities granted to South Sutter by the current license Article 33, and the lack of evidentiary documentation, staff conclude these issues do not warrant consideration in the EA.

Cultural Resources

Comment: ***The United Auburn Indian Community (UAIC) made four comments involving the identification of historic properties of religious and cultural significance including: (1) assessing and identifying the effects to historic properties involving changes to recreational use or new structures being added to recreational sites, and where the UAIC would like to be involved with identifying work needed for identifying and avoiding such effects; (2) analysis of cumulative and specific impacts to traditional and cultural sites, especially due to the proposed water level raise of the project reservoir, and ways to resolve such effects; (3) ways for involving the UAIC in early consultation; and (4) providing specific plans for the reburial of cultural items of importance to the UAIC that were recovered as part of previous inventory work involving cultural resources.***

Response: ***On July 1, 2019, South Sutter filed a comprehensive historic properties management plan (HPMP) that addresses aspects involving the four UAIC comments above, and where the UAIC participated in a Tribal Interest Study which was incorporated into the HPMP. Overall, the HPMP would be used by South Sutter to manage cultural resources and historic properties for the term of a new license and the UAIC has role in the HPMP as a consulting party. The Commission intends to execute a programmatic agreement (PA) with the California State Historic Preservation Office that would, in turn, implement a final HPMP upon license issuance. The Commission also intends to have the UAIC as a concurring party to the PA and where the UAIC will have another opportunity to review and comment on the PA and HPMP prior to the PA being executed. Commission staff will also be reviewing the HPMP and will consider points raised by the UAIC during our environmental review and subsequent issuance of the EA.***

3.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with NEPA, the environmental analysis will consider the following alternatives, at a minimum: (1) the no-action alternative, (2) the applicant's proposed action, and (3) alternatives to the proposed action.

3.1 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the no-action alternative, the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project would continue to operate as required by the current project license (i.e., there would be no change to the existing environment). No new environmental protection, mitigation, or enhancement measures would be implemented. We use this alternative to establish baseline environmental conditions for comparison with other alternatives.

3.1.1 Existing Project Facilities[7]

The existing project consists of one development that includes: one main dam; one powerhouse with an associated switchyard with a capacity of 6.8 MW; and appurtenant facilities and structures, including recreation facilities and gages. The project has no transmission facilities. The project includes:

- a 185-foot-high, 40-foot-wide, 2,070-foot-long earth-filled dam;
- a 45-foot-high, 20-foot-wide, 1,060-foot-long earth-filled south wing dam;
- a 25-foot-high, 20-foot-wide, 1,460-foot-long, earth-filled north wing dam;
- a 15-foot-high, 20-foot-wide, 1,450-foot-long earth-filled north dike;
- a 2,020-acre reservoir with a storage volume of 104,000 acre-feet at the normal maximum water surface elevation (NMWSE) of 300 feet;[8]
- a spillway with a maximum design capacity of 106,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) at a reservoir elevation of 320 feet with a 15-foot-wide concrete approach apron with the invert at 290 feet, a crest elevation of 300 feet, a 300-foot-long ungated, ogee-type concrete structure, a 77-foot-long downstream concrete chute with concrete sidewalls, and a 302.5-foot single span steel-truss bridge across the spillway crest;
- a 1,200-foot-long, unlined, rock channel that carries spill downstream to the Bear River;
- a 22-foot-high power intake structure with a reinforced concrete ungated vertical

[7] A non-project, 38-foot-high, diversion dam is located approximately 1.3 miles downstream of the project dam, where water is diverted into three non-project canals (about 510 cfs total).

[8] Based on recent topographic and bathymetric surveys, South Sutter determined the reservoir has a maximum surface area of 1,886 acres with a gross storage capacity of about 93,737 acre-feet at NMWSE of 300 feet.

tower intake with openings on three sides, two 10-foot-wide by 14-foot-high and one 10-foot-wide by 10-foot-high, each of which is protected by steel trashracks on 6-inches center;

- a 25-foot-4-inch-high, concrete, ungated vertical intake tower with 7-foot-wide by 8-foot-high openings on three sides, each of which is protected by steel trashracks on 6-inches centers that receives water for the outlet works;
- a 760-foot-long, 8-foot-diameter concrete tunnel through the left abutment of the main dam that conveys water from the power intake to the powerhouse;
- an above ground steel-reinforced, concrete powerhouse with a 6.8-MW, vertical-shaft, Francis-type turbine generator, which discharges to the Bear River at the base of the main dam;
- a 350-foot-long, 48-inch-diameter steel pipe that conveys water from the intake structure to a valve chamber for the outlet works;
- a 400-foot-long, 7.5-foot-diameter concrete-lined horseshoe tunnel that connects the valve chamber to a 48-inch-diameter Howell Bunger outlet valve with a capacity of 500 cfs that discharges directly into the Bear River;
- a fenced switchyard adjacent to the powerhouse;
- two recreation areas with campgrounds, day-use areas, boat ramps, restrooms, and sewage holding ponds; and
- a recreational water system that includes two pumps in the reservoir that deliver water to a treatment facility that is piped to a 60,000-gallon storage tank to supply water to recreation facilities.

3.1.2 Existing Project Recreation Facilities

There are two developed project recreational areas on the Camp Far West Reservoir, both are owned by South Sutter and operated by a private concessionaire. The North Shore Recreation Area (NSRA) is located off of Camp Far West Road in the town of Wheatland, California and open year-round. The South Shore Recreation Area (SSRA) is located off of McCourtney Road in the unincorporated town of Lincoln, California, and is only open from mid-May until September. Both the NSRA and SSRA include family and group campgrounds, day-use and picnic areas, restrooms, boat ramps, water system facilities, entrance stations and stores, roads, and dispersed-use areas.

3.1.3 Existing Project Operation

The existing project provides water to South Sutter's and Camp Far West Irrigation District's (CFWID) service districts. However, South Sutter also operates the project to meet Bear River streamflow requirements and to generate power. South Sutter has historically leased the power generating facilities to the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), which has operated the powerhouse and the switchyard.

The reservoir has a gross storage capacity of 93,737 acre-feet (i.e., storage at NMWSE of 300 feet) and no regulatory minimum pool. The reservoir's usable capacity is 91,237 acre-feet, which is the volume of water in the reservoir between the NMWSE and the reservoir's operational deadpool level, which is at a storage level of 2,500 acre-feet. Releases from the reservoir are made through: (1) the power intake to the powerhouse at the base of the dam; (2) the dam's low-level intake to a 48-inch-diameter outlet valve at the base of the dam; and (3) through an ungated spillway.

The project operates to fill the reservoir early in the season as sufficient water becomes available and spills any excess flows over the existing spillway. Because the reservoir is primarily fed by rainfall-produced runoff, it is difficult to predict the amount of inflow anticipated before the end of the season; therefore, South Sutter retains within the reservoir all of the inflow until the beginning of the irrigation season, except flows required to meet instream flow releases. In most years, the reservoir reaches NMWSE in January when the river basin produces its heaviest runoff, and then NMWSE starts to decline in April or May as releases for irrigation increase. The reservoir reaches its lowest point in mid-October when irrigation deliveries end. The project does not have any dedicated flood control space or associated flood control rules.

The project generates power during the winter and early-spring months when the reservoir is spilling and during the spring and summer months when releases are being made for irrigation and to meet instream flow requirements. Because of the generating unit's operating characteristics, power can only be generated when the elevation of the reservoir's water surface is at or above 236 feet and when reservoir outflow is greater than 130 cfs. If these two criteria cannot be met, water is released through the low-level outlet. This condition normally occurs each year starting in September and continuing into the fall until such time that surplus inflows are available to be passed through the powerhouse.

During the irrigation season, a maximum of 530 cfs passes through the powerhouse in conformance with downstream irrigation and instream requirements. However, during the heavy-runoff period when spilling from the reservoir occurs, a greater quantity of water is routed through the powerhouse up to its maximum hydraulic capacity of 725 cfs. When the reservoir water surface is high enough to send flows over the spillway, all flows up to approximately the physical capacity of the turbine are diverted through the power tunnel. The balance of any flows greater than turbine capacity are passed over the existing spillway.

During normal reservoir releases for furnishing irrigation water, all releases are utilized for power production except under those conditions as described above when the combination of head and flow are outside the operating characteristics of the turbine. During dry periods outside of the irrigation season, reservoir releases can be limited to minimum instream flow requirements, which are at times controlled by inflow per the

existing license. Inflow from the Bear River is measured during the low-flow season by South Sutter in the Bear River immediately upstream of Camp Far West Reservoir.

Operation of the powerhouse is automatic except for start-up, which is done manually. A powerhouse shutdown activates an alarm at SMUD's dispatch center, which requires sending personnel to the site to determine the problem and restart the powerhouse. SMUD receives Renewable Energy Credits for power generated at Camp Far West Powerhouse through the California Energy Commission.

In addition to providing power and downstream water supply, South Sutter pumps water directly from the reservoir to supply water to the project recreation facilities' water treatment plant for project recreation uses and to non-project residences and buildings utilized by the concessionaire's staff. Pumping averages approximately 15.3 acre-feet per year.

3.2 APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

3.2.1 Proposed Project Facilities[9]

South Sutter proposes to maintain all existing facilities with the following modifications:

(1) raise the NMWSE of the project reservoir by 5 feet from an elevation of 300 feet to an elevation of 305 feet;
(2) raise the crest of the existing overflow spillway from an elevation of 300 feet to an elevation of 305 feet to accommodate the proposed pool raise;
(3) replace and restore several recreation facilities;
(4) add an existing 0.25-mile-long road as a primary project road to access the powerhouse and switchyard; and

[9] South Sutter intends to file an application for amending its existing license for the project, which will include a proposal to construct an auxiliary spillway adjacent to the existing overflow spillway. Although described in the license application filed in July 2019, please note that the proposed auxiliary spillway is being considered under a process separate from this relicensing process and coordinated through the Commission's Division of Hydropower Administration and Compliance and the Division of Dam Safety and Inspections. Therefore, any comments related to the proposed auxiliary spillway were not considered during this scoping process.

(5) modify the project boundary to account for the removal of the 1.9-mile-long transmission line from the license in 1991, corrections based on current project operation and maintenance, and changes under the category of a contour 20 feet above the 300-foot NMWSE or proximity of 200-horizontal-feet from the 300-foot NMWSE.

3.2.2 Proposed Project Operations

The proposed pool raise would increase the project's reservoir storage by 9,836 acre-feet to a capacity of 103,573 acre-feet at the reservoir's new NMWSE of 305 feet. Typical reservoir operations are largely unaffected by the increase in available storage under the proposed project. When the pool raise is complete, the proposed auxiliary spillway (see footnote 7 above) in combination with the modified existing spillway will have a combined capacity of 126,600 cfs at a water surface elevation of 318.5 feet. The resulting additional storage in the reservoir would potentially be delivered for water supply in the year when it is stored or carried over for water supply and downstream demand in future years.

The proposed project would not affect the existing powerhouse capability curve, or the powerhouse tailwater-rating curve. There is a slightly greater probability of higher flows in most months, as compared to the No Action Alternative. Average annual project power generation would increase by 443 megawatt hours, with the largest increases occurring in Wet Water Years.

3.2.3 Proposed Environmental Measures

South Sutter proposes the following environmental measures:

Geologic and Soil Resources

- There are no proposed protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures related to geologic and soil resources for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. The potential need for PM&E measures will be evaluated during the relicensing process.

Aquatic and Fisheries Resources

- Determine Water Year (WY) type and use the determination to implement articles and conditions of the license that are dependent on WY type.

- Maintain the seasonal minimum streamflows based on water-year type in the Bear River downstream of the project dam and powerhouse.

- Provide the following fall and spring pulse flows for the Bear River downstream of the project dam and powerhouse:

    - Fall pulse flows would occur in each wet, above normal, and below normal water years in mid-November for a period of three days. In wet water years, a second pulse flow would occur in early December. Fall pulse flows would not occur in in dry and critically dry water years.

    - Spring pulse flows would occur over a 6-day period in April except in wet and above normal water years.

- Implement seasonal target ramping rates when the average hourly release from the project dam is less than 725 cfs from November through May in the Bear River downstream of the project dam.

- Implement target ramping rates during springtime installation of flashboards at non-project diversion dam located immediately downstream of the project dam.

- Conduct fish stranding surveys in the reach downstream of the non-project diversion dam during the first two years of implementation of the targeted ramping rates when flows are reduced for the installation of the flashboards on the non-project diversion dam.

- Implement Best Management Practices (BMP) for project operations and maintenance (O&M) activities to minimize the introduction and spread of non-native, invasive species (aquatic and terrestrial) including cleaning equipment prior to arriving to work sites.[10]

[10] In its license application, South Sutter discusses environmental measures (section 3.3.3.2) and BMPs (section 3.3.4.4.2) to control non-native, invasive species. However, it's unclear if South Sutter proposes to include these measures and BMPs as part of its application as they are not included in Appendix E2 *South Sutter's Proposed Measures*. In addition, it's unclear as to which specific BMPs are proposed.

Terrestrial Resources

- Conduct nest surveys and establish buffer zones around identified, active nests if any vegetation management requires removal of vegetation during the nesting season for birds.[11]

- Implement its Bald Eagle Management Plan that includes provisions to:

  - conduct eagle nest surveys by boat in the project reservoir in the first calendar year after license issuance and every 10 years during the term of the new license;

  - establish 0.25-mile-radius buffer zones with limited operating periods for project activities from January 1 to August 31 around ***all documented*** active eagle nests; and

  - placement of signs and barriers to designate and prohibit access (pedestrian, watercraft, etc.) to buffer zones.

- Implement its Great Blue Heron Rookery Management Plan that would include establishing a 500-foot-radius buffer zone around the existing heron rookery on the south shore of the project reservoir with limited operating periods from March 15 to July 31 each year and designating the buffer zone using barriers to discourage access and signs.

Threatened and Endangered Species Resources

- There are no proposed PM&E measures related to threatened and endangered species for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. The potential need for PM&E measures will be evaluated during the relicensing process.

Recreation Resources

- Implement the Recreation Facilities Plan, within 1 year of license issuance, to maintain, rehabilitate, and upgrade existing project recreational facilities during the term of the new license.

[11] South Sutter describes this proposed measure in section 3.3.4.4.2 of the FLA. Staff interprets that the proposed measure would apply to all nesting bird species and is separate from the proposed plans developed specifically for protecting nesting bald eagles and great blue herons.

Land Use and Aesthetic Resources

- There are no proposed PM&E measures related to land use and aesthetic resources for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. The potential need for PM&E measures will be evaluated during the relicensing process.

Cultural Resources

- Develop and implement its final Historic Properties Management Plan, in consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office and involved Indian tribes, that would include treatment measures for managing historic properties under the new license.

3.3 DAM SAFETY

It is important to note that dam safety constraints may exist and should be taken into consideration in the development of proposals and alternatives considered in the pending proceeding. For example, proposed modifications to the dam structure, such as the addition of flashboards or fish passage facilities, could impact the integrity of the dam structure. As the proposal and alternatives are developed, the applicant must evaluate the effects and ensure that the project would meet the Commission's dam safety criteria found in Part 12 of the Commission's regulations and the Engineering Guidelines (http://www.ferc.gov/industries/hydropower/safety/guidelines/eng-guide.asp).

3.4 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

Commission staff will consider and assess all alternative recommendations for operational or facility modifications, as well as protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures identified by us, the agencies, Indian tribes, NGOs, and the public.

3.5 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

At present, we propose to eliminate the following alternative from detailed study in the EA.

3.5.1 Project Decommissioning

Decommissioning of the project could be accomplished with or without removal of project facilities. Either alternative would require denying the relicense application and surrender or termination of the existing license with appropriate conditions. There would be additional costs involved with decommissioning the project and/or removing

any project facilities. The project would provide a viable, safe, and clean renewable source of power to the region. With decommissioning, the project would no longer be authorized to generate power.

No party has suggested that project decommissioning would be appropriate in this case, and we have no basis for recommending it. Thus, we do not consider project decommissioning a reasonable alternative to relicensing the project with appropriate environmental enhancement measures.

3.5.2 Federal Government Takeover

In accordance with § 16.14 of the Commission's regulations, a federal department or agency may file a recommendation that the United States exercise its right to take over a hydroelectric power project with a license that is subject to Sections 14 and 15 of the FPA.[12] We do not consider federal takeover to be a reasonable alternative. Federal takeover of the project would require congressional approval. While that fact alone would not preclude further consideration of this alternative, there is currently no evidence showing that federal takeover should be recommended to Congress. No party has suggested that federal takeover would be appropriate, and no federal agency has expressed interest in operating the project.

3.5.3 Non-power License

A non-power license is a temporary license the Commission would terminate whenever it determines that another governmental agency is authorized and willing to assume regulatory authority and supervision over the lands and facilities covered by the non-power license. At this time, no governmental agency has suggested a willingness or ability to take over the project. No party has sought a non-power license, and we have no basis for concluding that the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project should no longer be used to produce power. Thus, we do not consider a non-power license a reasonable alternative to relicensing the project.

[12] 16 U.S.C. §§ 791(a)-825(r).

4.0 SCOPE OF RESOURCE ISSUES

4.1 RESOURCE ISSUES

In this section, we present a preliminary list of environmental issues to be addressed in the NEPA document.[13] We have identified these issues, which are listed by resource area, by reviewing the license application and the Commission's record for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. This list is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but contains those issues raised to date that could have substantial effects. After the scoping process is complete, we will review the list and determine the appropriate level of analysis needed to address each issue.

4.1.1 Geologic and Soil Resources

- Effects of the proposed pool raise and continued project operations on shoreline erosion and ***the transport of sediment and large woody material*** in the Bear River downstream of the project.

4.1.2 Water Resources

- Effects of proposed project operations on water quality (water temperature, dissolved oxygen) and water quantity (instream flow) in the Bear River downstream of the project.

- Effects of the proposed pool raise on water quality (water temperature, dissolved oxygen) and water quantity (project storage) in Camp Far West Reservoir.

- ***Effects of project operation on groundwater levels in the project area.***

4.1.3 Aquatic and Fisheries Resources

- Effects of the proposed pool raise on aquatic habitat and fisheries resources in Camp Far West Reservoir.

- Effects of proposed project operations on aquatic habitat and fisheries resources, including ***the escapement and outmigration of*** anadromous

[13] Per the CEQ's final rule (July 15, 2020), Commission staff will consider and evaluate effects that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship (proximate cause) to the proposed action or alternatives.

fish species ***and the benthic macroinvertebrate community*** in the Bear River downstream of the project.

- ***Effects of proposed and continued project operations on essential fish habitat protected under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for Chinook salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha), California Central Valley, fall-run Evolutionary Significant Unit in the Bear River extending upstream to approximately the Camp Far West dam and in areas downstream in the Feather and Sacramento Rivers, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.***

- Effects of continued project operation on aquatic resources, including entrainment mortality of resident fish in the Bear River at the non-project diversion dam or in Camp Far West Reservoir***, as well as fish passage, hydrologic and geomorphic effects of the non-project diversion dam***.

- Effects of proposed and continuing project O&M on the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.

4.1.4 Terrestrial Resources

- Effects of proposed and continuing project O&M on botanical and wildlife resources including effects associated with vegetation management, herbicide/pesticide use, and the introduction and spread of non-native, invasive plant species.

- Effects of proposed and continuing project O&M on riparian vegetation and wildlife downstream of the project dam.

- Effects of continued project recreation activities on botanical and wildlife resources including special-status species.

- Effects of the proposed reservoir pool raise on sensitive natural communities,[14] wetlands, special-status plants, and wildlife habitat including effects associated with any inundation of shoreline habitat and riparian habitat in the Bear River and Rock Creek.

[14] Sensitive natural communities are vegetation communities that have been evaluated using standardized methodology to calculate a conservation status rank based on knowledge of the community's distribution, rarity, trends, and threats.

- Effects of continued project O&M**, *project-related recreation, vegetation management,*** and proposed renovations to the project recreation areas on bats and nesting birds including nesting bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*), and other special-status species.

4.1.5 Threatened and Endangered Species

- Effects of proposed project construction, continued project O&M, and recreation activities on federally listed species and critical habitat as follows. [15]

  Endangered Species
  - Hartweg's golden sunburst (*Pseudobahia bahiifolia*)
  - Pine Hill flannelbush (*Fremontodendron decumbens*)
  - Stebbins' morning-glory (*Calystegia stebbinsii*)
  - Conservancy fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta conservatio*)
  - Vernal pool tadpole shrimp (*Lepidurus packardi*) and critical habitat

  Threatened Species
  - Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), California Central Valley DPS and critical habitat
  - Chinook salmon, California Central Valley spring-run Evolutionarily Significant Unit and critical habitat
  - Green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*), North American Southern DPS ***and critical habitat***
  - Delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*)
  - Layne's ragwort (*Packera layneae*)
  - Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) and critical habitat
  - California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and critical habitat
  - Giant garter snake (*Thamnophis gigas*)
  - Valley elderberry longhorn beetle (*Desmocerus californicus dimorphus*)

[15] In its license application, South Sutter eliminated from further consideration: the Delta smelt, giant garter snake, and yellow-billed cuckoo because the project is located outside the ranges of these species; and the Pine Hill flannelbush, Stebbins' morning-glory, Layne's ragwort, and Conservancy fairy shrimp based on the absence of suitable habitat for these species.

- Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), Western U.S. Distinct Population Segment, (DPS)

4.1.6 Recreational Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on recreational access and use.

- Adequacy of existing recreational access and facilities to meet current and future recreational demand.

4.1.7 Land Use and Aesthetic Resources

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on land use in the project area.

- Effects of project operation and maintenance on visual quality of the project area.

4.1.8 Cultural Resources

- Effects of continued project operation on historic or archaeological resources, or traditional cultural properties that may be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

4.1.9 Developmental Resources

- Effects of the proposed and alternatives, including any environmental, protection, mitigation, and enhancement measures, on project economics.

5.0 EA PREPARATION SCHEDULE

The major milestones, including those for preparing the EA, are as follows:

Major Milestone	Target Date
Issue Scoping Document 2	March 16, 2021
Issue Ready for Environmental Analysis Notice	March 16, 2021
Deadline for Filing Comments, Recommendations and Agency Terms and Conditions/Prescriptions	May 17, 2021
Licensee Files Reply to REA Comments	June 29, 2021
Commission Issues Draft EA	January 2022

6.0 PROPOSED EA OUTLINE

The preliminary outline for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project EA is as follows:

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7.0 COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Section 10(a)(2) of the FPA, 16 U.S.C. Section 803(a)(2)(A), requires the Commission to consider the extent to which a project is consistent with federal or state comprehensive plans for improving, developing, or conserving a waterway or waterways affected by a project. Staff have preliminary identified and reviewed the plans listed below that may be relevant to the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project. Agencies are requested to review this list and inform Commission staff of any changes. If there are other comprehensive plans that should be considered for this list that are not on file with the Commission, or if there are more recent versions of the plans already listed, they can be filed for consideration with the Commission according to 18 CFR Section 2.19 of the Commission's regulations. Please follow the instructions for filing a plan at http://www.ferc.gov/industries/hydropower/gen-info/licensing/complan.pdf.

The following is a list of comprehensive plans currently on file with the Commission that may be relevant to the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project.

California Department of Fish and Game. 2007. California Wildlife: Conservation Challenges, California's Wildlife Action Plan. Sacramento, California. 2007.

California Department of Fish and Game. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. National Marine Fisheries Service. Bureau of Reclamation. 1988. Cooperative agreement to implement actions to benefit winter-run Chinook salmon in the Sacramento River Basin. Sacramento, California. May 20, 1988.

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California Department of Fish and Game. 1993. Restoring Central Valley Streams: A Plan for Action. Sacramento, California. November 1993.

California Department of Fish and Game. 1996. Steelhead Restoration and Management Plan for California. February 1996.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2003. Strategic Plan for Trout Management: A Plan for 2004 and Beyond. Sacramento, California. November 2003.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2008. California Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan. Sacramento, California. January 18, 2008.

California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1998. Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California. Sacramento, California. March 1998.

California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1980. Recreation Outlook in Planning District 3. Sacramento, California. June 1980. 82 pp.

California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1994. California Outdoor Recreation Plan. Sacramento, California. April 1994.

California State Water Resources Control Board. 2018. Bay-Delta Plan: Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary. Sacramento, California. December 2018.

California State Water Resources Control Board. 2018. Water Quality Control Plan for the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Basins and Appendices. Sacramento, California. May 2018.

California - The Resources Agency. 1989. Upper Sacramento River Fisheries and Riparian Habitat Management Plan. Sacramento, California. January 1989.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 2014. Recovery Plan for the Evolutionary Significant Units of Sacramento River Winter-run Chinook salmon and Central Valley Spring-run Chinook salmon and the Distinct Population Segment of California Central Valley steelhead. Sacramento, California. July 2014.

National Marine Fisheries Service. 2018. Final Recovery Plan for the Southern Distinct Population of North American Green Sturgeon. Sacramento, California.

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Pacific Fishery Management Council. 1988. Eighth Amendment to the Fishery Management Plan for Commercial and Recreational Salmon Fisheries off the Coasts of Washington, Oregon and California Commencing in 1978. Portland, Oregon. January 1988.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1990. Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture Implementation Plan: A Component of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. February 1990.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2001. Final Restoration Plan for the Anadromous Fish Restoration Program. Department of the Interior, Sacramento, California. January 9, 2001.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Canadian Wildlife Service. 1986. North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Department of the Interior. Environment Canada. May 1986.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. n.d. Fisheries USA: The Recreational Fisheries Policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, D.C.

8.0 MAILING LIST

The list below is the Commission's official mailing list for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2997. If you want to receive future mailings for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project from the Commission and are not included in the list below, please send your request by email to FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or by mail to: Kimberly D. Bose, Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street, N.E., Room 1A, Washington, DC 20426. All written and emailed requests to be added to the Commission's mailing list must clearly identify the following on the first page: Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project FERC No. 2997-031. You may use the same method if requesting removal from the mailing list below.

Register online at http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, (202) 502-8659

Entities on the Official Mailing List for the Camp Far West Hydroelectric Project

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