

# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed

### Existing Conditions & Uses

#### Overview

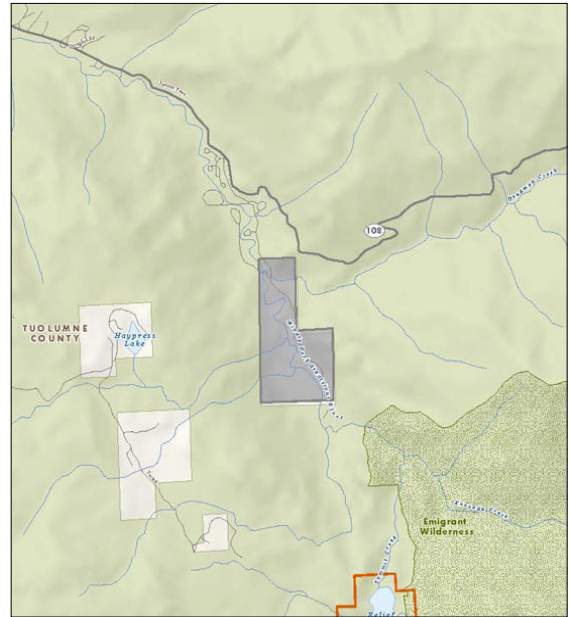
- Scenic high sierra meadow, forest, and native cottonwood habitat; 244 acres in Tuolumne County
- Historic pack station providing access to the Emigrant Wilderness
- All acres currently outside FERC boundary<sup>1</sup>
- Associated with the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project (FERC #2130); expect new hydroelectric license in 2007

Kennedy Meadows provides important outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat in the remote upper elevations of the Sierra Nevada. The property is located in Tuolumne County along Highway 108, just 57 miles east of Sonora and 50 miles south of South Lake Tahoe, at approximately 6,500 feet elevation. Most of the planning unit is surrounded by USFS Stanislaus National Forest (see Figure SR-1). The USFS Emigrant Wilderness is located less than 0.5 mile to the southeast of the planning unit.

The parcel is bisected by the Middle Fork Stanislaus River (MFSR) and is predominately



Kennedy Meadows Pack Station lodge



Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit  
Tuolumne County

forested, interspersed with open meadows. The 12-mile segment of the MFSR from Relief Reservoir to Clark Fork, including the segment of the MFSR that runs through this planning unit, has been proposed for “recreational” Wild and Scenic River classification by USFS.

#### Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The native black cottonwood woodland, conifer forest, and meadow habitats are home to several special status wildlife species. Kennedy Meadows contains habitat for mountain yellow-legged frog and historical habitat for Yosemite toad, as well as willow flycatcher and yellow warbler. The upper elevation mixed conifer with late successional stands supports other special status species such as northern goshawk, American marten, and Swainson’s thrush. There is also potentially suitable foraging habitat for the great gray owl, although no sightings have been documented. Surveys on adjacent lands have identified several species of bats that may also be present at Kennedy Meadows.

PG&E conducted relicensing surveys of the area in recent years and documented observations of the following: American dipper, spotted



# Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit Existing Conditions

- PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Retention
  - PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Disposition
  - BIA
  - BLM
  - BOR
  - DOD
  - NPS
  - Other/NGO
  - State
  - USFS
  - Federal Wilderness
  - Boat Launch
  - Campground
  - Dam
  - Day Use
  - Feature of Importance
  - Fishing
  - Fish Barrier Dam
  - Gate
  - Lodging
  - Non-Motorized Boating
  - Parking
  - Powerhouse
  - Private Camp
  - Ranch
  - Trailhead
  - Whitewater Put-In/Take-Out
  - FERC Boundary
  - Stream / River
  - Canal / Ditch
  - Pipeline
  - Highly Valued Stream
  - Primary Roads
  - Secondary Roads
  - OHV Roads
  - Trail
- All symbols may not appear on the map

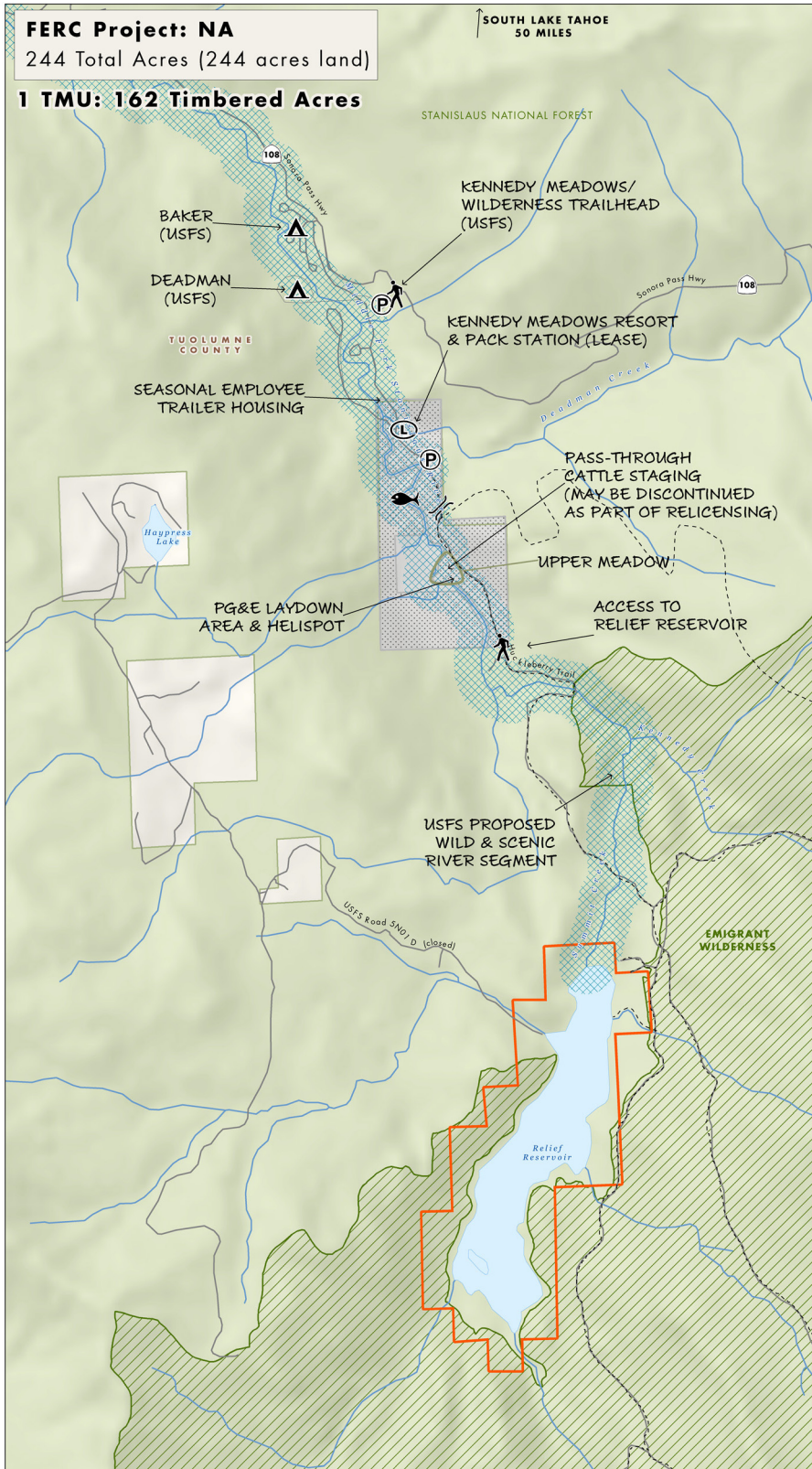


Figure SR-1



# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed

sandpiper, mountain quail, red-breasted sapsucker, warbling vireo, brown creeper, hermit thrush, Nashville warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, black-throated gray warbler, Macgillivray's warbler, black-headed grosbeak, and mule deer. The Stanislaus mule deer herd is also known to use summer range in this area.

Riparian vegetation occurs between Kennedy Meadows and the confluence of the MFSR and the Clark Fork. Black cottonwood, mountain alder, and red osier dogwood are the dominant riparian species along this stretch of the MFSR. Relicensing studies for botanical resources identified concerns about riparian vegetation and bank stability at Kennedy Meadows, particularly the absence of young age classes of cottonwood trees along the MFSR banks. In addition, USFS has noted observations of the noxious weed cheatgrass at Kennedy Meadows, and has expressed concerns about the potential for this species to spread into the adjacent Emigrant Wilderness.

Although the new License Order has not yet been issued for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project, the Final EIS for this project included measures to develop a detailed, three-phased plan for stabilizing banks and restoring riparian vegetation in the Kennedy Meadows section of the MFSR. The FERC Final EIS also included provisions for monitoring the effects of grazing at Kennedy Meadows on cottonwood recruitment and survival. Additionally, PG&E is developing a management plan that will address the spreading of manure in the upper meadow.

### Open Space

The planning unit lands are largely undeveloped and set in the vast untouched region of the Stanislaus National Forest. The area is remote and provides access to pristine wilderness areas. Tuolumne County designates this region as "Parks and Recreation," as it provides for commercial recreational uses to serve the tourist industry as well as leisure activities for county residents. The Tuolumne County General Plan does not expect current land use to intensify.

### Outdoor Recreation

Kennedy Meadows provides access for recreational users seeking a wilderness experience and activities such as equestrian riding, camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, and backpacking. An equestrian pack station has operated at Kennedy Meadows on a seasonal basis since 1917, providing trail access to the adjacent lands. The Kennedy Meadows Pack Station has provided generations of visitors the opportunity to access the adjacent wilderness, including small children, the elderly, and people with disabilities who may not be able to access the area on foot. The current pack operation is located on 160 acres of leased PG&E lands and consists of approximately 27 buildings, including barns, rental cabins, a small lodge, a saloon, various outbuildings, and several corrals. Some 21,000 visitors are estimated to visit the Kennedy Meadows area annually, with an estimated 14,000 vacationers staying at the pack station and about 1,500 taking horsepacking trips from the pack station. Long-distance hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail also use the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station as a resupply point. A recent fire on October 1, 2007 damaged several structures at the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station including the main lodge building (including its store and restaurant), several cabins and other buildings. However, the saloon, barn, over half of the cabins, and many other structures remain standing.



Upper wet meadow (looking south)

# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed



Fishing along the Middle Fork Stanislaus River

Primitive recreation experiences are moderated by the large volume of visitation and horses on area trails. The lessee provides various guided horseback trips into the adjacent Emigrant Wilderness, as well as cabins at the pack station for overnight visits. The Huckleberry Trail, which runs through this planning unit, provides public access to the wilderness as well as to Relief Reservoir. There are also several USFS campgrounds located north of the planning unit as well as a large USFS parking area available to recreation users entering the Emigrant Wilderness.

The section of the MFSR running through the planning unit provides popular fishing access. This section of the MFSR is relatively low gradient and contains substantial gravel bars and a much wider and flatter floodplain than downstream reaches of the MFSR. This reach is heavily stocked with rainbow trout; brown trout were also identified during recent relicensing surveys.

### Forest Resources

The Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit is contained within one PG&E Timber Management Unit (TMU) containing 162 timbered acres. This TMU is managed by PG&E for Multiple-Use management, including sustained timber production. Protection and uses of other resources and facilities, however, may preclude

sustained timber management as the highest and best use of portions of the TMU.

### Agricultural Uses

Although grazing is not regularly practiced on the properties at Kennedy Meadows, PG&E allows an adjacent grazing lessee (to the USFS) to stage cattle in Kennedy Meadows for two days on the way into the USFS allotment and up to one week on the way out. During recent relicensing studies, some concerns were identified regarding the potential impacts of this existing practice on cottonwood recruitment and survival; as a result, PG&E is considering prohibiting pass-through staging, as well as horse grazing, in the upper meadow.

### Historic Resources

Lands in the vicinity of Kennedy Meadows are rich in cultural and historic resources. For hundreds of years, the Miwok<sup>2</sup> and other native people traveled, traded, hunted, and fished the area. While the Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit has not been surveyed to date, extensive studies of nearby FERC licensed project areas indicate that there is a high probability of cultural resources. In addition, the Kennedy Meadows Resort and many of the associated recreation residences were built prior to 1950 and may be eligible for historical status.



Upper dry meadow & riparian forest along the river



# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed

### Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses at Kennedy Meadows be preserved and enhanced by focusing on unique habitat values, opportunities to preserve and enhance the popular recreation experience, and protection of the historic and cultural values of the region. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here (see Figure SR-2), our objective is to preserve this unique ecosystem while also providing appropriate recreational opportunities. We recommend this effort be conducted in close coordination with PG&E and the implementation of pending FERC relicensing requirements for the area. The following recommendations will need to be re-evaluated given the recent fire at the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station.

**Objective: Preserve and enhance biological and cultural resources, as well as enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management.**

As shown on Table SR-1, The Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for Kennedy Meadows. 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 the planning unit.

### Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

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



Middle Fork Stanislaus River (looking north)

Kennedy Meadows is a small and special habitat area in a vast region of largely pristine wilderness. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat and resources found here, as well as the recreational experience that is interconnected with this natural environment, the Stewardship Council recommends that baseline studies and plans be developed to gain a clear understanding of the resources. 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 encourage close coordination with the USFS and other resource-focused organizations working in the region, and that all planning be considered in conjunction with fuels, forest, and recreation management plans.

### Open Space

**Objective: Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, the wilderness character of the region, and the recreation setting.**

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

# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed

open space values, including the level of uses allowed and the requirement to maintain scenic qualities.

### Outdoor Recreation

**Objective: Enhance recreational facilities and operations in order to provide additional public access, education, and recreation opportunities consistent with the carrying capacity of the area.**

Kennedy Meadows is an extremely popular recreation area – so much so that it runs the risk of being “loved to death” with so many visitors and equestrian trips originating from the pack station. However, the Stewardship Council believes that by improving existing facilities and providing additional facilities, this parcel can provide sustainable recreation for years to come.

As a starting point, the Stewardship Council recommends that appropriate recreational studies be undertaken to evaluate existing use, carrying capacity, projected use, and latent demand, followed by the development of a recreation management plan. These studies, including consultation with relevant agencies, would provide information about visitor needs and determine if and how existing recreation uses could be improved to protect resources and enhance the recreation experience. Recreation studies would also indicate if recommended



Equestrian trail ride, Kennedy Meadows Pack Station

facilities, such as trails and day use facilities, are in demand and if they would be feasible given the carrying capacity of the area. In addition, the Stewardship Council recommends that special consideration be given to youth education opportunities at the site.

The Stewardship Council is aware that certain aspects of the current operation at Kennedy Meadows detract from the recreational experience and may impact natural resources. For example, the existing power source for the pack station is an on-site diesel generator. We recommend that alternatives to this be explored to minimize noise levels and take advantage of renewable energy technology. In addition, reduction of horse manure on trails should also be considered to provide cleaner trail conditions and enhance the visitor experience. In addition, parking facilities should be closely evaluated to ensure resources are not being impacted. These types of facility and/or operational changes would require close coordination with any on-site lessee.

### 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.**

Although forest resources at Kennedy Meadows are limited by the size of the property, 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 fuels and forest management plans should be developed in conjunction with the noxious weed and wildlife and habitat management plans. We expect that all of these plans would be developed in coordination with adjacent USFS and lessee management and practices as appropriate.



# KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT

## Stanislaus River Watershed

### Agricultural Uses

**Objective: Preserve and enhance pass-through grazing practices in order to support ongoing ranching activity, if this can be accomplished in balance with ensuring appropriate protection of natural resources.**

While pass-through grazing is the only active agricultural use on the planning unit, recent concerns voiced about this practice require further investigation. The Stewardship Council recommends that the future management consider this issue and work closely with PG&E, as appropriate, particularly if the new FERC license requires studies and/or monitoring. If PG&E decides to eliminate the pass-through grazing practice rather than monitor the effects of grazing on streambank stability, further consideration may be required to provide access to grazing allotments on adjacent USFS properties.



Middle Fork Stanislaus River

### Preservation of Historic Values

**Objective: Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection, as well as to support opportunities for public education.**

The Kennedy Meadows area has not been surveyed for cultural resources and therefore, little is known about the cultural resources at the site. Extensive studies of nearby lands, however, indicate that there is a high probability of cultural resources. Additionally, portions of the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station may also be eligible for historical status. 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 at Kennedy Meadows, that appropriate management plans be developed and implemented, and that opportunities to support public education regarding cultural resources be considered.

Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Some acreage, including the Huckleberry Trail (see Figure SR-1), may be added to the FERC boundary as part of a current relicensing process.

<sup>2</sup> The Central Sierra Miwok Tribe were the most recent Native American occupants of this area.

KENNEDY MEADOWS PLANNING UNIT  
**Stanislaus River Watershed**

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**Table SR-1 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept**

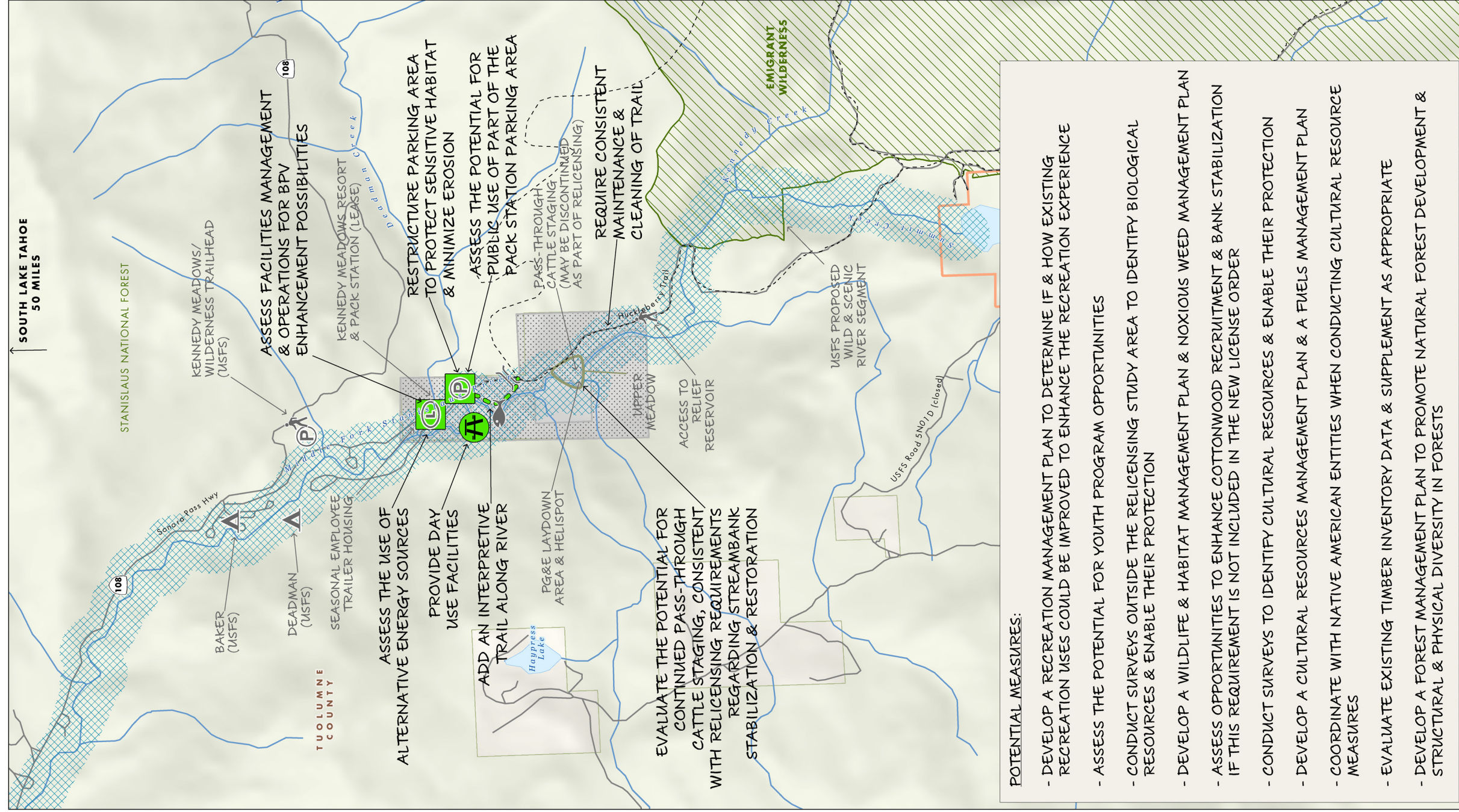
Planning Unit Objective: Preserve and enhance biological and cultural resources, as well as enhance recreation opportunities and sustainable forestry management.		
Beneficial Public Value	Objective	Potential Measures to Preserve and/or Enhance BPVs – Not Requirements*
Protection of the Natural Habitat of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants	<b>Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct surveys outside the relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection.</li> <li>• Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.</li> <li>• Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit.</li> <li>• Assess opportunities to enhance cottonwood recruitment and bank stabilization if this requirement is not included in the New License Order.</li> <li>• Restructure parking area to protect sensitive habitat and minimize erosion.**</li> </ul>
Preservation of Open Space	<b>Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, the wilderness character of the region, and the recreation setting.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.</li> </ul>
Outdoor Recreation by the General Public	<b>Enhance recreational facilities and operations in order to provide additional public access, education, and recreation opportunities consistent with the carrying capacity of the area.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a recreation management plan for Kennedy Meadows to determine if and how existing recreation uses could be improved to enhance the recreation experience.</li> <li>• Provide day use facilities including picnic tables that provide scenic river or mountain views.</li> <li>• Add an interpretive trail along the river.**</li> <li>• Assess the potential for public use of part of the pack station parking area.**</li> <li>• Assess facilities management and operations for BPV enhancement possibilities.**</li> <li>• Assess the use of alternative energy sources at the pack station.**</li> <li>• Require consistent maintenance and cleaning of the trail to enhance the recreation experience.**</li> <li>• Assess the potential for youth program opportunities.</li> </ul>
Sustainable Forestry	<b>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.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate existing timber inventory data and supplement as appropriate.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Develop a fuels management plan to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.</li> </ul>
Agricultural Uses	<b>Preserve and enhance pass-through grazing practices in order to support ongoing ranching activity, if this can be accomplished in balance with ensuring appropriate protection of natural resources.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate the potential for continued pass-through cattle staging in the Upper Meadow, consistent with relicensing requirements regarding streambank stabilization and restoration.**</li> </ul>
Preservation of Historic Values	<b>Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection, as well as to support opportunities for public education.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.</li> <li>• Develop a cultural resources management plan for the planning unit.</li> <li>• Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.</li> </ul>

\* 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.



# Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit Recommended Concept



- POTENTIAL MEASURES:**
- DEVELOP A RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN TO DETERMINE IF & HOW EXISTING RECREATION USES COULD BE IMPROVED TO ENHANCE THE RECREATION EXPERIENCE
  - ASSESS THE POTENTIAL FOR YOUTH PROGRAM OPPORTUNITIES
  - CONDUCT SURVEYS OUTSIDE THE RELICENSING STUDY AREA TO IDENTIFY BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES & ENABLE THEIR PROTECTION
  - DEVELOP A WILDLIFE & HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN & NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT PLAN
  - ASSESS OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE COTTONWOOD RECRUITMENT & BANK STABILIZATION IF THIS REQUIREMENT IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE NEW LICENSE ORDER
  - CONDUCT SURVEYS TO IDENTIFY CULTURAL RESOURCES & ENABLE THEIR PROTECTION
  - DEVELOP A CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN & A FUELS MANAGEMENT PLAN
  - COORDINATE WITH NATIVE AMERICAN ENTITIES WHEN CONDUCTING CULTURAL RESOURCE MEASURES
  - EVALUATE EXISTING TIMBER INVENTORY DATA & SUPPLEMENT AS APPROPRIATE
  - DEVELOP A FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN TO PROMOTE NATURAL FOREST DEVELOPMENT & STRUCTURAL & PHYSICAL DIVERSITY IN FORESTS



- PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Retention
- PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Disposition
- BIA
- BLM
- BOR
- DOD
- NPS
- Other/NGO
- State
- USFS
- Federal Wilderness
- Concept Features**
  - Modify Existing Feature
  - New Feature
- Existing Features**
  - Boat Launch
  - Campground
  - Dam
  - Day Use
  - Feature of Importance
  - Fishing
  - Fish Barrier Dam
  - Gate
  - Lodging
  - Non-Motorized Boating
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  - Private Camp
  - Ranch
  - Trailhead
  - Whitewater Put-In/Take-Out
  - FERC Boundary
  - Stream / River
  - Canal / Ditch
  - Pipeline
  - Primary Roads
  - Secondary Roads
  - OHV Roads
  - Trail

All symbols may not appear on the map

**PRELIMINARY SET OF RECOMMENDED POSSIBILITIES -NOT REQUIREMENTS**

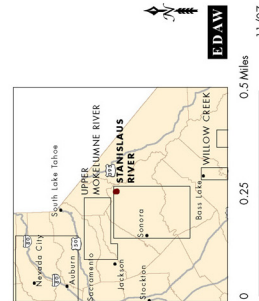


Figure SR-2



## Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit

The following recommendations will need to be re-evaluated given the recent fire at the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station.

### 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.*

Although forest resources are present on the lands in this planning unit, its small size makes substantial timber harvesting unlikely. Riparian and meadow habitat, sedimentation considerations, as well as the potential for conflicts with recreation uses in this area were also taken into consideration. The Stewardship Council recommends developing a forest management plan for the planning unit through the evaluation of existing forest inventory data and supplemental information, when appropriate. In addition to supporting natural forest development, the forest management plan would promote holistic watershed management, supporting the enhancement of other BPVs over the long term. The forest management plan would be compatible with existing recreation uses as well as recommended habitat enhancement measures and cultural resource protection goals. This plan should be completed in coordination with the fuels, noxious weed, and wildlife and habitat management plans.

#### Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.*

Although the wildfire hazard in this area is relatively low, the Stewardship Council recommends the development of a fuels management plan. The fuels management plan would ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit. Coordination with adjacent USFS management would foster a holistic approach to the forest, habitat, and recreation resources in this area. As part of the existing lease for the Kennedy Meadows Resort, the lessee is required to perform fuels management in areas around buildings and structures. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends only performing fuels management in areas not already managed by the lessee and coordinating development of the fuels management plan with the lessee.

### 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. Recommendations include only minor additions of recreation facilities and are not expected to decrease the scenic quality of the viewsheds.

## **Preservation of Historic Values**

### **Potential Measures:**

- *Conduct surveys of the planning unit to identify cultural resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a cultural resources management plan for the planning unit.*
- *Coordinate with Native American entities when conducting cultural resource measures.*

Since the Kennedy Meadows area was not surveyed for cultural resources as part of the recent relicensing, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of the planning unit to identify cultural resources and enable their protection. Given that many of the buildings associated with the Kennedy Meadows Resort were constructed prior to 1950, they may also be eligible for historical status and protection. Documentation of cultural sites should be coordinated with local Native American entities. Assuming that recommended surveys identify cultural sites within the planning unit, the Stewardship Council recommends developing a cultural resources management plan for the planning unit to ensure that cultural resources are provided adequate protection in the future. The plan would include appropriate measures for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of cultural resources (archaeological and historical), as well as traditional use areas. Treatment measures could include avoidance, specific protective measures (e.g., fencing), site monitoring, and methods to preserve, restore, or enhance cultural resource values through conservation easements, management agreements, or through public interpretation and education programs. Development of the cultural resources management plan should be coordinated with local Native American entities.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a recreation management plan for Kennedy Meadows to determine if and how existing recreation uses could be improved to enhance the recreation experience.*

Kennedy Meadows is so popular that it runs the risk of being “loved to death” with so many visitors and equestrian trips originating from the pack station. By improving existing facilities and providing additional facilities, this parcel can provide sustainable recreation for years to come. Since Kennedy Meadows receives a high volume of visitors in the summer, recommendations include recreation studies such as existing use, carrying capacity, projected use, and latent demand surveys, followed by the development of a recreation management plan. These studies, along with consultation with relevant agencies, would provide information about visitor needs and determine if and how existing recreation uses could be improved to protect resources and enhance the recreation experience. Recreation studies would also indicate if recommended facilities, such as trails, day use facilities, and additional interpretive signage, are in demand and if they would be feasible given the carrying capacity of the area.



### **Potential Measures:**

- *Provide day use facilities including picnic tables that provide scenic river or mountain views.*
- *Add an interpretive trail along the river.*

The pack station currently provides 20 cabins for overnight visitation, and there are several USFS campgrounds nearby. The Stewardship Council recommends providing day use facilities including picnic tables and a short trail to serve these visitors. Interpretive signage on the trail could educate visitors regarding topics such as the history of water storage the area; habitat values of the meadows, forest, Middle Fork Stanislaus River (MFSR), and nearby wilderness; pack station and pioneer history; and Native American history in the area, thereby enhancing the overall visitor experience. The USFS Central Stanislaus Watershed Analysis noted that as a highly visited area, this landscape has excellent potential for expanding interpretation and education. Installing interpretive signage along a trail or by the MFSR would take advantage of this opportunity. Picnic tables would be sited at places along the trail and within the parcel that could provide scenic river or mountain views. These facilities would disperse use throughout the parcel and away from the trailhead pack station area, which currently receives the most concentrated use.

### **Potential Measure:**

- *Assess the potential for youth program opportunities.*

Due to the outstanding opportunities to see and learn about varied habitats, endangered species, cultural resources, and nearby wilderness values, there are excellent opportunities to educate youth on a variety of topics within the planning unit. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends assessing the potential for youth programs. Programs could teach youth about topics such as wildlife and botanical resources, including threatened and endangered species, as well as cultural resources and the heritage of the area.

### **Potential Measures:**

- *Assess facilities management and operations for BPV enhancement possibilities.*
- *Assess the use of alternative energy sources at the pack station.*
- *Require consistent maintenance and cleaning of the trail to enhance the recreation experience.*

The Stewardship Council would assess lease facilities management and operations for BPV enhancement possibilities to ensure that protection and enhancement of all existing values is being met. For example, the existing pack station operations may have the potential to be enhanced in terms of energy use, trail maintenance, and parking. The current power source for the pack station is an on-site diesel generator. Alternative energy sources such as solar panels or burning biomass would be explored to minimize noise levels from the generator as well as provide an educational opportunity for visitors on the subject of renewable energy technology. Altering the energy source at the pack station would need to be coordinated with the lessee. Reduction of horse manure on trails would also be required to provide cleaner trail conditions and thereby enhance the visitor experience, particularly for those hiking in the area. As the summer recreation season goes on, manure can build up on the trail, creating unpleasant conditions for hikers. Additionally, in light of the recent fire at the Kennedy Meadows Pack Station, management and operations would be reviewed to ensure appropriate safety plans are in place.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Assess the potential for public use of part of the pack station parking area.*

The Stewardship Council would also evaluate the potential for public use of part of the parking area for non-pack station visitors. Having a small number of designated public parking spaces for short-term parking (e.g., 2 hours) would provide public access to day use activities in the area including fishing, wildlife viewing, and short hikes.

## **Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat**

**Potential Measures:**

- *Conduct surveys of outside the relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*
- *Develop a wildlife and habitat management plan for the planning unit.*

Though many biological resource studies were conducted for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project relicensing, often these studies focused only on resources within the FERC boundary. The Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit is currently completely outside the FERC boundary and therefore has not been comprehensively surveyed as part of the recent relicensing process. Relicensing studies did, however, include the area of the planning unit that is located within 200 feet of the MFSR. Therefore, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of the planning unit to identify biological resources and enable their protection. The Stewardship Council also recommends using biological resource survey data to create a wildlife and habitat management plan. The planning unit contains potential habitat for several special status species including Yosemite toad, mountain yellow-legged frog, willow flycatcher, and great gray owl, and recommended surveys may reveal additional special status plants and wildlife. Once recommended surveys are completed, potential habitat enhancement and restoration opportunities can be identified and developed into a comprehensive plan describing goals and objectives for habitat and species, as well as measures to enhance and protect habitat for 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 noxious weed, forest, recreation, and fuels management plans.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Assess opportunities to enhance cottonwood recruitment and bank stabilization if this requirement is not included in the New License Order.*

The FERC Final EIS included measures to develop a detailed, three-phased plan for stabilizing banks and restoring riparian vegetation in the Kennedy Meadows section of the MFSR. If not included in the New License Order as a requirement, opportunities to enhance cottonwood recruitment would be included in the recommended wildlife and habitat management plan. Cottonwood trees are important for stabilizing streambanks along the MFSR as well as for providing food resources, hiding cover, and movement corridors for wildlife.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Develop a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit.*

Although the Final EIS for the Spring Gap-Stanislaus Project includes development of a noxious weed management plan as well as a visitor education and information plan to increase visitor



awareness of this problem, the Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit area will not likely be included because it is not currently located within the FERC boundary. The Stewardship Council therefore recommends developing a noxious weed management plan for the planning unit to eradicate existing infestations of noxious weeds such as cheatgrass where possible and implement preventative measures to minimize the spread of weeds in the future. This plan would also provide for consistency in management of noxious weeds with adjacent management and should be coordinated with the USFS, Central Sierra Partnership Against Weeds, and the Tuolumne County noxious weed programs. This plan should be completed in conjunction with fuels, forest, and wildlife and habitat management plans.

**Potential Measure:**

- *Restructure the parking area to protect sensitive habitat and minimize erosion.*

The pack station and adjacent Emigrant Wilderness are popular recreation destinations, but parking can be considerably limited given the number of vehicles driving to the Kennedy Meadows Planning Unit. The Stewardship Council recommends ensuring that parking does not impact sensitive habitat or cause erosion. To accomplish this, gravel parking areas could be redesigned and restructured somewhat to provide a maximum number of spaces while protecting sensitive areas. In addition, areas where off-road driving has occurred should be revegetated and bouldered to restrict vehicles to designated roads. These restrictions would provide a complementary use of the area's resources in view of the preservation goals of nearby wilderness areas. Restructuring the parking area would protect sensitive habitat and minimize erosion, with overall disturbed areas being reduced if feasible. Such restructuring would need to be accomplished in coordination with the lessee.

## **Agricultural Uses**

**Potential Measure:**

- *Evaluate the potential for continued pass-through cattle staging in the Upper Meadow, consistent with relicensing requirements regarding streambank stabilization and restoration.*

In their Final EIS, FERC recommended monitoring the effects of grazing at Kennedy Meadows on cottonwood recruitment and survival or that livestock grazing and staging could simply be prohibited on PG&E lands at Kennedy Meadows. Although the New License Order has not yet been issued, the FERC Final EIS noted that a growing body of evidence suggests that cottonwood recruitment is closely linked to streamflow patterns. Thus, the identified decline in cottonwood recruitment and survival may be due to flows in the Middle Fork Stanislaus River and not necessarily due to pass-through grazing. If PG&E decides to prohibit livestock grazing and staging on their lands at Kennedy Meadows in lieu of monitoring as part of relicensing, the Stewardship Council would evaluate the potential of continued pass-through cattle staging in the upper meadow, consistent with any future FERC license requirements regarding streambank stabilization and restoration. The FERC Final EIS includes development of a three-phased plan for stabilizing banks and restoring riparian vegetation in consultation with USFS, DFG, and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). If continued pass-through cattle staging is determined to be compatible with bank stabilization and restoration goals, monitoring would likely be required to ensure that unanticipated effects do not impact bank stability. Continuation of pass-through cattle staging at Kennedy Meadows would maintain access between two adjacent USFS grazing allotments.