

MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN RIVER PROJECT

FERC NO. 2079



REVISED RECREATION PLAN

MAY 1989

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INTRODUCTION

Licensee has prepared the following report on recreation facilities and opportunities at the Middle Fork American River Project - FERC No. 2079 (Project) in response to a letter from FERC dated October 9, 1987, which requested revision of the existing recreation plan for the Project.

This report was prepared in consultation with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), which is the major Federal lands and recreation resources administering agency in the Middle Fork American River Project vicinity. Other resource agencies consulted in preparation of this report include the California Department of Water Resources (DWR), California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDP&R) and the National Park Service - Western Region (NPS). Documentation of agency consultation is provided in Appendix A at the end of this report.

HISTORY OF PROJECT RECREATION

The Federal Power Commission license for the Project was issued on March 13, 1963. As directed by conditions of this license, the Licensee submitted to FERC on April 11, 1967, its original recreation plan as Exhibit R. In addition, as requested by FERC, the Licensee submitted to FERC on November 21, 1977, as-built exhibit drawings J, K, L, and R. FERC requested in a commission staff letter dated October 26, 1979, to include existing and future recreation lands within the project boundary presented on the Exhibit K drawings. The Licensee submitted revised Exhibit K drawings incorporating the recreation facility lands within the project boundary on January 31, 1980.

On July 29, 1965, the Licensee entered into a contract with DWR for recreation grants under the Davis-Grunsky Act. This contract required the Licensee to construct specific initial stage recreation facilities, which were described in Exhibit R, by May of 1967. The contract also required the Licensee to construct specific second, third, and fourth stage recreation facilities. The second stage facilities were to have been completed in 1981 and the third and fourth stages were to be constructed by 1991 and 2001, respectively.

In 1965, the Licensee entered into an agreement with the USFS in which the Licensee agreed to turn all of the recreation facilities over to the USFS and in turn, the USFS agreed, at its cost, to administer, operate, maintain, repair, renew, and replace the recreation facilities, federal appropriations permitting.

Though the second stage recreation facilities have not been constructed, the Licensee had made the necessary deposits required under the DWR contract and held a series of meetings with the USFS and DWR to work out a mutually acceptable plan for second stage facilities. All parties generally agreed that the second stage facilities were not needed at the time and current facilities would be sufficient, at least into the 1990's.

Since the original plan was developed and the DWR contract executed, the need for recreation facilities at the Project has changed substantially, and inflation increased dramatically. Also, the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 eliminated the Licensee's ability to levy taxes for the purpose of constructing additional recreation facilities.

After a 1987 environmental and public use inspection, FERC notified the Licensee that since the second stage facilities have not been constructed and the current plan shows some existing facilities and future sites outside of the Project boundary, a revision of the recreation plan would be appropriate. FERC said the revised recreation plan should:

Delete the schedule for future stages of development from the plan based on current and projected demand. Identification of areas reserved for future development should be retained. Define the degree of use or other mechanism which will trigger the development of future sites.

Based on identified needs and consultation, define the best use of the McGuire Day Use Area--either its rehabilitation, its conversion, or its removal so as to restore the site to a natural state--and provide a schedule for accomplishing this work

Exclude areas and facilities which are not on project lands from the recreation plan, specifically:

- Ahart Family Camp
- Dolly Family Camp future site
- Upper French Meadows Group Camp future site
- Gates Group Camp future site
- McGuire Family Camp future site
- Lagoon Lake Trail Camp future site
- Big Meadows Family Camp
- Middle Meadows Group Camp
- Middle Meadows Picnic Area future site
- Lower Meadow Family Camp future site

Address the need for additional parking capacity at the group campgrounds at French Meadows.

Include a description of how use will be managed at the Ralston Afterbay Picnic Area to avoid long-term camping and associated problems at this facility.

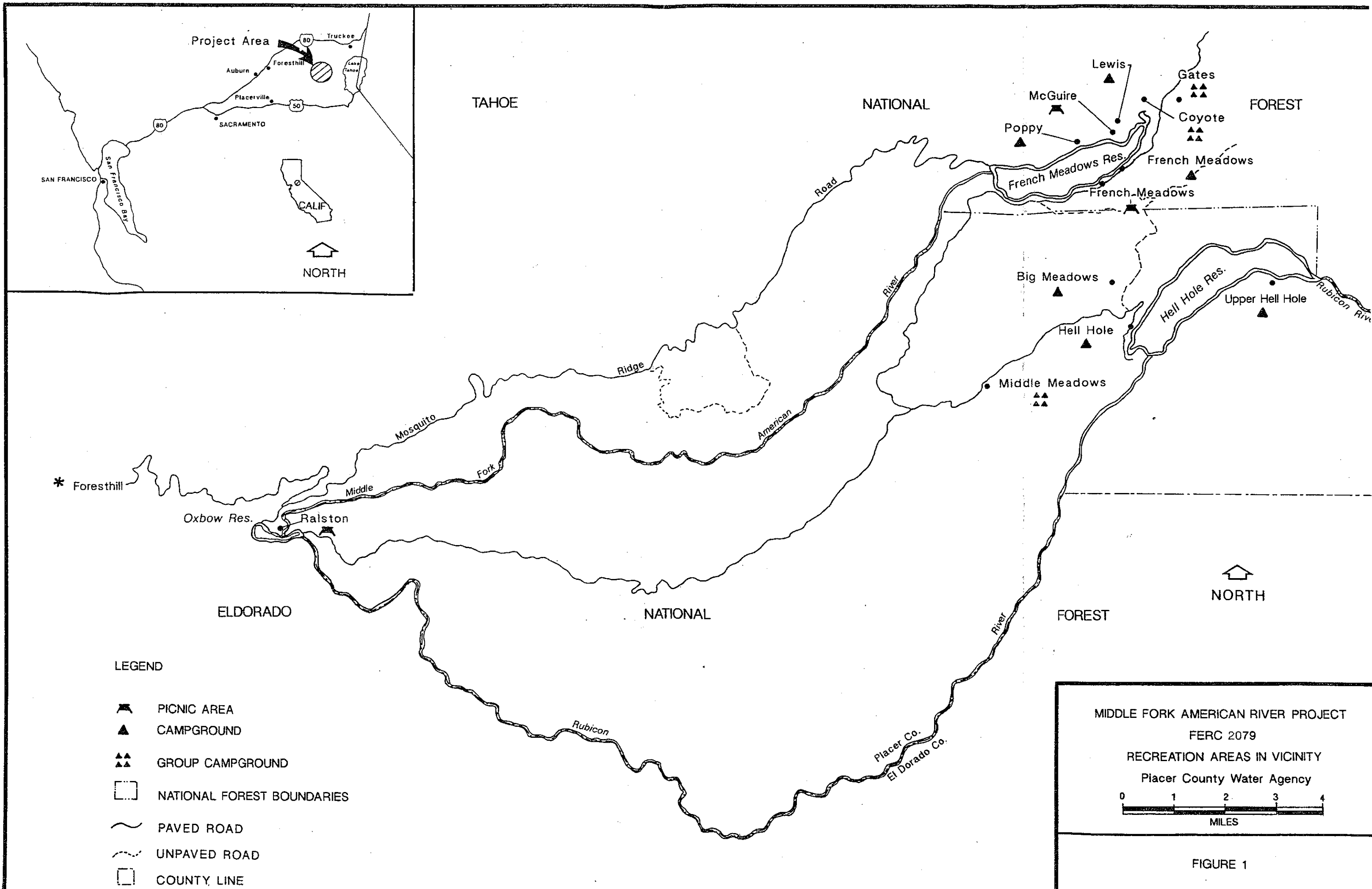
GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AREA

Project Location

The Project recreation facilities are located in Placer County and within both Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests. The estimated population of Placer County as of January 1, 1987 was 144,900. The nearest town is the unincorporated community of Foresthill. Auburn, which is located approximately 52 road miles to the southwest of the Project, had a population of 8,525 as of January 1, 1987. The closest major metropolitan area is Sacramento, approximately 80 road miles to the southwest of the Project, with a population of 1,070,000 as of January 1, 1987.

The Project is located along the canyons of the Middle Fork American and Rubicon Rivers. The Project ranges in elevation from 5,200 feet at French Meadows Reservoir on the Middle Fork American River to 4,700 feet at Hell Hole Reservoir on the Rubicon River to 1,200 feet at Oxbow Reservoir, which is located at the confluence of the two rivers. The total tributary watershed for the Project is 429 square miles. The terrain in these portions of the Middle Fork American and Rubicon Rivers is rugged, with steep slopes and erodible soils that limit recreation development and use.

See Figure 1 for the location of the Project area.



Access

Access to French Meadows Reservoir is provided by Mosquito Ridge Road, which is paved and leads to the Reservoir from the town of Foresthill easterly through the Middle Fork American River Canyon. This route provides many views of the Sierra Nevada, as well as typical mountain foreground scenery. Placer County Planning Department has recommended that this route, and its scenic resources, be protected.

A paved road which branches off from Mosquito Ridge Road near Oxbow Reservoir provides one means of access to Hell Hole Reservoir. Access to Hell Hole Reservoir can also be made from French Meadows Reservoir by two routes: a nine-mile dirt road over Chipmunk Ridge to the north of Hell Hole Reservoir and a 13-mile paved road that leads to the Reservoir from the west.

Access to Hell Hole Reservoir from Georgetown is provided by taking Georgetown-Wentworth Springs Road easterly for approximately 32 miles, then follow signs northerly for approximately 30 miles to Hell Hole Reservoir. These roads are paved.

PROJECT RECREATION STUDY

A comprehensive recreation resource study was conducted by Licensee during the 1988 recreation season for the Project and its vicinity to assist in the development of a recreation plan. The study was conducted in cooperation with the USFS. The study area included French Meadows Reservoir, Hell Hole

Reservoir, and an area at Oxbow Reservoir between Oxbow and Ralston Powerhouses. The study consisted of a resource analysis and a recreation needs analysis.

The resource analysis consisted of an inventory and review of environmental data to assess recreation development opportunities and constraints within the study area.

The recreation needs analysis was drawn from USFS historical use data and a recreation user survey conducted by the Licensee during the 1988 recreation season (May through October). The survey included a visitor questionnaire completed by the public and mailed back to the Licensee, and observations of recreational activities during selected weekends, weekdays and holidays. Results of this survey are discussed in the EXISTING AND POTENTIAL RECREATION USE section.

In addition, the most recent issue of the California Outdoor Recreation Resources Plan (CORRP) was consulted for current and projected recreational trends and concerns.

EXISTING RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Regional Overview

Public recreational opportunities in the Project region include facilities developed by Eldorado National Forest, Tahoe National Forest, Sacramento

Municipal Utility District (SMUD), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), and Licensee. In addition, dispersed activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, and mining are found in the region.

Approximately 30 road miles south of Hell Hole Reservoir and 30 road miles east of Placerville is the Crystal Basin Recreation Area of the Eldorado National Forest. This area is made up of three major reservoirs: Loon Lake, Ice House Reservoir, and Union Valley Reservoir. The USFS maintains eight family campgrounds (2,085 PAOT-People At One Time), one group camp (100 PAOT), and several picnic areas at the three reservoirs. The reservoir elevations range from 4,900 feet to 6,500 feet. Union Valley is the largest reservoir with 2,860 surface acres, followed by Loon Lake (1,450 surface acres), and Ice House (678 surface acres).

Located approximately one mile upstream on the Middle Fork American River from French Meadows Reservoir is Ahart Campground. This 12-unit family campground is owned and operated by the USFS and was constructed a number of years prior to the construction of French Meadows Reservoir. In addition, the USFS owns and operates Talbot Campground with five campsites, located an additional four miles up river from Ahart. Records for Talbot date back to 1926, while records for Ahart date back to 1930.

Approximately 45 road miles west of French Meadows Reservoir and 30 road miles east of Auburn are Sugar Pine Reservoir (160 surface acres) and Big Reservoir (70 surface acres). Tahoe National Forest maintains three family campgrounds (390 PAOT), one group camp (100 PAOT), and several picnic areas at the Reservoirs.

There are also several recreation areas along the Highway 80 corridor that are within one to two hours driving time from Auburn. Some of these areas include Rollins Lake (Nevada Irrigation District - NID), Folsom Lake State Recreation Area (CDP&R), and the Drum-Spaulding Project - FERC No. 2310 (PG&E).

Project Area

Within the Project boundary, Licensee is currently responsible for a total of five family campgrounds containing 152 camp units (760 PAOT capacity), two group campgrounds containing seven group camp sites (250 PAOT capacity), and three picnic areas containing 22 picnic units (110 PAOT capacity). See Table 1 for Project recreation facilities located within the Project Boundary. Recreation facilities that are outside the Project boundaries, but were constructed according to the original recreation plan, are listed on Page 3.

As previously mentioned, the Licensee has an operation and maintenance agreement with the USFS for all facilities within the Project boundary as well as the facilities constructed pursuant to the original recreation plan that are outside of the Project boundary.

French Meadows Reservoir is located 56 road miles from Auburn in the Tahoe National Forest. The reservoir has an elevation of 5,200 feet and consists of 1,920 surface acres and 11 miles of shoreline. Recreation facilities at the Reservoir include French Meadows Picnic Area, McGuire Picnic Area, French Meadows Boat Ramp, McGuire Boat Ramp, Gates Group Campground, Coyote Group Campground, French Meadows Campground, Lewis Campground, and Poppy Campground.

TABLE 1
MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN RIVER PROJECT
FERC PROJECT NO. 2079

PROJECT RECREATION FACILITIES

FACILITY	# OF UNITS	MAX. PAOT (1) CAPACITY
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Campgrounds

French Meadows	75	375
Lewis	40	200
Poppy (2)	12	60
Gates Group Camp	3	125
Coyote Group Camp	4	125
Hell Hole	10	50
Upper Hell Hole (2)	15	75
 TOTAL		
FAMILY	152	760
GROUP	7	250

Picnic Areas

McGuire	10	50
French Meadows	7	35
Ralston Afterbay	5	25
 TOTAL	22	110

Boat Launch Areas

Parking Spaces

McGuire	75
French Meadows	46
Hell Hole	50
Ralston (Car-top)	6

(1) PAOT - Persons At One Time

(2) Boat-in Camp

French Meadows Campground has 75 family camp units, Lewis Campground has 40 family camp units, and Poppy Campground has 12 family camp units and is accessible only by boat or a 1.5-mile trail.

Hell Hole Reservoir is located 71 miles from Auburn in the Eldorado National Forest. The Reservoir has an elevation of 4,700 feet and consists of 1,300 surface acres. It is situated in the rugged, deep gorge of the Rubicon River and has a shoreline surrounded by granite boulders.

Recreation facilities at the Reservoir include Hell Hole Vista, Hell Hole Boat Ramp, Hell Hole Campground, and Upper Hell Hole Campground. Upper Hell Hole Campground consists of 15 camp units which are accessible only by boat or by hiking along the shoreline for five miles. Hell Hole Campground has 10 camp units for tents only.

Approximately one mile west of Hell Hole Reservoir is the Big Meadows Family Campground. This 55-unit campground was constructed by the Licensee according to the original recreation plan and is owned and operated by the USFS.

Oxbow Reservoir, which is located at the confluence of the Rubicon and Middle Fork American rivers, is 29 road miles from Auburn. The Reservoir has an elevation of 1,200 feet.

The only recreation facility at the Reservoir is the Ralston Picnic Area which includes a small boat launch. Ralston Picnic Area has five picnic units.

All the above mentioned recreation facilities are open to the public.

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL RECREATION USE

Existing Recreation Use

During the 1988 summer recreation season, a recreation user survey was conducted to obtain information regarding recreation use levels and patterns in the immediate vicinity of the Project. All recreation facilities within the Project boundary were surveyed, as well as some facilities outside of the Project boundary.

The user survey, conducted by the Licensee, was made up of two parts: observations of use at each facility and mailback survey questionnaires for users to send back after visiting the facilities. Observations at the sites were made on 27 days between May and September 1988, and included a representative sample of weekdays, weekends, and holidays. Observation data recorded included weather conditions, time of day, occupancy level, recreation equipment used, and activities of recreationists. The mailback survey data included visitor origin, number of previous visits to the area, duration of visit, group size, and user opinion on adequacy of the facilities.

Based on the data collected during the user observations, an estimate of visitor days for the various campgrounds and day use areas was developed (See Table 2). The estimates are consistent with the Forest Service use data collected since 1971.

TABLE 2
MIDDLE FORK AMERICAN RIVER PROJECT
FERC PROJECT NO. 2079
1988 RECREATION USE

FACILITY	1988 VISITOR DAYS	THEORETICAL MAX. CAP.*	PERCENT OCC.
<u>Campgrounds</u>			
French Meadows	22,500	46,875	48%
Lewis	7,500	25,000	30%
Poppy	200	7,500	2%
Gates Group Camp	4,535	15,625	29%
Coyote Group Camp	5,725	15,625	37%
Hell Hole	1,750	6,250	19%
Upper Hell Hole	1,000	9,375	11%
TOTAL	43,210	126,250	34%
<u>Day Use Areas</u>			
McGuire Picnic Area	1,190	6,250	19%
French Meadows P.A.	150	4,375	3%
Ralston Picnic Area	810	3,125	26%
TOTAL	2,150	13,750	16%
TOTAL RECREATION USE OF PROJECT FACILITIES	45,360	140,000	32%

* Theoretical Maximum Capacity is the number of people a facility could accommodate if the facility was full every day of the recreation season. It is computed as follows:

of sites x 5 (average # of persons/site) x 125 (season length)

Example: French Meadows Campground 75 x 5 x 125 = 46,875

The data collected indicate that Campgrounds within the Project Area were used at 34 percent capacity during the 1988 recreation season. On the Fourth of July weekend, the family campgrounds in the Project Area were at 95 percent capacity. The two group camps were used at 33 percent capacity during the recreation season, while the day use picnic facilities were used at 16 percent capacity.

In the area of recreational use of facilities outside the Project boundaries, but which were constructed as proposed in the original recreation plan, the Big Meadows Family Campground in Eldorado National Forest had an occupancy rate of 21% during the 1988 recreation season. The Middle Meadows Group Camp was closed by the Eldorado National Forest in 1980, and has remained closed since then. No recreation facilities outside the Project boundaries were constructed in Tahoe National Forest. Approximately 73 percent of the visitors were from areas within three hours driving time of the Project Area. These areas include the Sacramento Metropolitan area, the Auburn-Grass Valley area, and the Tahoe-Truckee area. Approximately 22 percent of the visitors were from the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Area region, which is between four and five hours driving time from the Project Area. Only five percent of the visitors were from areas over five hours driving time.

Driving time is probably the single greatest determinant of recreation use in the Project Area. Though Auburn can be reached in a reasonable amount of time from most Northern California regions via Interstate Highway 80, the 50-mile road between Auburn and the Project Area is a narrow, winding, two lane paved road which, under good driving conditions, takes nearly two hours to travel.

Recreation activities at French Meadows Reservoir include camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, fishing (Kamloop, cutthroat, and brown trout), and boating. All types of boating are allowed; however, waterskiing and speedboats are not recommended.

Recreation activities at Hell Hole Reservoir include camping, picnicking, boating, fishing (Kamloop, rainbow, cutthroat, and brown trout), hunting in season (deer and bear), hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and off-road vehicle use.

At Oxbow Reservoir, recreation activities include picnicking, fishing, swimming, and boating (non-motorized).

Potential Recreation Use

As with other recreation areas throughout Northern California, recreation use is expected to increase somewhat in the Project Area. However, due to the type of access roads to the Project Area, recreation use probably will not increase as much as it will in most other areas in the region with better access.

Projections of future population growth in the region within three hours driving time were made using visitor origin data generated by the recreation use survey and the Projected Total Population for California Counties, prepared by the California Department of Finance (September 1986). From this information and based on a correlation of population growth and recreation demand, it was determined that public recreation demand in the region could be

expected to increase by as much as 52 percent by the year 2010. Based on such an increase, and assuming that recreational use patterns will remain unchanged from the present, annual recreational use at the Project recreation facilities in the year 2010 is estimated to be 68,900 visitor days, with 65,600 of these being overnight visits. Such an increase in recreation use would mean that the Project recreation facilities would be used at 49 percent of their theoretical maximum capacity. This data would seem to indicate that the existing Project recreation facilities should be able to accommodate Project recreation use through the year 2010. The current FERC license expires in 2013.

Agency Recommended Measures

The Licensee has had several meetings with the USFS and DWR to review the requests and needs the agencies have for the project.

DWR indicated that the existing Project recreation facilities are more than adequate to meet current use levels experienced at the Project, and that the recreation fund reserve should be spent on improving the existing recreation facilities, rather than adding more recreation facilities.

USFS felt that there was not a need for additional facilities at this time, but would like to see some type of provision for adding facilities at a later date should a need be demonstrated. USFS indicated that one of the more pressing needs at the Project was additional parking, especially at the group camps, and that they would prefer four long parking spurs (45' - 50') as close to the activity areas as possible, at the three 25 PAOT camps at Coyote Group

Campground. Presently there is limited parking at these sites. At the Black Bear Camp at the Coyote Group Camp, USFS requested seven RV/trailer parking spaces and an additional five car parking area.

At the Gates Group Camp, USFS requested that four parking spurs be added in close proximity to the activity areas of the two 25 PAOT camp sites. At the 75 PAOT camp site, USFS is requesting that the existing 100' x 60' parking area be enlarged so larger vehicles can be accommodated more easily. They are also recommending an additional four parking spaces and a new loop road. This would bring the parking capacity to 20 vehicles.

USFS also indicated that many of the camp spurs at the family campgrounds are too short to accommodate travel trailers or large RV's. They recommended that 25 - 35 spurs be lengthened at French Meadows Campground. At Lewis Campground, USFS requested that 15 - 20 spurs be lengthened and the campground road be repaired and resurfaced. At Big Meadows Campground, USFS requested lengthening and leveling 10 spurs, reconstructing three spurs, and constructing six service area pull-outs. USFS also recommended that the Hell Hole Vista trail be repaired as needed, and requested that funding be provided for developing a new water source to serve Big Meadows and Hell Hole Campgrounds and the USFS Work Station.

USFS expressed concern about two areas that have some dispersed recreation use. The first area is the Duncan Creek area. USFS felt that a toilet facility should be installed, operated, and maintained for the area. The other area that concerned the USFS was the area downstream of the Ralston

Afterbay Dam. Rafting concessionaires use this area as a put-in point to begin raft trips. USFS feels it may be appropriate to install a toilet facility at this location.

PROPOSED MEASURES AND FACILITIES

Based on historical use data collected by the USFS and the user survey conducted by the Licensee in 1988, the Licensee has determined that the existing Project recreation facilities are, in terms of capacity, adequate to meet current Project recreation needs. Licensee also believes the provision of additional Project recreation facilities should be based upon demonstrated need, rather than pre-determined stages of facility development which do not consider recreation use levels.

Recreation Facility Improvements

Though the existing recreation facilities are adequate to accommodate the current use levels experienced at the Project and the facility components are in satisfactory condition, Licensee agrees with the USFS that parking accommodations at most of the overnight facilities were not designed for the types of recreation vehicles presently used. Specifically, more spurs at family campgrounds need to be able to accommodate large RV's and trailers, and the group camps also need additional parking.

To the extent that it has the necessary funds, Licensee proposes that it perform the following Project recreation facility improvements. If FERC and DWR concur, these improvements will be completed by October 31, 1993 and would be in lieu of the previously proposed second, third, and fourth stages of Project recreation facility development.

1. At French Meadows Family Campground, up to 25 spurs as determined on site by the Licensee and USFS, will be improved. The selected spurs will be lengthened to 45 feet, leveled, and paved to the existing width (ten foot width paved and one foot shoulders on each side). Barriers will be added as necessary. Also, one of the four-stall toilet buildings will be converted to handicap accessible.
2. At the Lewis Family Campground, up to 15 spurs as determined on site by the Licensee and USFS, will be improved. The selected spurs will be lengthened to 45 feet, leveled, and paved to the existing width (ten foot width paved and one foot shoulders). Barriers will be added as necessary. One of the four-stall toilet buildings will be converted to handicap accessible.
3. At the Coyote Group Camp, the following improvements will be performed by the Licensee. At the Black Bear Camp, seven parking spurs up to 50 feet in length and a five car parking area will be added. The spurs and parking area will be paved and barriers added as necessary. The toilet building will be converted to handicap accessible. At the other three 25 PAOT camps within Coyote Group Camp (Prairie Wolf, Little Wolf, and Brush Wolf), Licensee will

construct as many as four additional parking spurs, up to 50 feet in length, ten feet wide, and located as close to the activity areas as possible, at each of the camps. The number and locations of additional spurs will be determined by the Licensee and USFS and will be paved. Barriers will be added as necessary. Tree removal and large cut and fill situations will be avoided and may result in reducing the number of additional spurs constructed.

4. At the Gates Group Camp, the following improvements will be made by the Licensee. At the Ponderosa camp (75 PAOT), the Licensee will enlarge the existing parking area as USFS requested so that the area consists of eight 45 foot parking spurs, six 25 foot parking spurs, and a turnaround. All added spurs will be ten feet wide and paved. Barriers will be added as necessary. At the two 25 PAOT camps (Aspen and Lodgepole), the Licensee will construct up to four additional parking spurs, up to 50 feet in length and ten feet wide. Spurs will be located as close to the activity area as possible and final locations will be determined by Licensee and USFS. Tree removal and large cut and fill situations will be avoided and may result in reducing the number of additional spurs constructed.
5. The McGuire Day Use Area is made up of three areas: McGuire Boat Launch, McGuire Picnic Area, and McGuire Beach Facility. The boat launch and associated parking areas are in satisfactory condition. All the stumps at the McGuire Picnic Area, which were left as a result of the storm damage several years ago, will be removed. Recreation use at the McGuire Beach facility is light. The changing

structure, which was constructed in 1967, has deteriorated to the point that it will require reconstruction. However, the Licensee has determined that this type of facility is not necessary at French Meadows Reservoir. The USFS agrees that this facility is probably not necessary. The Licensee will remove the changing structure and rehabilitate the two unit restroom facility. The disturbed area will be graded back to as close to the natural grade as possible and allowed to return to its natural state. A cable security system for boat trailers will be installed at one of the McGuire Boat Launch parking areas and at the French Meadows Boat Launch parking area.

6. Though not within the FERC Project boundary, some work in the Big Meadows Campground will be performed. Specifically, the work will include lengthening, leveling, and paving ten spurs; reconstructing three spurs; and, constructing six service area pull-outs.
7. At the Hell Hole Vista site, the trail leading to the overlook will be rehabilitated. The rehabilitation work will be confined to 1.5 feet on each side of the centerline of the existing trail and work will include necessary repair of steps, removal of loose rock, and adding native material to required areas.
8. Licensee will work with the USFS to ensure that the Ralston Afterbay Picnic Area is maintained to the standards of the operation and maintenance agreement. Although the Licensee did not witness a long-term camping problem during the 1988 recreation season, the Picnic Area use will be monitored and any camping activity will be

reported to the USFS District office in Foresthill. Licensee will install additional signing regarding camping restrictions as necessary.

Licensee will work with the USFS prior to construction to ensure that construction activities will have as little effect as possible to recreation activities at the Project.

Dispersed Recreation Use

USFS expressed concern about two areas within the Project boundary that experience some dispersed recreation use. The Duncan Creek Reservoir area was identified as a future recreation facility site in the original recreation plan. The area attracts dispersed hunting and fishing activity and, according to USFS, little overnight camping. However, during the 1988 recreation user survey, no overnight camping was observed by the Licensee.

USFS feels there may be a need to install some type of toilet facility in the area. Licensee does not agree with the USFS that there is a need for a toilet facility. Licensee does not feel that this area is suitable for recreation facility development in the future. The area has limited potential for development due to unsuitable grades and the close proximity to the sensitive riparian habitat of Duncan Creek. USFS has also recorded several archaeological sites in this area.

Due to environmental concerns and the fact that the only recreation use appears to be minimal dispersed use, Licensee does not feel this area should be considered for future recreation facility development.

USFS is also concerned over the dispersed use at the area just below Ralston Afterbay Dam, adjacent to the Oxbow Powerhouse. Commercial rafting companies use this area as a put-in point for excursions down the Middle Fork American River. These rafting companies operate under permits issued by the State of California. USFS is advocating installation of a toilet facility at this site. Licensee feels that a permanent toilet facility would not be appropriate at this site because it would have to be located too far from the raft put-in to avoid the area flood plain. Licensee is opposed to a portable facility in close proximity to the raft put-in site because it may promote overnight camping in this area which cannot be allowed because of its proximity to the Ralston Dam. If a portable toilet facility is required, Licensee feels that it should be a condition of the commercial rafting permits, and all costs should be the responsibility of the rafting companies who use this area as part of their rafting operations.

Future Recreation Facility Development

Licensee will construct an additional 30 unit campground just westerly of the existing Lewis Campground on the basis of demonstrated need and consistent with the carrying capacity of the area. The need will be demonstrated when French Meadows and Lewis Family Campgrounds, together, reach 95 percent capacity for ten days between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend, but excluding these holiday weekends and July Fourth weekend. This facility

should be constructed three years after the year in which the need is demonstrated. Components for the campground will include surfaced internal roads, parking spurs to accommodate RV's/trailers, vehicular control barriers, vault-type sanitary facilities, fire rings, picnic tables, and potable water. Design standards and components to be agreed to by Licensee and USFS prior to construction.

Licensee also proposes that a 50 PAOT group camp be constructed on the basis of demonstrated need and consistent with the carrying capacity of the area. The need will be demonstrated when six of the seven group camp sites are reserved to groups of 75 percent of the designed PAOT capacity for 14 weekend days between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend, but excluding these weekends and the July Fourth weekend, for two consecutive years. This facility will be constructed three years after the year in which the need is demonstrated and will be constructed near the McGuire Beach area. Components will include parking to accommodate large vehicles, cooking grills, picnic tables, vault-type sanitary facilities, and potable water.

SPECIAL DESIGNATED AREAS

Wilderness Areas

Granite Chief Wilderness Area is a remote alpine area characterized by steep, rugged ridges and barren peaks, which tower over picturesque glacial valleys carved by ice thousands of years ago. Many streams and a few lakes are scattered throughout the area. Granite Chief is located approximately five

miles northeast of the Project area. Access to the Granite Chief vicinity can be made from French Meadows Reservoir by an unimproved dirt road which leads from the Reservoir to Soda Springs. The only access into Granite Chief is by foot or horseback since it is closed to motorized vehicles. Several trails lead into the heart of the area. The Pacific Crest Trail runs north and south through the area near its eastern border.

Granite Chief was designated a Wilderness Area in 1986 but the Wilderness Management Plan is expected to be approved sometime in 1989.

The northwestern boundary of the Desolation Wilderness Area is located approximately nine miles to the southeast of the Project area. No roads connect the two areas. The most direct access to the Desolation Wilderness Area is from various trails leading from the southwest shore of Lake Tahoe.

The Desolation Wilderness Area was established in 1931 and enlarged in 1969 to its present size of 63,475 acres. Characterized by many small lakes, this glaciated scenic wilderness varies in elevation from 6,500 to 10,000 feet. Plant life is alpine in character. This Wilderness Area is one of California's most popular Wilderness Areas; in order to limit the number of people entering each day, entry quotas have been established on many trails.

National Trails

No national trails are located within the Project area. However, the Pacific Crest Trail crosses the Eldorado and Tahoe National Forests at various locations near the Forests' eastern boundary, approximately nine miles east of the Project area.

National Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-542) provided for federal protection and preservation of the nation's free-flowing rivers. Currently, there are no existing Wild and Scenic Rivers within the Project area. However, the Rubicon River was inventoried by the NPS as a candidate for Wild and Scenic River designation and has been recommended for Scenic River classification in Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management plan of 1988.

The Rubicon River flows from its source at Clyde Lake in Desolation Wilderness to its confluence with the Middle Fork of the American River at Oxbow Reservoir. The candidate portion of the Rubicon runs for 29 miles from Hell Hole Dam to the confluence with the Middle Fork of the American River. The Rubicon flows through a steep canyon bordered by dense mixed conifer forests in the upper reaches and hardwood-chapparral in the lower reaches.

The River offers opportunities for fishing, swimming, picnicking, and primitive camping. Deep pools and sandy beaches, where accessible, are the favorite recreation spots. Most of the current recreation use originates at

Ellicotts Bridge. Anglers, gold-panners and dredgers usually work their way downstream from the bridge. Movement is difficult because of the cliffs and waterfalls. Hikers, equestrians and motorcyclists travel east along the parallel trails. Some kayaking may occur. Because of the steepness and lack of access, overall recreation use remains low. No developed sites are within the inventoried area.

The North Fork American River was designated in 1978 as a part of the National Wild and Scenic River System by an Act of Congress. The portion of the river designated as Wild and Scenic is located approximately seven miles north of the Project area, but no direct road access can be made between the two areas. The River offers a wide variety of scenic vistas, recreational opportunities, and historic features. The North Fork American River is characterized by cascading rapids and deep, placid pools surrounded by steep canyon walls and pine and oak covered bluffs. Although access is limited, hiking, fishing, and swimming are some of the more popular forms of recreation along the river. Early townsite locations, cabins, and mining operations from the 1849 gold-rush era can still be explored at various sites. Because of its Wild River designation, the area is closed to motorized vehicles and motorized mining dredges.

State Game Refuge

The area of land, administered by Eldorado National Forest, Tahoe National Forest, and the private lands between Star Ridge and Chipmunk Ridge, have been designated as a State Game Refuge designated as I-I. French Meadows Reservoir is located within the game refuge. The refuge designation prohibits the hunting of game on all affected lands, but otherwise does not limit USFS or private land management.

APPENDIX

Appendix I - Agency Consultation

AGENCY CONSULTATION

<u>Date</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
12/15/88	USFS, DWR	Meeting to discuss agency concerns regarding Project recreation
1/13/89	USFS, DWR	Meeting to discuss Licensee's initial proposals for the Project Recreation Plan
1/17/89	USFS, DWR	Letter summarizing 1/13/89 meeting
1/26/89	USFS, DWR	Meeting to review proposals for the Project Recreation Plan and make changes where possible
1/30/89	USFS, DWR	Letter summarizing 1/26/89 meeting
3/17/89		The following agencies received copies of the final draft of the revised Recreation Plan. All agencies were asked to respond with written comments by April 20, 1989.

U.S. Forest Service
 Eldorado National Forest
 Tahoe National Forest

Calif. Department of Water Resources

Calif. Department of Fish and Game

Calif. Department of Parks and Recreation

National Park Service - Western Reg.

Placer County Planning Department

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Following are the written comments received from agencies and the Licensee's response to comments.

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Tahoe
National
Forest

Highway 49
and Coyote Street
Nevada City, CA 95959

Reply To: 2330

Date: MAY - 1 1989

Mr. Stephen J. Jones
Power Systems Manager
Placer County Water Agency
P.O. Box 667
Foresthill, CA 95631

RECEIVED
MAY 2 1989
POWER SYSTEMS DIVISION

COMMENT FILE

Dear Mr. Jones:

This letter is in response to your request for our comments on the review of the draft of the revised Project Recreation Plan transmitted with your letter of March 17, 1989.

Your correspondence indicates you wish to ensure that all issues are addressed prior to submittal of the final Plan and that these comments will be appended to the final Plan when submitted to the FERC.

My letter of February 22, 1989, documenting the joint meeting of January 26, 1989, addressed those areas where agreement had not yet been achieved. A review of the most recent draft reveals some of these difference still exist. We will cover each of them in the order they appeared in my March 17, 1989, letter.

Since this may be our final opportunity to respond prior to your submittal to the FERC, I think we should also respond to other elements of the text of the revised plan, particularly since it had been rewritten extensively since our agencies began this planning effort.

The following numerical responses are keyed to my last letter.

1. The plan excludes Ahart Campground. Text on page 3 indicates the FERC has determined the plan should exclude this campground. Text on page 8 infers that since Ahart pre-dates the Middle Fork Project, it cannot otherwise qualify for inclusion.

We believe the statement made by The FERC following their 1987 inspection was an opinion based on a cursory explanation of the situation given on the date the inspection was made. We intend to



Mr. Stephan J. Jones

2.

submit our rationale in writing to the FERC in the event we do not have it completed in time for inclusion in your submittal. 1

Briefly, even though Ahart does pre-date the project, use there has increased significantly and is noticeably reservoir influenced. For example, it is common to observe a high percentage of campers with boats.

2. Text on page 26 defines the location, size and standard of a possible future family campground addition.

As before, we agree with the triggering mechanism etc., but are concerned about too much specificity without any wording to allow for future review, validation, and flexibility in the other discussion. For example:

- a. A 30-unit campground is mentioned. We think wording should be added that indicates a future analysis, considering a wide range of factors, should validate proposed campground size. 2
 - b. Campground location (just westerly of Lewis CG) is likewise very specific. We think wording should be added to indicate that future evaluation of this site and others will be needed to validate this proposal.
 - c. The design standard of components of a future new campground (i.e. road standards, spur size, etc.) should be comparable to those now existing, but updated to meet future standards when constructed. In addition, we do not find construction of just vault-type toilets acceptable considering flush toilets are currently provided in family campgrounds.
3. My February 22, 1989, letter should have referred to Item 3 page 3 of the previous draft plan instead of page 2.

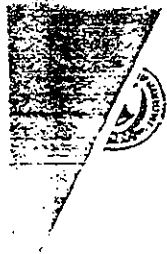
The Plan does incorporate the intent to upgrade, as contrasted with rehabilitating or maintaining, without actually using the specific terminology.

4. Remains agreeable

5. Remains agreeable

6. Referring to the discussion on pages 26 and 27, we do not agree with 14 weekend days being part of the triggering mechanism for an additional group campground. We continue to advocate "10 weekend days" as we have since your original draft plan utilized it as part of the criteria. Otherwise the mechanism is acceptable. 3





Mr. Stephan J. Jones

3.

We have some of the same concerns about describing construction standards of a future group campground as we indicated in our comments on family campgrounds in Item 2 above. Conformance to similar but future existing standards is an acceptable concept. Again, specifying a vault toilet is not acceptable to us. Finally, our discussions have included the possibility of providing for the construction of two 25 PAOT group camps instead of one 50 PAOT unit. We believe the Plan should accommodate this possibility of two smaller sites rather than one large site.

7. The discussion of upgrading French Meadows Campground is on page 21. The draft plan does not mention that an on-site review would be required to determine which spurs to include in a modernization project. We thought consensus was reached during our discussions to use this approach.

This is significant because our discussions included an estimate of 25-35 newly lengthened spurs, added to approximately 13 spurs currently adequate in length, for a range of 38-50 long spurs available following the project.

Existing width is not acceptable. The current standard is 10' minimum with 12' more desirable for RVs and trailers in certain conditions if that width is practical considering site factors. We would also like you to adjust your spur length up to 55 feet where site conditions allow.

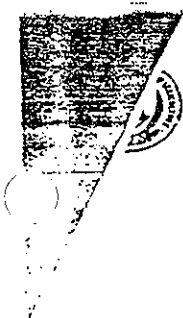
The "backwards" spurs mentioned in my letter are not included. We cannot assume the Plan automatically includes a consideration to correct these where practical. We also discussed the need to level spurs even if lengthening is not practical and still believe this should be done.

8. The Lewis Campground upgrading discussion is also on page 21. We have the same comments as for French Meadows in item 7 above except the number of spurs is different. We discussed adding 15-20 lengthened spurs to the 10 existing long spurs.

The Plan does not include upgrading the road system as we had proposed. We feel the upgrading of the road system should be included for the reasons discussed at our winter meetings.

9. Group camp improvements are discussed on pages 21-23. We understood there was agreement that drawings we provided were essentially agreed to, with the understanding that the changes were conceptually firm, but that actual numbers of spurs might fluctuate depending on actual physical and terrain conditions. The plan should clearly confirm this.





Mr. Stephan J. Jones

4.

Removing some trees to achieve desired spur lengths should be expected. We agree to avoiding a lot of clearing such as that which might be required for major adjustment to a road system or some other significant modification. 10

Spur widths of ten feet are acceptable, but twelve feet is preferred for RVs.

10. The area downstream of Ralston Afterbay is discussed on page 25. We maintain that a toilet is needed to accommodate sanitation requirements generated by rafting activity which is project induced.

We can work around the flood plain consideration and will involve the California Department of Fish and Game in the solution.

It is not our intent to "promote" camping at the rafter put-in or downstream of the dam. We recommend a toilet to solve an existing sanitation problem. We disagree with your statement that camping cannot be allowed downstream of the dam. 11

We agree that in this instance, since most of the rafting use is attributable to commercial trips, the rafting sector should bear most of the cost of sanitary facilities. However, we also believe the recreation plan should include all recreational needs generated by the project regardless of any unique funding methods.

11. The discussion of Duncan Diversion begins on page 24. Your use of the word "little" in describing overnight camping does not in our view convey an accurate description of the situation. Almost all of the recreational use at this location is related to camping. This at least applies to the use which may be contributing to a sanitation problem.

The final Plan could be changed to indicate that a toilet may be needed now or in the future to clarify that it has not been determined to be needed now, but that an evaluation would be required to establish if an unacceptable sanitation problem exists or develops in the future. 2

We have no archaeological site inventoried at this location as the text indicates. This and other environmental factors are properly a part of the future environmental analysis process. The project cannot properly be dropped from all future consideration based on current limited information or bias. We suggest a triggering mechanism such as an on-site review by whatever qualified specialists are required to evaluate the sanitation situation.

The above items 1 through 11 complete our input which relates directly to my February 22, 1989, letter. The following pertains to sites or improvements not mentioned in the subject letter, but which I think need to be mentioned here briefly because the Plan does not include them or there is a need for clarification. These items are:





Mr. Stephan J. Jones

5.

1. McGuire Beach, pg. 23 - These comments are editorial in nature to correct inaccuracies or misleading text.

- a. Relative to the first sentence, each of the three McGuire facilities stands alone. That is, the three collectively do not comprise the McGuire Day Use Area. Occasionally we informally use the term McGuire in reference to the picnic and swimming site because they are adjacent to one another. The Plan should keep them separated.

We assume the second sentence about the parking area and boat ramp refers solely to the McGuire Boat Ramp and parking lot and not the parking associated with all three of the McGuire sites. The Plan should not include discussion of the present physical condition of facilities except perhaps in the Introduction. Facility condition is a maintenance consideration. Parking lot size would be an example of a Plan or developmental consideration. In this instance, the boat ramp parking lot is large enough and need not be addressed in the Plan.

The fourth sentence about use at McGuire Beach is inaccurate. Delete "or no use" from this sentence. "Light" is a better adjective to describe use rather than the word "little". The beach area has been above the reservoir water level the past two years which may have contributed to the impression the site is seldom used.

We don't agree with the statement about the condition of the change pavilion. The condition of the facility is not the point. The point is, the pavilion portion of the facility is not needed, but it is necessary to retain the adjoining restrooms. Sentences 5 through 7 should be revised and combined to convey the necessary message in this regard.

2. Boat Ramp Parking Lots - Providing a security system for boat trailers at the two lots was discussed during our meetings. We discussed that providing for security would also perhaps alleviate spur congestion in the campgrounds. It was our understanding that a security feature would be included, but the Plan does not mention it.

The remaining comments are made for the purpose of, improving the readability of the Plan, to correct errors, and to suggest additions or deletions to improve the text. This document and Exhibit R will be referred to many times in the future by a variety of personnel from a number of different agencies. It is worth investing some extra effort at this point to provide for future efficiency in interpreting and implementing the Plan. These comments are:



Mr. Stephan J. Jones

6.

1. We would suggest adding a Table of Contents. 17
2. The sentence at the bottom of page 2 should be improved to clarify that the quantity and mix of existing types of facilities may be sufficient at this time, but that the existing standards are not adequate. As we know, the Plan addresses quite a few existing inadequacies. 18
3. We assume that the FERC may require use of an established format for the Plan and requires some discussion of other types of recreation which are in proximity to the project area because the Plan includes this type of information.

Granite Chief is discussed on page 9. Granite Chief became a Wilderness in 1984; therefore, you need to delete the last part of the last sentence on this page. Also, insert the word "Wilderness" the first time Granite Chief is used in the sentence. The Wilderness is within 1-3 miles of the project area depending on the place in question, therefore the second time "Granite Chief" is used the sentence would not be accurate unless it states that "Granite Chief Peak is ten miles northeast of French Meadows Reservoir". The word "several" would be more appropriate than "many" in reference to the number of trails into the area as indicated in the third sentence from the page end. 19

The discussion of page 28 does not include any reference to the Granite Chief Wilderness.

4. We would point out, as we have before, that the Plan improperly presents and applies data and averages. For example, the figure 31% (should be 34% based on Table 2) used on page 14 isn't very meaningful because it is an average of conventional family campgrounds, group campgrounds and boat-in campgrounds scattered throughout the project area. If your intent is to convey a general understanding of recreational camping use, we would suggest you disaggregate the information. To do so would show family camping use at the two Project family campgrounds accessible by vehicle at French Meadows Reservoir to be around 40%, with use at French Meadows Campground at 48% for the one year sampled. It has been our experience for Forest Service family campgrounds in California that the practical capacity is 40% of the theoretical capacity season long. This indicates we are above capacity at French Meadows Campground presently. If both French Meadows and Lewis campgrounds use are averaged together, the indication is that we are right at capacity. Based on our figures, group campground use was slightly over 40% in 1988, a year in which the reservoir came no where near filling. Our concern with having information presented in this manner manifests itself on page 18 where overall numerical averages are used to make projections about the adequacy of facilities for another 25 years. It would be more informative and useful for example to indicate that USFS records indicate that the weekend occupancy rate at group campgrounds, exclusive of holidays, has averaged 60-68%. 20



Mr. Stephan J. Jones

7.

On the same general topic, Table 2 is based on a 125-day season. The prime season, from Memorial Day to Labor Day, is around 100-days. We point this out to caution that averages and numbers need to be fully understood. For example, the family campgrounds at French Meadows average about 50% for the 100-day period. This is a more useful figure for recreation planning and significantly different than 34%. We understand that the triggering mechanisms do not include use of subjective averages.

5. We don't agree with the comment attributed to us that the access from Auburn to the project area is the most important factor effecting use as indicated in the last paragraph on page 15. Current design limitations of the camping facilities are more important. The facilities fill often enough on holidays, during major heat spells in the valley, etc. to lead us to believe the drive up may not be all that important.
6. The third paragraph on page 17 indicates that swimming in Oxbow Reservoir is not allowed. We know of no such prohibition.
7. The subjects of spur lengths and parking have been discussed at length earlier in this letter, but again on the same subjects, there are some editorial needs on page 19.

The first sentence would be more accurate as follows: USFS indicated that one of the more pressing needs at the Project was additional parking, especially at the group camps and that they recommend adding a minimum of four long parking spurs (45'-50'), the actual number to be determined by physical and terrain limitations and applicable design criteria for parking as close to the activity areas.....

The first two sentences of the second paragraph should be changed as follows: at the Gates Group Camp, USFS recommends parking spurs be added in close proximity to the activity areas of the two 25 PAOT camp sites as described above.

The next sentence should be revised to state that "the existing parking lot be enlarged so larger vehicles can be accommodated more easily and so the parking lot size is commensurate with the design capacity of the unit".

8. Relative to the last paragraph on page 19,
 1. Change the word "some" to "many" or "most" in the first sentence.
 2. Cross out "34" in the second sentence and add "25-35".



District Rangers and Staff

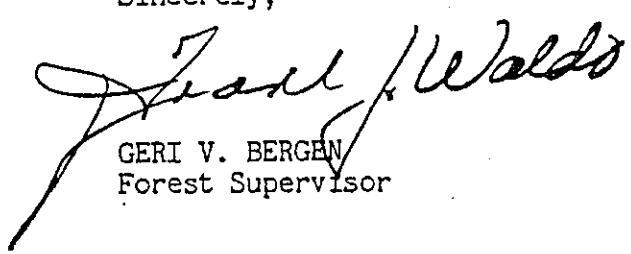
8.

3. Change the third sentence to, "At Lewis Campground, USFS recommended that 15-20 spurs be lengthened and that the campground road be upgraded to present standards." Item 8 of my February 22, 1989 letter addresses this subject. 23
9. We recommend an addition to the first sentence in the middle of page 20 to complete the message. Insert "in terms of capacity" following the word "adequate." The existing facilities are not adequate in all respects. 24
10. Relative to the second paragraph on page 21, we believe providing facilities to accommodate Project induced recreational use should determine what is provided instead of the funds available or some other factor. We also do not think that facilities which may be added or upgraded between now and 2013, whether accomplished in one season or any number of stages should be considered in lieu of any requirements contained in the current Plan. The new Plan, once adopted by the FERC, will merely make the present one obsolete. That's a little different than being in lieu of. 25

A suggested addition along the subject line of the discussion in item 10 above is that priorities may have to be established along the way for a variety of reasons, among them the amount of construction disturbance which is acceptable in one season, the amount of construction which is practical during a given period, or perhaps for budgetary reasons. The Plan should mention that the affected agencies will cooperatively establish priorities in this regard whenever the need arises. 26

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Draft Plan at this stage. We look forward to working with you on the few remaining areas of disagreement and coming together with a common position for your Recreation Plan exhibit R presentation to FERC. I am sure our joint efforts in cooperation will help to create the best plan for the recreating public. If you need any additional information in order to understand the foregoing comments please let us know.

Sincerely,


GERI V. BERGEN
Forest Supervisor



Caring for the Land and Serving People

Comments by United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Tahoe National Forest (Letter dated 5/1/89)

(Comment numbers correspond with numbers in right hand margin of agency letter)

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 1

Licensee feels that since Ahart Campground is not within the FERC Project Boundary, and it pre-dates the Project by approximately 30 years, it is not appropriate to include it in the Revised Recreation Plan, nor should the Licensee be responsible for repairs and/or improvements to the Forest Service facility.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 2

Should the recreation demand increase enough to trigger future development, Licensee feels that increasing family campground capacity at the French Meadows area by approximately 25 percent (or 30 units) is appropriate and will be enough additional capacity. Licensee would not be opposed to adding language which would limit the number of additional units to 30, but less if the USFS feels 30 is not necessary.

The location selected for the future family campsite is one of the future sites of the original recreation plan. If resource studies indicate that this site is not suitable, an alternative location will be sought. Licensee feels that the sight should be in the immediate vicinity of French Meadows Reservoir since the use which will have triggered the new facility occurred there.

Licensee feels that the design standards of components that are described in the plan are comparable to existing components. Though flush toilets were originally constructed, Licensee feels that handicap accessible, vault-type toilets are acceptable and appropriate.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 3

Fourteen weekend days constitutes half of the two-day weekends of a typical recreation season. Licensee feels that ten weekend days is not enough to warrant additional facilities.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 4

Licensee's objective is to construct one additional 50 PAOT group camp if the demand requires it. Separating the same site into two-25 PAOT group sites is acceptable.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 5

Plan states that "as determined by Licensee and USFS." It will be changed to "as determined, on site, by Licensee and USFS."

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 6

The actual proposed spur width will be 12 feet; ten foot width paved and one foot shoulders on each side. The plan will be clarified.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 7

"Backward" spurs are not part of the plan. These spurs will accommodate parties who wish to tent camp. Only 18 percent of the spurs at French Meadows and Lewis Campgrounds are "backwards." None of these spurs are proposed to be lengthened.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 8

See response to Comment No. 7

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 9

As discussed at our previous meetings, Licensee feels that resurfacing and repairing internal campground roads is USFS responsibility as a result of the 1965 O & M Agreement. The USFS has performed the same work at French Meadows Campground as part of the O & M Agreement.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 10

The drawings provided at the meetings were conceptual at best. The configuration of the parking spurs is not critical at this point but the number of spurs and their width and length are. The plan adequately describes the number and dimensions of spurs to be added. Locations will be determined in the field by the Licensee and USFS. Licensee understands that some tree removal will be necessary.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 11

Licensee is unaware of an existing sanitation problem at Ralston Afterbay. Licensee is aware that commercial rafting companies use this area as a "put-in" point for their excursions. USFS contacted the Licensee with a letter dated 2/24/89 outlining a proposal that would be funded by the commercial rafting companies to install a vault toilet facility at the afterbay. Licensee approves of this proposal as long as it is installed above the 100-year flood plain and that operation and maintenance is funded and performed by the rafting companies. Also, location of the facility would have to be such that it would not interfere with Project operations.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 12

Licensee observed no overnight camping at Duncan Creek Diversion during the recreation resource study in 1988 and is unaware of any previous years records of overnight camping activity. Licensee has not observed anything to indicate that there may be a sanitation problem in this area. Licensee is aware of the dispersed fishing activity below the Diversion dam, in Duncan Creek.

A literature review of archaeological records indicate that the USFS has recorded a site southwest of the Diversion dam, near the access road (FS-05-17-54-267). Also, there is an historic ditch that is in the immediate vicinity of Duncan Creek that dates back to 1892, according to records.

Due to the topography, the riparian habitat of Duncan Creek, and the uncertainty of effects of development to the archaeology, Licensee feels that keeping this area open to dispersed recreation, with no facilities, is an appropriate and best use.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 13

The plan adequately separates McGuire Picnic Area, McGuire Boat Launch, and McGuire Beach.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 14

Second sentence shall be changed to clarify that reference is being made to boat ramp parking.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 15

Fourth sentence shall read "use at McGuire Beach is light." The description of the changing pavilion is accurate and is relevant. Licensee agrees that the pavilion is not needed and that the restrooms will be retained as stated in the plan.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 16

Licensee will add a cable security system at one parking area at McGuire Boat Launch and the upper parking area at French Meadows Boat Launch.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 17

A Table of Contents will be added to the plan.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 18

Licensee disagrees and feels that the "existing standards," are, for the most part, adequate. The plan is addressing and correcting all project facilities that are not "to standard."

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 19

Plan will be changed to correctly identify Granite Chief as a Wilderness Area. Earlier telephone conversations with representatives of the Truckee Ranger District indicated that the Granite Chief area was not yet designated as a Wilderness Area, but should be implemented in 1989. The District Resource Officer clarified this during a May 10, 1989 telephone conversation by stating that Granite Chief became a Wilderness Area in 1986 but the Wilderness Management Plan will be approved sometime in 1989.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 20

Table 2 reflects 1988 recreation use at the facilities within the FERC Project Boundary. Licensee concurs that French Meadows Campground and Lewis Campground was at 40 percent capacity during the 1988 recreation season. However, Licensee does not agree that a facility that is used at 48 percent of capacity over a recreation season is considered to be "above capacity." The USFS records available to Licensee does not breakdown group camp use for individual weekends, just overall season use. However, 60 to 68 percent capacity at the group camps seems high and did not reach this capacity on two day weekends during the 1988 recreation season.

Licensee recognizes an average recreation season being 125 days in length (May 15 - September 15). In 1988, the Project facilities were open prior to Memorial Day and after Labor Day.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 21

Licensee feels that the road between Auburn and the Project Area is a major reason recreation use differs from similar type facilities found in the region. Driving a large RV or towing a boat or travel trailer on this road can be somewhat difficult, and users can more easily drive to other alternative recreation areas with the same type of recreation opportunities.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 22

Text will be changed to include swimming as a recreation activity at Ralston Afterbay.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 23

First sentence will be changed to "one of the more pressing ..." The remainder of the paragraph is what was agreed upon at our meetings. The word

"some" will be changed to "many" and "34" will be changed to "25 - 35." Third sentence will be changed to "15 - 20 spurs to be lengthened."

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 24

"In terms of capacity" will be added.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 25

Funding is necessary for the proposed recreation facility improvements and Licensee will perform the improvements numbered one through eight, outlined on pages 21 - 24. It should be pointed out that USFS states that it will only honor its O & M Agreement so long as funds are available.

The USFS, DWR, and Licensee all agreed that the current plan's "staged development" was not in the best interest of the Project recreation needs. Licensee agrees that the current plan would be obsolete once the Revised Recreation Plan is approved by FERC. All involved parties have agreed to this.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 26

Licensee agrees and will add "Licensee will consult with USFS prior to construction to ensure that construction activities will have as little effect as possible on recreation activities at the Project."



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Eldorado
National
Forest

100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667
(916) 622-5061

Reply To: 2720

Date: April 24, 1989

Mr. Stephen J. Jones
Placer County Water Agency
P. O. Box 667
Foresthill, CA 95631

RECEIVED
APR 27 1989
POWER SYSTEMS DIVISION

COMMENT No

Dear Mr. Jones:

This responds to your request of March 17, 1989 for review of the Revised Recreation Plan for FERC Project No. 2079 (dated March 1989).

Our comments on the Plan follow, keyed to the appropriate pages in the Plan:

Page 2, 3rd paragraph - If you don't plan to include a copy of the 1965 agreement as an appendix, it may be desirable to further clarify this paragraph by adding: that the USFS agreed to administer, operate, and maintain, repair, renew, and replace facilities "federal appropriations permitting" (B-2). Further, that "The performance of this agreement by the Service is contingent upon the appropriation of sufficient funds to enable the Service to perform" (C-3). And that, if unable to carry out its obligations under the agreement the USFS would permit the Agency to operate and maintain the facilities at the Agency's expense (C-4).

Page 2, last paragraph - As a matter of historical background and information it may be desirable to note that PCWA's original estimates of projected recreation use - and therefore, the proposed facility construction schedule - were based, to a large extent, on the assumption that the Soda Springs-Riverton Road would be extended across the Hell Hole Dam. This would have placed the heavily used Crystal Basin Recreation Area only minutes away from the Hell Hole and French Meadows areas. If this tie-through should be completed in the future, it could significantly increase recreation traffic and use pressures in the Hell Hole-French Meadows areas.

Page 3 - As you know, we do not agree with FERC's direction that certain sites now be excluded because they are outside the project boundary. Our reasons are included in my letter of 2/14/89 to Antonia Lattin (copy enclosed). FERC and PCWA did consider these sites "project-related" or "project-induced" even though they were outside the project boundary. (For your information, the District is proposing to include both the Big Meadows and Middle Meadows sites on the new Forest Service reservation system, operated by Mystix Corp. We are hopeful that utilization of Mystix's advertising and marketing expertise will expand public awareness and use of these sites.)



Page 11 - Shouldn't the boat ramps be included in this listing? What about Hell Hole Vista?

Page 12, 3rd paragraph - A minor point, but one you may want to correct for the sake of consistency: you have referred to 75 family camp sites at French Meadows, 40 camp sites at Lewis, etc. Elsewhere in the Plan you refer to camp and picnic units, which is the term the Forest Service uses and prefers. We use the word "site" to describe the total facility (for example, French Meadows site has 75 units; the formula at bottom of page 15 would read "# of units", rather than "# of sites").

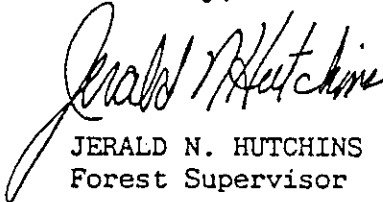
Page 13, 2nd paragraph - suggest adding at the end of the paragraph: "Although not within the project boundary, Big Meadows is considered project-induced. Its location is the only site within a reasonable distance of the reservoir which was suitable for development of a family campground". Also, although Middle Meadows is not considered within the project boundary, it is still a PCWA-built facility and is covered in the 1965 agreement. Suggest that it be mentioned here as constructed by the Licensee as part of the original recreation plan.

Page 29, 1st paragraph - Add at end of paragraph: "The Rubicon River was recommended for Scenic River classification in Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan of 1988".

For the most part we believe the revised Plan is an accurate representation of the past and present situation - at least as far as the Eldorado is concerned. We are comfortable with the Agency's rehabilitation proposals for the Eldorado portion of the project, through the License period. However, should significant, unpredicted pressures develop for some reason - such as new or improved access - we would, of course, want to take another look at the recreation picture.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review the Plan.

Sincerely,



JERALD N. HUTCHINS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

cc:
Georgetown RD
Tahoe NF

Comments by United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Eldorado National Forest (Letter dated 4/24/89)

(Comment numbers correspond with numbers in right hand margin of agency letter)

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 1

It is not necessary to include the entire 1965 O & M Agreement as part of this recreation plan. However, "federal appropriations permitting" will be added to the end of the paragraph for clarity. Since this agreement has been executed, the Licensee has never been notified by the USFS that there were not sufficient funds available to perform its obligations as specified in the agreement.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 2

At the time the original recreation plan was developed, a proposed road project was being considered in the area. However, all agencies, including the USFS, have discussed the proposed road project at our meetings and have concluded that it will probably never be constructed.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 3

Licensee is in agreement with FERC that Big Meadows Campground and Middle Meadows Group Camp be excluded from the FERC Project Boundary. Licensee is proposing improvements at Big Meadows even though not in the Project Boundary. Middle Meadows Group Camp has been closed by Eldorado National Forest since 1980 due to lack of use.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 4

These facilities have been added to the table. A footnote has been added to show that it is a facility without discrete units and will show number of parking spaces.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 5

Licensee agrees and will change the word "sites" to "units" where appropriate.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 6

Licensee recognizes that Big Meadows Campground and Middle Meadows Group Camp are part of the original recreation plan as it pertains to the Davis-Grunsky Contract and the 1965 O & M Agreement, but is not part of the FERC Project because it lies outside of the FERC Project Boundary.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 7

The sentence will be added as requested.

Comments by California Department of Water Resources (Letter dated 4/18/89)

(Comment numbers correspond with numbers in right hand margin of agency letter)

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 1

All proposed improvements are within the areas covered under the Davis-Grunsky Agreement.