

COVER SHEET

FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE
UPPER NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER PROJECT

Project No. 2105-089

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES vii to xviii

FEIS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
SUMMARY.....	xix
1.0 PURPOSE OF ACTION AND NEED FOR POWER.....	1-1
1.1 PURPOSE OF ACTION	1-1
1.2 NEED FOR POWER.....	1-3
1.3 INTERVENTIONS	1-6
1.4 SCOPING PROCESS.....	1-7
1.5 AGENCY CONSULTATION	1-8
1.6 SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT	1-9
1.7 COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS.....	1-11
2.0 PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES.....	2-1
2.1 APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL	2-1
2.1.1 Project Description and Operation	2-1
2.1.1.1 Project Description	2-1
2.1.1.2 Project Boundary	2-3
2.1.1.3 Project Operation.....	2-3
2.1.2 Proposed Environmental Measures	2-4
2.2 MODIFICATIONS TO APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL	2-11
2.2.1 Mandatory Conditions	2-11
2.2.1.1 Section 18 of the Federal Power Act—Authority to Require Fishways	2-11
2.2.1.2 Section 4(e) Conditions	2-11
2.2.2 Staff’s Alternative	2-12
2.3 NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	2-14
2.4 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY	2-14
2.4.1 Federal Government Takeover of the Project	2-14
2.4.2 Issuing a Nonpower License	2-15
2.4.3 Retiring the Project.....	2-15
3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS.....	3-1
3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE UPPER NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER BASIN	3-1
3.2 SCOPE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ANALYSIS	3-3
3.2.1 Geographic Scope.....	3-3

3.2.2	Temporal Scope.....	3-4
3.3	PROPOSED ACTION AND ACTION ALTERNATIVES	3-4
3.3.1	Water Resources.....	3-4
3.3.1.1	Affected Environment	3-4
3.3.1.2	Environmental Effects	3-47
3.3.1.3	Cumulative Effects on Water Resources.....	3-89
3.3.1.4	Unavoidable Adverse Effects. None.	3-90
3.3.2	Aquatic Resources	3-90
3.3.2.1	Affected Environment	3-90
3.3.2.2	Environmental Effects	3-101
3.3.2.3	Cumulative Effects on Aquatic Resources.....	3-153
3.3.2.4	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-154
3.3.3	Terrestrial Resources.....	3-154
3.3.3.1	Affected Environment	3-154
3.3.3.2	Environmental Effects	3-169
3.3.3.3	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-184
3.3.4	Threatened and Endangered Species.....	3-184
3.3.4.1	Affected Environment	3-184
3.3.4.2	Environmental Effects	3-190
3.3.4.3	Cumulative Effects on Bald Eagles.....	3-199
3.3.4.4	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-199
3.3.5	Recreational Resources	3-199
3.3.5.1	Affected Environment	3-199
3.3.5.2	Environmental Effects	3-219
3.3.5.3	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-258
3.3.6	Land Use and Aesthetic Resources	3-258
3.3.6.1	Affected Environment	3-258
3.3.6.2	Environmental Effects	3-275
3.3.6.3	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-289
3.3.7	Cultural Resources.....	3-289
3.3.7.1	Affected Environment	3-289
3.3.7.2	Environmental Effects	3-316
3.3.7.3	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-324
3.3.8	Socioeconomic Resources.....	3-324
3.3.8.1	Affected Environment	3-324
3.3.8.2	Environmental Effects	3-327
3.3.8.3	Unavoidable Adverse Effects	3-329
3.4	NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE.....	3-329
3.5	IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES.....	3-329
3.6	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORT-TERM USES AND LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY	3-330

4.0	DEVELOPMENTAL ANALYSIS	4-1
4.1	POWER AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT.....	4-1
4.2	POWER AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE STAFF- RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE.....	4-1
4.3	POWER AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE	4-37
4.4	POWER AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT RETIREMENT ALTERNATIVE.....	4-37
5.0	STAFF’S CONCLUSIONS	5-1
5.1	COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE	5-1
5.1.1	Staff’s Modifications to PG&E’s Proposal	5-1
5.1.2	Other Measures Not Included in Staff’s Alternative.....	5-4
5.1.3	No-action Alternative	5-4
5.1.4	Recommended Alternative	5-4
5.1.4.1	Water Resource Measures	5-29
5.1.4.2	Aquatic Resource Measures	5-31
5.1.4.3	Recreation Resource Measures.....	5-35
5.1.5	Conclusion.....	5-39
5.2	CUMULATIVE EFFECTS SUMMARY	5-39
5.3	FISH AND WILDLIFE AGENCY RECOMMENDATIONS	5-41
5.4	CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE AND OTHER RESOURCE PLANS	5-60
5.5	RELATIONSHIP OF LICENSE PROCESS TO LAWS AND POLICIES.....	5-62
5.5.1	Water Quality Certification	5-62
5.5.2	Section 18 of the Federal Power Act—Authority to Require Fishways	5-62
5.5.3	Section 4(e) of the Federal Power Act	5-63
5.5.4	Endangered Species Act.....	5-63
5.5.5	National Historic Preservation Act.....	5-65
5.5.6	California Environmental Quality Act	5-66
6.0	LITERATURE CITED.....	6-1
7.0	LIST OF PREPARERS	7-1
8.0	LIST OF RECIPIENTS.....	8-1
	APPENDIX A UNFFR PROJECT—FINAL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.....	A-1

APPENDIX B UNFFR PROJECT—FOREST SERVICE FINAL SECTION 4(E)
CONDITIONS..... B-1

APPENDIX C STAFF RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE UPPER
NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER HYDROELECTRIC
PROJECT DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ... C-1

APPENDIX D ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF POTENTIAL
MEASURES TO CONTROL WATER TEMPERATURE IN THE
NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER..... D-1

APPENDIX E BASIS FOR FURTHER EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF
POTENTIAL CONTROL MEASURES ON WATER TEMPERATURE
IN THE NORTH FORK FEATHER RIVER BASIN E-1

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1-1.	General site location of the Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project.	1-2
Figure 1-2.	Feather River basin map.....	1-4
Figure 3-1.	North Fork Feather River hydroelectric projects	3-2
Figure 3-2.	Lake Almanor (NF1) end-of-day water surface elevation and storage, water years 1970–2003.	3-11
Figure 3-3.	Water quality and water temperature monitoring sampling stations for the Upper North Fork Feather River Project area.	3-22
Figure 3-4.	Vertical profiles of water temperature for Lake Almanor near Canyon dam along with schematics of gate elevations and general bed profiles of Prattville intake and Canyon dam outlet, mid-July and September/October	3-29
Figure 3-5.	Schematic of summer water temperatures displaying relative flows and water storage in the North Fork Feather River Basin under typical existing conditions.....	3-63
Figure 3-6.	Representative Prattville intake and discharge-weighted Caribou powerhouse modeled water temperatures for normal, reasonable extreme, and extreme hydrological and meteorological conditions.....	3-67
Figure 3-7.	Representative modeled water temperatures for normal hydrological and meteorological conditions with Rock Creek-Cresta Project required first 5-year minimum flows and Poe reach required minimum flows.....	3-68
Figure 3-8.	Representative modeled water temperatures for dry hydrological and reasonable extreme meteorological conditions with Rock Creek-Cresta Project required first 5-year minimum flows and Poe reach required minimum flows	3-69
Figure 3-9.	Representative modeled water temperatures for critically dry hydrological and extreme meteorological conditions with Rock Creek-Cresta Project required first 5-year minimum flows and Poe reach required minimum flows.	3-70
Figure 3-10.	Total WUA values for species and life stages evaluated (one velocity calibration method) in the Seneca reach.....	3-106

Figure 3-11. Total WUA values for species and life stages evaluated (one velocity calibration method) in the upper Belden reach.	3-107
Figure 3-12. Total WUA values for rainbow trout spawning as evaluated (one velocity calibration method) in the Seneca reach.....	3-108
Figure 3-13. Total WUA values for rainbow trout spawning as evaluated (one velocity calibration method) in the upper Belden reach	3-109
Figure 3-14. Total WUA values for species and life stages evaluated (one velocity calibration method) in lower Butt Creek.....	3-114
Figure 3-15. PG&E and FS public recreation sites in the UNFFR Project vicinity	3-202
Figure 3-16. Proposed recreation facility improvements and key viewing points in the UNFFR Project area.	3-223

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1-1.	Actual and projected generation resources in the California-Mexico Power Area	1-5
Table 1-2.	Actual and forecasted generation, demand, and reserve capability for CA/MX and WECC.....	1-6
Table 3-1.	Meteorological summary for Chester, California.....	3-5
Table 3-2.	Summary of daily average flow discharge (cfs) data, by month and overall, for the project vicinity	3-6
Table 3-3.	Summary of Lake Almanor end-of-day water surface elevations, water years 1970-2003	3-12
Table 3-4.	PG&E water rights for the UNFFR Project.....	3-15
Table 3-5.	Water quality criteria for the UNFFR Project.....	3-19
Table 3-6.	Range of general water quality parameters measured in project waters by PG&E in 2000, 2002, and 2003	3-23
Table 3-7.	Monitoring locations for Commission-approved Rock Creek-Cresta water temperature monitoring plan and summary of daily average water temperatures for continuous monitoring in June through September of 1999 through 2004	3-26
Table 3-8.	Summary of dissolved oxygen concentrations monitored by PG&E during 2000	3-33
Table 3-9.	Summary of total coliform and fecal coliform densities monitored by PG&E during 2000 to 2002.....	3-36
Table 3-10.	Fish and crayfish tissue analysis results for silver, mercury, and PCBs in Butt Valley reservoir, Belden forebay and Belden reach, 2001–2003	3-42
Table 3-11.	Fish tissue bioaccumulation screening-sampling protocols	3-53
Table 3-12.	Sulfide and dissolved iron and manganese concentrations in Lake Almanor and the Seneca reach, August to November, 2001	3-81
Table 3-13.	Fish species identified in recent surveys (1996-2002) of waters in the UNFFR Project	3-91

Table 3-14.	Species composition and relative abundance in Seneca reach, Belden reach, upper Butt Creek, and lower Butt Creek, 2000–2002	3-95
Table 3-15.	Total number of trout (rainbow and brown) caught by anglers in project waters surveyed in 2000, by size range.....	3-96
Table 3-16.	Recommended minimum flow releases from Canyon dam (Seneca reach) as measured at gage NF-2.....	3-102
Table 3-17.	Recommended minimum flow releases from Belden dam (Belden reach) as measured at gage NF-70.....	3-102
Table 3-18.	Recommended pulse-flow releases for the Seneca and Belden reaches.....	3-116
Table 3-19.	Recommended Belden reach recreational flow schedule.....	3-126
Table 3-20.	Naming convention matrix for modeled scenarios in Lake Almanor.....	3-137
Table 3-21.	Vegetation series mapped within the UNFFR Project boundary	3-155
Table 3-22.	Special-status plant species that are known to occur within the UNFFR Project area	3-158
Table 3-23.	Noxious and invasive weeds documented in the UNFFR Project area.....	3-160
Table 3-24.	Special-status species that could occur or are documented to occur in the project vicinity.....	3-162
Table 3-25.	Reproduction in 14 bald eagle nesting territories in the UNFFR Project vicinity, 1988-2001	3-188
Table 3-26.	Public recreation sites on UNFFR Project reservoirs.....	3-201
Table 3-27.	Recreation visits to campgrounds at the project reservoirs in 2001	3-210
Table 3-28.	Average daily boating use on Lake Almanor between May 12 and October 13, 2001	3-211
Table 3-29.	Public recreation sites on UNFFR Project River reaches.....	3-212
Table 3-30.	Recreation visits to campgrounds in the project reaches in 2001	3-214

Table 3-31.	Summary of the accessibility of existing public, FS, and licensee recreation facilities	3-217
Table 3-32.	Belden reach recreation river flow schedule	3-252
Table 3-33.	Project-related roads	3-266
Table 3-34.	Project recreation roads	3-268
Table 3-35.	Key viewing points in the UNFFR Project area	3-270
Table 3-36.	VQO classifications and guidelines	3-273
Table 3-37.	ROS classifications and guidelines	3-274
Table 3-38.	Prehistoric or multicomponent sites identified within the APE	3-292
Table 3-39.	Potential TCPs identified by PG&E’s ethnographic study in the APE.....	3-300
Table 3-40.	Ethnohistoric Maidu villages in the UNFFR Project vicinity	3-303
Table 3-41.	Historic archaeological sites and structures identified in the APE	3-307
Table 3-42.	Race and poverty in UNFFR Project area	3-326
Table 4-1.	Staff assumptions for economic analysis of the UNFFR Project.....	4-2
Table 4-2.	Summary of the annual net benefits for PG&E’s proposed action, PG&E’s proposed action with additional staff-adopted measures, PG&E’s proposed action with additional staff-adopted measures and mandatory measures, the no-action alternative, and project retirement for the UNFFR Project.....	4-3
Table 4-3.	Summary of capital and one-time costs, annual costs, annual energy costs, and total annualized costs of environmental measures proposed by PG&E and recommended by staff and others for the UNFFR Project	4-4
Table 5-1.	Fish and wildlife agency recommendations for the Upper North Fork Feather River Project	5-43

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

°C	degrees Celsius
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
Albion	Albion Environmental, Inc.
APE	area of potential effects
AW	American Whitewater
Basin Plan	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan
BIA	U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs
BMP	best management practice
BRM	bedrock mortars
CalEPPC	California Exotic Pest Plant Council
CA/MX	California-Mexico Power Area
CARB1	Caribou No. 1 powerhouse
CARB2	Caribou No. 2 powerhouse
CCC	California Coastal Commission
CDFA	California Department of Food and Agriculture
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CDPR	California Department of Parks and Recreation
CDWR	California Department of Water Resources
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
cfs	cubic feet per second
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
COEHHA	California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
Commission	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
CRLF	California red-legged frog
CRMP	Cultural Resources Management Plan
CSC	state species of concern
CSUCRF	California State University Chico Research Foundation
CTR-FALP	California Toxics Rule, Freshwater Aquatic Life Protection
CVRWQCB	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
DO	dissolved oxygen
EBNFFR	East Branch of the North Fork Feather River
EIR	environmental impact report
EIS	environmental impact statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ERC	Ecological Resources Committee (for the Rock Creek-Cresta Project, FERC Project No. 1962)
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FDA	U.S. Food and Drug Administration
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FPA	Federal Power Act
FS	U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

FSS	FS sensitive species
FWS	Fish and Wildlife Service
HPMP	Historic Properties Management Plan
HSC	habitat suitability criteria
HSP	hazardous substances plan
I&E	interpretation and education
IFIM	Instream Flow Incremental Methodology
IIHR	Iowa Institute of Hydraulic Research
Interior	U.S. Department of the Interior
KVP	key viewing point
kWh	kilowatt-hours
LAC	limits-of-acceptable change
LACSP	Lake Almanor Cloud Seeding Project
LART	Lake Almanor Recreation Trail
LRMP	Land and Resource Management Plan
LWD	large woody debris
µmhos/cm	micromhos per centimeter
MCDG	Maidu Cultural and Development Group
mg/l	milligram(s) per liter
MIF	minimum instream flow
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTBE	methyl-tert-butyl ether
MW	megawatt
MYLF	mountain yellow-legged frog
National Register	National Register of Historic Places
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NERC	North American Electric Reliability Council
NFFR	North Fork Feather River
NFS	National Forest System
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NOAA Fisheries	National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service
NPS	U.S. National Park Service
NTU	nephelometric turbidity unit(s)
O&M	operations and maintenance
ORV	off-road vehicle
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PAR	PAR Environmental Services, Inc.
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyl
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric Company
pH	potential hydrogen (a measure for acidity and alkalinity)
PHABSIM	Physical Habitat Simulation

QA/QC	quality assurance/quality control
REA	ready for environmental analysis
RFIP	recreation flow implementation plan
RRMP	recreation resource management plan
SA	Settlement Agreement
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SMP	shoreline management plan
SWRCB	State Water Resources Control Board
TAF	thousand acre-feet
TCP	traditional cultural properties
TON	threshold odor number
TPZ	timberland production zone
TRG	technical review group
UNFFR	Upper North Fork Feather River
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VELB	valley elderberry longhorn beetle
WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council
WQC	water quality certification
WQMP	water quality monitoring program
WUA	weighted useable area
WY	water year