

3.8 Recreation

This section summarizes information about the recreational resources and uses within the project area and the potential impacts to recreation associated with implementation of the No-Action Alternative, the Proposed Action, and Alternative 1. The project's conformance with the federal and state Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts (WSRAs) are also evaluated. The following evaluation is based on a review of local land use plans and policies specific to recreational uses and field reconnaissance to identify potential recreational opportunities in the project area.

3.8.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Setting

Trinity County has a vast array of recreational resources, such as rivers, lakes, wildernesses, and scenic byways. The major rivers within Trinity County are the Trinity River, South Fork Trinity River, North Fork Trinity River, New River, Mad River, and Eel River. These rivers provide recreational opportunities such as fishing, kayaking, rafting, recreational mining, and camping.

The Trinity River was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River in 1981 by the Secretary of the Interior. The designated reach extends from Lewiston Dam downstream to Weitchpec. Two tributaries to the Trinity River are also designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers: the New River and the North Fork Trinity River. These tributaries enter the Trinity River downstream of the rehabilitation sites.

The TRD includes two large impoundments, Trinity Lake and Lewiston Reservoir. These lakes provide recreational opportunities, such as boating, fishing, and camping. Trinity Lake is situated in the northeast section of Trinity County and has a surface area of approximately 16,400 acres. Lewiston Reservoir is immediately downstream of Trinity Dam and is operated as a re-regulation facility that provides water to Whiskeytown Reservoir.

There is one congressionally designated wilderness area in the Trinity River basin. The Salmon-Trinity Alps provides recreational opportunities such as hiking, backpacking, horse packing, hunting, and angling. The wilderness area is located in the northern part of Trinity County and is the primary watershed for the Trinity River.

Two scenic byways cross Trinity County: the Trinity Heritage Scenic Byway (SR 3) and the Trinity Scenic Byway. These byways provide a scenic travel route through Trinity County for residents and visitors. The Trinity Heritage Scenic Byway includes 120 miles of road from south of Hayfork, north past Trinity Lake to Edgewood at Interstate 5 (I-5). The Trinity Scenic Byway follows SR 299 between Redding and Arcata, California. This byway is approximately 140 miles long and bisects Trinity County as it parallels the Trinity River.

The federal government manages about 72 percent of the land in Trinity County. BLM is the primary land manager for public lands between Lewiston Dam and the confluence of the North Fork Trinity River and the mainstem Trinity River. The STNF manages the majority of federal land between the confluence of the North Fork Trinity River and the mainstem Trinity River and the confluence of the New River and

the Trinity River. Six Rivers National Forest manages federal lands within a basin between the New River and the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation. The HVT manages lands within the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation.

The Trinity River provides year-around recreation opportunities. These opportunities include boating, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, inner-tubing, fishing, swimming, wading, camping, gold panning, nature study, picnicking, hiking, and sightseeing. In addition, fishing for Chinook salmon, steelhead, and rainbow and brown trout are major recreational activities on the Trinity River throughout the year. With the development and implementation of the TRRP, the type, location, and timing of recreational activities continues to evolve.

Developed recreation areas along the Trinity River consist of private campgrounds, resorts, and lodges; public campgrounds and picnic areas; and fishing access sites. Approximately 35 developed recreation sites are located within along the Trinity River corridor. More than 200 river access sites were inventoried in 1979 between Lewiston Dam and Weitchpec.

Local Setting

There is a variety of residential subdivisions and commercial enterprises along the river corridor. All of the rehabilitation sites include residential developments, and the Valdor Gulch and Elkhorn sites have some degree of commercial development (e.g., campgrounds, boat launches). Much of the private land in this region was subdivided in the early 1970s, and the area has been developed with numerous residences since that time. Lands within the project area continue to be developed because of the availability of developable lands in close proximity to SR 299, and a locally recognized mild micro-climate within easy commuting distance of Weaverville. Factors contributing to this growth have included availability of private land on relatively level floodplains now somewhat protected from flooding by the dams, County zoning practices, abundant water from the river, and the attractive recreational/environmental setting.

Despite the presence of roads and development, public river access opportunities are limited in the vicinity of the rehabilitation sites. Currently, there are three developed river access points and five undeveloped (dispersed) recreation sites between Junction City and Helena. Table 3.8-1 provides a summary of these sites, and Figure 3.8-1 shows recreation areas in the general vicinity of the rehabilitation sites. These recreation areas provide a variety of recreation opportunities such as fishing, whitewater rafting, picnicking, and wildlife viewing.

As the manager of public lands along the Trinity River corridor between Lewiston and Helena, BLM is responsible for monitoring recreation visitor use within the Trinity River Special Recreation Management Area. Monitoring data indicate approximately 80,000 Recreational Visitor Days (RVDs) were spent on Trinity River recreation in 2005. Of these RVDs, the Junction City Campground and Bagdad boat launch received approximately 25 percent of this use. Recent estimates of recreational use of the Trinity River and Trinity Lake suggest that \$13 million is spent by recreational users in Trinity County, with non-county residents accounting for about 75 percent of this total.

TABLE 3.8-1.
RECREATION WITHIN THE VICINITY OF THE CANYON CREEK REHABILITATION SITES

Developed Recreation	
Junction City Campground and River Access	BLM-managed campsite that provides overnight and day-use facilities. River access is via a gravel bar located across SR 299 from the campground.
Big Foot Campground	Privately owned facility that provides overnight and day-use accommodations, a guide service, boat launch, and convenience store
Bagdad boat launch	BLM-managed boat launch site and day-use facility for whitewater recreation and drift boats
Dispersed Recreation	
Cooper's Bar	A private gravel bar used by nearby residents for various recreational activities
County-owned boat launch	County property commonly used as boat launch site
Lime Point and Lime Point Road	Lime Point is a gravel bar located on the left side of the river which provides for river access. Lime Point Road is an unimproved road on the right side of the river which provides access from SR 299 to the County property commonly used as a boat launch site.
Raft launch site used by a commercial outfitter	A raft launch site that is accessible from SR 299 and is commonly used by a commercial outfitter as raft launch site
Pear Tree Gulch	A gravel bar accessible from SR 299 that is used for pedestrian river access

3.8.2 RELEVANT PLANS AND POLICIES

Federal

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

Congress enacted the National WSRA in 1968 in an effort to protect free-flowing rivers with “outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values.” The entire mainstem of the Trinity River was designated as a National Wild and Scenic River by the Secretary of the Interior in 1981, primarily because of the river’s anadromous fishery. Approximately 97.5 miles of the river are also classified as recreational under the National WSRA. BLM is the river management agency from Lewiston to Helena, and the STNF is the river management agency

Insert Figure

3.8-1 Recreation Areas in the General Vicinity of Canyon Creek Rehabilitation Sites

from Helena to the boundary of the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation. The BLM classifies the mainstem Trinity River from 100 yards below Lewiston Dam, downstream past the rehabilitation sites to Cedar Flat (an area located approximately 17 miles west of the Pear Tree Gulch Site), as recreational. The BLM's management objectives are to:

- enhance recreation opportunities related to use of the Trinity River, including mineral collection;
- maintain scenic quality along the river corridor; and
- protect and enhance the anadromous fisheries of the Trinity River.

The federal WSRA designates qualifying free-flowing river segments as wild, scenic, or recreational. The WSRA establishes requirements applicable to water resource projects affecting wild, scenic, or recreational rivers within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, as well as rivers designated on the National Rivers Inventory. Under the WSRA, a federal agency may not assist in the construction of a water resources project that would have a direct and adverse impact on the free-flowing, scenic, and natural values of a wild or scenic river. If the project would affect the free-flowing characteristics of a designated river or unreasonably diminish the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values present in the area, such activities should be undertaken in a manner that would minimize adverse impacts and should be developed in consultation with the administering agency. The Trinity River was designated a Wild and Scenic River due in part to its "outstandingly remarkable resource," the fishery (P.L. 90-542). Consultation required under Section 7 of the WSRA was prepared to specifically address requirements under the federal WSRA and is provided as Appendix D.

State

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

Under the California WSRA, the segment of the Trinity River that encompasses the Proposed Action is designated as "scenic" and "recreational." These classifications were designated in 1980, a year prior to the federal designation. The Public Resources Code (5093.53[b]) defines "scenic rivers" as being "those rivers or segments of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads." "Recreational rivers" are defined in the Public Resources Code (5093.53[c]) as being "those rivers or segments of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past. There are no permits required under the State WSRA.

Local

Trinity County General Plan Goals and Objectives

The Trinity County General Plan contains goals and policies designed to guide the future physical development of the County, based on current conditions. The General Plan contains all the state-required elements, including community development and design, transportation, natural resources, health and

safety, noise, housing, economic development, public facilities and services, air quality, and recreation. The following goals and policies related to recreation issues associated with the project area were taken from the applicable elements of the General Plan (Trinity County 2001), including the Junction City Community Plan (Trinity County 1987).

County Wide Goals and Objectives

General Plan Goals

1. To retain the mountain beauty, the vast wilderness areas and the open character of Trinity County
2. To provide additional facilities for camping, picnicking, boating, and sightseeing, both public and private
3. To encourage recreation as the primary economic resource of the County

Land Use Element Goals

Cultural

Retain the rural character of Trinity County by:

- Encouraging uses that fit with the land
- Considering the “rights” of the individual when making decisions as well as the “rights” of the community
- Seeking information and cooperation from state and federal agencies within Trinity County

Economic

Maintain and enhance a viable economic base for Trinity County by:

- Encouraging tourism

Junction City Community Plan Goals and Objectives

The Junction City Community Plan covers the area centered on the Trinity River from Maxwell Creek to slightly downstream of Helena.

Economic Development

Goal: To encourage recreation development as a viable sector of the local economy

- Develop and service publicly owned access areas to the river to meet the needs of visitors

Parks and Recreation

Goal: To provide access to the Trinity River in a manner that recognizes and respects existing developments

- Ensure that future access areas or sites are designed and located so as to avoid potential conflicts with private development

Goal: To ensure that recreational uses of the Trinity River do not result in degradation of this valuable resource

- Continue to monitor recreational use of the river to ensure that additional use or access does not result in degradation of the river environment
- Utilize the BLM quarter mile corridor boundary on the Trinity River to review projects for their potential impact on recreational use of the Trinity River

Trinity County Subdivision Ordinance

The Trinity County Subdivision Ordinance, Section 16.08.130, identifies the Trinity River below Lewiston Dam as a “Public Waterway.” This ordinance requires “reasonable public access” for subdivisions on public waterways if no existing reasonable public access exists, as determined by the Planning Commission or Board of Supervisors. Reasonable public access includes access to or along a river, stream, or reservoir by highway, foot trail, bike trail, horse trail, or other means. In determining what constitutes “reasonable public access,” many factors are considered, including the type of riverbank; the various appropriate recreational, educational, and scientific uses that are possible; the likelihood of trespass on private property and reasonable means of avoiding such trespass; public safety; and other such information.

“Reasonable public access” on a public waterway pursuant to the Trinity County Subdivision Ordinance and the California Subdivision Map Act is not required for the project. However, the concept of reasonable public access is being considered because there have been trespass issues identified within the boundaries of the rehabilitation sites.

Project Consistency with the Trinity County General Plan and Community Plans

This section compares the goals and objectives of the Proposed Action to the relevant local planning policies (i.e., Trinity County General Plan and Junction City Community Plan) to determine if there are any inconsistencies.

The goals and objectives described in Chapter 1 are generally compatible with the applicable General Plan goals and policies summarized above. The overall goal of the Proposed Action is to rehabilitate the sites so that they function in a manner that is closer to historic conditions (e.g., pre-Lewiston Dam). Although there will be excavation of alluvial materials along the Trinity River that would result in temporary and short-term interruption of public and private access to the river within each of the rehabilitation sites, the project would be temporary and will include mitigation measures intended to reduce impacts to recreational values during project implementation.

In the long-term, opening of the floodplain may allow for increased public use of the river at some rehabilitation sites. Additionally, placement of excavated materials at the Pear Tree Gulch site will facilitate BLM’s long-term goal to provide recreational access at this location.

3.8.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES/IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Methodology

The analysis consists of identifying recreational resources (parks and recreation facilities) in or near the site boundaries and determining whether implementation of the Proposed Action would have an impact on these resources. This analysis is a qualitative assessment of the impacts to potential recreational uses associated with this segment of the Trinity River.

In addition to evaluating the impacts on recreation opportunities, the project was evaluated for consistency with Trinity County recreation objectives and both State and Federal Wild and Scenic River designations. The WSRA Section 7 Determination for the Canyon Creek Rehabilitation Project is included as Appendix D.

Significance Criteria

Impacts associated with recreational uses are considered significant if the project would:

- conflict with established or planned recreational uses within the project area;
- substantially affect existing recreational opportunities; or
- result in an increase in the use of the existing neighborhood, regional parks, public lands in general, or other recreational facilities such that substantial deterioration of these facilities would occur or be accelerated.

The following criteria were also used to determine significant impacts to riverine recreation:

- substantial increase in turbidity so as to negatively affect recreation aesthetics;
- incompatibility with the Federal or State Wild and Scenic River designation, defined as jeopardizing the river’s anadromous fishery resources or scenic and recreational qualities; or
- non-compliance with Trinity County recreation resource objectives.

Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Table 3.8-2 summarizes the potential recreation impacts resulting from implementation of the project.

TABLE 3.8-2.
 SUMMARY OF RECREATION IMPACTS FOR THE NO-PROJECT ALTERNATIVE, PROPOSED ACTION, AND ALTERNATIVE 1

Impact	Project Site	No-Action Alternative	Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Proposed Action with Mitigation	Alternative 1 with Mitigation
1. Construction associated with the project could disrupt recreation activities in the Trinity River.	All sites	NI	LS	LS	N/A ¹	N/A ¹

TABLE 3.8-2.
SUMMARY OF RECREATION IMPACTS FOR THE NO-PROJECT ALTERNATIVE, PROPOSED ACTION,
AND ALTERNATIVE 1

Impact	Project Site	No-Action Alternative	Proposed Action	Alternative 1	Proposed Action with Mitigation	Alternative 1 with Mitigation
2. Construction of the project could result in an increased safety risk to recreational users.	All sites	NI	LS	LS	N/A ¹	N/A ¹
3. Construction associated with the project could lower the river's aesthetic value for recreationists by increasing turbidity levels in the Trinity River.	All sites	NI	S	S	LS	LS
4. Implementation of the project could affect Wild and Scenic River Values.	All sites	NI	LS	LS	N/A ¹	N/A ¹

Notes:

LS = Less than Significant S = Significant SU = Significant Unavoidable
NI = No Impact B = Beneficial N/A = Not Applicable

¹Because this potential impact is less than significant, no mitigation is required.

All Sites (Conner Creek, Valdor Gulch, Elkhorn, and Pear Tree Gulch)

Impact 3.8-1: Construction associated with the project could disrupt recreation activities (boating, fishing, and swimming) in the Trinity River. ***No Impact for the No-Action Alternative; Less-than-Significant Impact for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1***

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, there would be no disruption to boating, fishing, and swimming activities within the Trinity River because construction would not occur.

Proposed Action and Alternative 1

As previously discussed, the Trinity River supports in-stream recreational uses, primarily whitewater recreation and fishing. These in-stream recreational activities take place throughout the year, but are more prevalent between the months of April and December. Access to the Trinity River is available on public and private lands, including undeveloped foot paths and improved access points. Some of these access points prohibit public use. Public access is provided on lands owned by Trinity County and BLM

lands. Where available, access to the river provides a variety of water-based recreational activities (e.g., boating, fishing, swimming).

During implementation of either the Proposed Action or Alternative 1, there would be construction equipment and activity within the floodplain and immediately adjacent to the river bank. Activities within the rehabilitation areas described in Chapter 2 may result in short-term interruptions to public access. However, river access will remain available at several public and private access points between Junction City Campground and Bagdad Boat Launch. These facilities ensure uninterrupted public access to the river on both sides of the site boundaries. This impact is considered less than significant because potential disruptions to recreational activities within the site boundaries would be temporary and public access will continue to be provided via Junction City Campground and the Bagdad Boat Launch.

Mitigation Measures

No-Action Alternative, Proposed Action, and Alternative 1

Since no significant impact was identified for these alternatives, no mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation: N/A.

Impact 3.8-2: Construction of the project could result in an increased safety risk to recreational users.
No Impact for the No-Action Alternative; Less-than-Significant Impact for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, there would be no safety risks to recreational users because construction would not occur.

Proposed Action

During construction of the Proposed Action, there would be heavy equipment activity and construction vehicle traffic directly adjacent to the Trinity River. These construction-related activities could distract recreational users (e.g., boaters, anglers) for short periods of time (3-6 weeks per site). However, since no in-channel construction would occur, the Proposed Action would not increase the safety risks associated with river-related recreation. This impact would therefore be less than significant.

Alternative 1

Potential safety risks to recreational users from construction and operation under Alternative 1 are similar to those under the Proposed Action, although Alternative 1 would require slightly less construction time and slightly less work adjacent to the Trinity River. This impact would therefore be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No-Action Alternative, Proposed Action, and Alternative 1

Since no significant impact was identified, no mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation: N/A.

Impact 3.8-3: Construction activities associated with the project could lower the Trinity River's aesthetic values for recreationists by increasing turbidity levels in the Trinity River. ***No Impact for the No-Action Alternative; Significant Impact for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1***

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, turbidity levels in the Trinity River would not increase because construction would not occur.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action could increase turbidity in the Trinity River for some distance downstream. The level of this increase is largely dependent on the flow regime at the time of the discharge. The flows typically attributed to good fishing tend to be clear; nominal increases in turbidity may affect the recreational experience of anglers. A certain increase in these levels may result in potentially significant aesthetic impacts to certain user groups. Water quality objectives for the Trinity River specifically prohibit increases in the levels of other materials in a way that causes nuisance or adversely impacts beneficial uses (i.e., recreation).

The Basin Plan includes two specific prohibitions directed at construction, logging, and other associated non-point source activities:

- The discharge of soil, silt, bark, sawdust or other organic and earthen material from any logging, construction or associated activity of whatever nature into any stream or watercourse in the basin in quantities deleterious to fish, wildlife or other beneficial uses is prohibited.
- The placing or disposal of soil, silt, bark, slash or sawdust or other organic and earthen material from any logging, construction or associated activity of whatever nature at locations where such material could pass into any stream or watercourse in the basin in quantities deleterious to fish, wildlife or other beneficial uses is prohibited.

Implementing the Proposed Action has the potential to increase turbidity and total suspended solids during construction activities. Although no in-river construction will occur, some bank sloughing may occur during these activities, resulting in some degree of turbidity within and downstream of the project boundary. Fine sediments may be suspended in the river for several hours following excavation activities. The extent of downstream sedimentation would be a function of the instream flow velocity and particle size. For example, fine-grained sediments like silts and clays can be carried several thousand feet downstream of the excavation areas, while larger-sized sediments like sands and gravels would tend to drop out of the water column within several feet of the construction limit. Increased turbidity and suspended solids levels would adversely affect water quality (refer to Section 3.5, Water Quality) and could also adversely affect anadromous fish species that are known to occur in the Trinity River (refer to Section 3.6, Fisheries Resources). This would therefore be considered a significant impact.

Alternative 1

Potential increases in turbidity levels in the Trinity River associated with construction of Alternative 1 would be less than under the Proposed Action. Similar to the Proposed Action, construction activities associated with Alternative 1 would temporarily result in turbidity within and downstream of the activity areas. However, Alternative 1 would result in less disturbed area and substantially less volume in terms of material excavated within the river channel at the Conner Creek and Elkhorn sites. Construction activities for the Valdor Gulch and Pear Tree Gulch sites are common to both action alternatives. Although the area and volume of material excavated from the river channel that would be affected under Alternative 1 are less than under the Proposed Action, fine sediments may be suspended in the river for several hours following excavation activities. This would therefore be considered a significant impact.

Mitigation Measures*No-Action Alternative*

Since no significant impact was identified, no mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation: N/A.

Proposed Action and Alternative 1

- 3a:** Turbidity increases associated with project construction activities shall not exceed the Regional Water Board water quality objectives for turbidity in the Trinity River basin. Turbidity levels are defined in nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs). The current threshold for turbidity levels in the Trinity River, as listed in the Basin Plan for the North Coast Region (2001), is summarized below.
- Turbidity shall not be increased by more than 20 percent above naturally occurring background levels. Allowable zones of dilution within which higher percentages can be tolerated may be defined for specific discharges upon the issuance of discharge permits or waiver thereof.
- 3b:** To ensure that turbidity levels do not exceed the threshold listed above during river's edge project construction activities, Reclamation or its contractor shall monitor turbidity levels 50 feet upstream and 500 feet downstream of the point of river's edge construction activities. At a minimum, field turbidity measurements shall be collected whenever a visible increase in turbidity is observed. Monitoring frequency shall be a minimum of every 2 hours during periods of increased turbidity.
- 3c:** Reclamation or its contractor shall prepare and implement a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that describes BMPs for the project. Ripping of all riparian areas is expected to stop delivery of storm water to the river; however, BMPs, including silt fences, sediment filters, dewatering activities, and routine monitoring to verify effectiveness, may be necessary. Proper implementation of erosion and sediment controls and dewatering activities shall be adequate to minimize sediment inputs into the Trinity River until river levels rise and inundate the floodplain. All sediment containment devices and erosion control devices will be inspected daily during the construction period to ensure that the devices are functioning properly. Excavated and stored materials will be kept in upland sites with erosion control properly installed and maintained. Excavated and stored materials will be staged in stable upland sites. All applicable erosion control standards will be required during stockpiling of materials.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 3.8-4: Implementation of the project could affect Wild and Scenic River values. *No Impact for the No-Action Alternative; Less-than-Significant Impact for the Proposed Action and Alternative 1*

No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, there would be no adverse impacts to Wild and Scenic River values because construction would not occur.

Proposed Action and Alternative 1

Construction and implementation of the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 would have a temporary impact on the scenic and recreational components of the Trinity River's Wild and Scenic River values. However, the impact on scenic values would be less than significant because the rehabilitation activities would enhance the overall form and function of the Trinity River, thereby enhancing the outstandingly remarkable values for which it was designated a Wild and Scenic River. Temporary impacts on the scenic quality of the river are also discussed above under Impact 3.8-3 and in Section 3.14, Aesthetics.

The impact on recreational values would also be less than significant because access to the river would be available from areas adjacent to the rehabilitation sites and because the Proposed Action and Alternative 1 do not include in-channel work that would pose a safety risk to recreational users. Temporary impacts on recreation are also discussed above under Impacts 3.8-1 and 3.8-2.

Mitigation Measures

No-Action Alternative; Proposed Action; Alternative 1

Since no significant impact was identified for these alternatives, no mitigation is required.

Significance after Mitigation: N/A.