

**Southern California Edison Bishop Creek Project Relicensing
Technical Working Groups
August 14-15, 2018, Bishop, CA**

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting Schedule

The June Technical Working Group (TWG) Resource Area Meetings were held over the course of two days, August 14 and 15, 2018, according to the following schedule. The meeting summaries below are organized in the same order.

- August 14, 9 am – 5pm
 - Cultural Resources Technical Working Group
 - Aquatic Resources Technical Working Group
- June 15, 9 am – 4pm
 - Terrestrial & Botanical Resources Technical Working Group
 - Recreation & Land Management Resources Technical Working Group

Objectives

All the technical working groups worked toward the same broad objectives:

1. Review additional information gathered on existing environment since June
2. Share and understand agency resource objectives relevant to Project resources
3. Answer questions about proposed studies, including scope and methods
4. Identify and discuss potential additional studies and their project nexus
5. Establish clear understanding of schedule and next steps

TWG Meeting Summaries

For consistency, all summaries include a list of meeting attendees and are organized according to the following agenda items:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Review Draft Charter
- Report on June Action Items' Status
- Overview of Agency Resource Objectives and Relevant Management Plans
- Review Updated Pre-Application Document (PAD) Section
- Discuss Annotated Study Plans
- Schedule, Next Steps, Action Items

Within each subsection, discussion topics are summarized, key questions and comments are listed, and action items are noted with a tag [ACTION ITEM]. All action items are then listed at the end of the summary.

I. Cultural Resource Technical Working Group

Attendees

Tristan Leong, USFS (Phone)
Sheila Irons, USFS
Jacqueline Beidl, USFS
Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt
Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt
Matt Harper, Klenischmidt
Lynn Compas, HRA

Heather Miller, HRA
Matthew Woodhall, SCE
Audry Williams, SCE
Samantha Nelson, SCE
Martin Ostendorf, SCE
Mike Harty, Kearns & West
Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

Review Draft Charter

Mike Harty reminded participants that a draft Charter outlining the Technical Working Group purpose and process was circulated in July. To date, Kearns & West has not received any comments on the draft. Mike asked that comments be submitted before the end of August [ACTION ITEM]. US Forest Service (USFS) indicated support for the charter and will submit comments on the draft.

Mike explained that while agencies are not being asked to sign the Charter, the Relicensing Team would like participants to provide an explicit affirmation of willingness to operate under the expectations outlined in the document.

Review of June Action Items

Mike Harty thanked TWG participants for the resources they have shared with the Relicensing Team since the June meetings; he noted that there are still some outstanding agency action items, which Kearns & West will follow up on. USFS directed the Team to one outstanding item: the draft Forest Plan, which is currently in its objection period, is now available on the Inyo National Forest website in the [planning documents section](#).

Finlay Anderson highlighted several items the Relicensing Team has worked on in response to requests made in June. TWG participants had asked for more information on how projects are reviewed internally at SCE to ensure that comply with cultural resources management guidelines. That information is now integrated into document describing Project O&M, which was distributed prior to the meeting. The Team has also summarized the changes to the Project boundary during the last license term in the newest Pre-Application Document (PAD) draft. Finlay will follow up with Sheila Irons to get a copy of the USFS Special Use Permit for the power line that was removed from the Project boundary during that time [ACTION ITEM].

Finlay noted that the Relicensing Team's approach to data sharing is still evolving: due to some technical difficulties with the Project website, the Team has been sharing documents via ShareFile. While that platform has served well for sharing non-confidential documents, they are still defining how to share sensitive cultural documentation that should not be publicly available.

Overview of Agency Resource Objectives & Relevant Management Plans

Finlay explained that the Relicensing Team would like a clear understanding of agency objectives in each resource area, so that they can prepare the plans with these in mind.

USFS explained that, at a minimum, USFS needs to make sure they are complying with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires federal agencies to account for and consult on the effects of undertakings they are permitting on historic properties. The study plans will provide the information needed to determine how to comply with Section 106.

The new Forest Plan has a cultural section but also incorporates Tribal-related objectives throughout the document; rather than repeat laws and regulations, the Plan focuses on opportunities for partnerships and ways to interpret and preserve sites (the Section 110-side of NHPA). USFS noted that this guidance will be most helpful when the relicensing advances to discussions about mitigation of Project effects. USFS did raise one caveat regarding their Forest Plan: they are assuming that by the end of the relicensing process the new Forest Plan will have been adopted.

USFS suggested that the BLM may have a similar guidance document the relicensing team should look at [ACTION ITEM].

Audry Williams explained that the Relicensing Team will review the Forest Plan's cultural resource objectives and FERC's ILP criteria to ensure that the study plans meet the standards and goals in those documents. Then they will share the plans with USFS for additional feedback.

Review Updated PAD Resource Section

Audry explained that the Relicensing Team continues to expand the known cultural resources information in the PAD. She provided an update on the progress of the records search: they are finished assessing records from the Eastern Information Center and will soon be doing a Heritage Search of USFS and BLM records. Lynn Compas will contact USFS to schedule that search [ACTION ITEM], and the Team will integrate the results of all their searches into the PAD. Cultural resources in the PAD are now designated using Smithsonian, USFS, and BLM numbering for easy cross-referencing. The Relicensing Team will create a GIS file of the Study Area and APE which will be provided to the USFS for the record search [ACTION ITEM].

SCE knows that there are a number of ancillary buildings included in the records that have been removed, so at some point they will have to determine what is extant and what is not. In addition, the Relicensing Team will include a calculation of the percentage of the Project that has been surveyed and an assessment of the accuracy of those surveys.

USFS agreed to wait to complete a review of the draft PAD until the Relicensing Team has finished its records searches and identified data gaps to inform the PAD and Study Plans.

Heather Miller noted that it would be helpful to correlate contributing and non-contributing resources to Edison's historic districts to determine which structures still need to be looked at. Audry explained that SCE does not have a GIS layer with ancillary buildings; they only have the building numbers as identified on old maps. In addition, some ancillary buildings may not have ever been mapped; someone will need to find missing Finlay suggested the SCE team discuss how to best approach this task [ACTION ITEM].

Heather suggested that mapping all those structures in GIS could be an additional study. Audry noted that the creation of a comprehensive Project-wide shapefile was done during the Big Creek Relicensing,

which was helpful for the Historic Property Management Plan (HPMP). USFS suggested additional data points for each of the structures being mapped: (1) identify whether each element is contributing or not – since once an item is identified as non-contributing, it never has to be assessed again, and (2) label ages, since everything built more than 45 years ago (as counted from 2024) will need to be addressed in the study plan.

Discuss Annotated Study Plans

Audry presented a PowerPoint which outlined study plan goals and objectives, the proposed study plan area, methods, schedule, and next steps. The detailed slides are provided in Appendix A.

Audry emphasized that the goal of the studies is to ensure that future Project facilities and operations meet FERC compliance requirements under Section 106 of NHPA, as well as meeting the objectives of the Forest Plan and BLM Resource Management Plan. The proposed study plan area includes the Area of Project Effects (APE) with a generic one-mile buffer (for purposes of records searches); it also includes several recreation areas that might need particular attention based on cultural resource impacts even though they are outside the APE.

USFS was interested in the presence of prehistoric sites. Heather explained that there were nine sites within the project boundary that were recommended as eligible based on evaluations during the last relicensing, but additional sites have been identified since that time. They tend to be small activity sites.

Audry explained that unless a stakeholder has a specific question about a specific resource, there are not likely additional cultural studies to consider, except for identification of Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP). She identified ditches in the Project area as one potential research topic; the ditches which could be remnants of Paiute agriculture. USFS noted that topic is important to local tribes.

Schedule, Next Steps, Action Items

Under the current proposed schedule, draft study plans will be distributed for review and comment in mid-September and will be discussed in detail at the October meetings. The final draft study plans will be distributed in November for discussion in December. The plans will be finalized in early 2019 for submission along with the PAD in March. By doing early stakeholder engagement, SCE hopes that the study plans will reflect agency and tribal needs and that, as a result, FERC will accelerate study plan determination.

USFS noted that BLM and the Tribes are not currently engaged; USFS will invite them to get involved in September and October to articulate any needs that have not yet been addressed. However, the Tribes may not engage until FERC begins its scoping and formally initiates consultation. Audry planned to attend a tribal meeting in Big Pine that night, and she and USFS will continue tribal outreach. When SCE has completed its draft PAD section and study plans, a hard copy will be sent to nearby tribes for reference and review [ACTION ITEM]. They will also consider scheduling a meeting with the Bishop and Big Pine Paiute for discussion of that draft.

Action items include:

- Kearns & West will:
 - Send out October TWG invitations.
- Kleinschmidt will:

- Validate and reissue dates in the milestone document.
- Follow up with Greg Haverstock to find out if BLM has additional cultural resource objectives/relevant management plans.
- Follow up with Sheila Irons re: USFS Special Use Permit for the power line that was removed from the Project boundary.
- Contact USFS & BLM to schedule records search [Lynn Compas].
- Provide GIS files with transmission lines and items from the records search to USFS.
- Determine how to approach—and develop a timeframe for -- finding and mapping unmapped ancillary facilities that need to be addressed in the HPMP.
- Send tribes a hard copy of the 70% draft PAD and study plans they are finalized in late September.
- USFS will:
 - Provide any feedback on the Charter by 8/31.
 - Provide any additional comments on the study plan outlines by 8/31.

II. Aquatic Resource Technical Working Group

Attendees

Steven Orihuela, Bishop Paiute Tribe
 Tristan Leong, USFS (phone)
 Sheila Irons, USFS
 Kary Schlick, USFS
 Blake Engelhardt, USFS (phone)
 Chase Hildeburn, SWRCB
 Nick Buckmaster, CDFW
 Steve Parmenter, CDFW
 Justin Barrett, USFWS
 Shawna Theisen, USFWS
 Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt
 Brandon Kulik, Kleinschmidt
 Matt Harper, Kleinschmidt
 Edith Read, E Read and Associates
 Michael Donovan, Psomas
 Matthew Woodhall, SCE
 Vince White, SCE
 Al Partridge, SCE
 Mike Harty, Kearns & West
 Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

Introductions

Mike Harty described the Relicensing Team's primary aim for the meeting: they hope to clarify agency resource objectives and to explicitly link them to study plan outcomes. They also want to identify and understand any objectives that the study plans are not yet addressing.

Review Draft Charter

Mike reminded participants that a draft Charter outlining the Technical Working Group purpose and process was circulated in July. To date, Kearns & West has not received any comments on the draft. Mike asked that comments be submitted before the end of August [ACTION ITEM].

Review of June Action Items

Mike Harty thanked TWG participants for the resources they shared with the Relicensing Team since the June meetings; he noted that there are still some outstanding agency action items, which Kearns & West will follow up on.

Finlay Anderson highlighted several items the Relicensing Team has worked on in response to requests made in June. The Team has developed and distributed a description of Project operations and maintenance that will be incorporated into the Project Description section of the draft PAD. Vince White has calculated the natural hydrograph for Bishop Creek, which the Team will use to inform modeling going forward.

Finlay noted that the Relicensing Team's approach to data sharing is still evolving: due to some technical difficulties with the Project website the Team has been sharing documents via ShareFile. Now that the website is back online, they will likely use some combination of the two to share documents. They are developing an official protocol for information sharing, including GIS layers, which they will share with TWG participants.

Finlay also thanked the TWG participants for their feedback to the June meeting summary; in addition to corrections, they provided additional thoughts and perspectives which will help inform the study plans and PAD sections. The final notes, which include those comments and SCE responses, have been circulated and will be posted online.

Overview of Agency Resource Objectives & Relevant Management Plans

Finlay explained that the Relicensing Team would like a clear understanding of agency objectives in each resource area to ensure the study plans present the information agencies need to achieve their management goals. Ultimately, for each study requested by the agencies, FERC will expect a clearly articulated "Project nexus" – i.e., an explanation of how the Project could potentially impact a resource and why additional information could help an agency manage that resource to achieve their agency's objectives.

Each agency gave a brief summary of their priorities and perspective with respect to aquatic resources:

- CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) manages Bishop Creek for intensive angler use. They assume that catch per unit effort (CPUE) is about one fish/hour, but they do not have reliable estimates of user days or catch. A baseline study on user days and CPUE would allow them to better assess whether project operations impact this management objective. There is a self-sustaining in-stream brown trout population and "put-and-take" trout stocking in the reservoirs. Fewer brown trout are reaching catchable size (i.e., larger than 10 inches) than in the past; CDFW hypothesizes that it may be due to current streamflow management, but they do not want to prioritize that analysis at the expense of studies on other stocked species. CDFW is working to manage the speckled dace to help avert its listing.
- USFS pointed the Relicensing Team to the new Forest Plan's standards and guides for riparian habitat; from those, they should be able to tease out the desired end conditions. For instance, the new plan prioritizes in-stream flows sufficient to sustain conditions as close as possible to the original conditions in which surrounding biota evolved. In general, the new plan manages for habitat as opposed to specific species.

- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) explained that their mission is to down-list or delist threatened or endangered species and decrease the likelihood that other species will be listed. To that end, their goal is to maintain, if not increase, habitat, especially for threatened and endangered species. If there are ways to incorporate additional conservation actions, they strongly support those. They will want to know more about how this project will effect frog species, even if there is chytrid fungus in the area.

Review Updated PAD Resource Section & Operations Presentation

Vince White described his methodology for calculating Bishop Creek's natural hydrograph. He used flow measurements from 1990 to 2017, which he cross-checked against USGS data for accuracy. He used measurements of daily discharge from Lake Sabrina, South Lake, and the bottom of the project and subtracted flows from several diversions to estimate what the unimpaired flow of Bishop Creek would be. He then ranked the years by their average flow and divided them into three groups – dry, normal, and wet years – based on the distribution. The next version of the PAD will describe Vince's work.

Discuss Annotated Study Plans

Finlay Anderson explained that the Relicensing Team's goal is to develop more narrative around management objectives and clearly identify the linkages between study plan objectives and missing information. They want feedback from the agencies on whether they have management objectives that are not covered by the existing plans. If so, they can determine whether additional plans are needed or the current plans can be expanded to address those needs. Feedback is welcome through the end of the month [ACTION ITEM]. In late September, the Team will provide revised and fully developed plans and ask for more comments [ACTION ITEM].

Brandon Kulik presented a PowerPoint which outlined study plan goals and objectives, project nexus, study plan area, methods, and schedule for each of three study plans – the fish distribution baseline study plan, the operations modeling study plan, and the instream flow study plan. The detailed slides are provided in Appendix B. Brandon noted that the Operations Modeling Study Plan is being fast-tracked, so the TWGs can begin using it this year to refine the other study plans; the Relicensing Team intends to present the model outline at the October meetings.

TWG participants asked questions and provided comments throughout the presentation. Those comments have been summarized and organized by topic area below:

Re: Fish Distribution Baseline Study Plan

- Question (Q) (USFS): Is there a reason you are not planning to sample riverine reaches right below Lake Sabrina and South Lake?
 - Response (R) (Kleinschmidt): Based on maps it is a high gradient area, so we assumed there would be negligible habitat there and it would be more effective to focus sampling on the forebays.
 - Comment (C) (CDFW): There are some big sandy pools in those upper reaches that could provide good sucker habitat.
- Q (USFWS): Do you have any mechanism to determine how juvenile fish are surviving?

- R (Kleinschmidt): We believe that sampling them would be too invasive for a delicate population. We will know they are surviving based on the existence of the adult populations.
- Q (USFWS): Do you have any data on suckers and the likelihood of take or injury from electrofishing?
 - R (CDFW): Adults appear to be able to handle electrofishing, though they are vulnerable to gill netting. We could get an exact mortality number from electrofishing being done in the lower Owens River, but it appears low.
- C (USFS): Is there successful sucker recruitment? Boat electrofishing could give us the additional information needed to make that determination.
 - C (CDFW): You have to be careful with these determinations. It could look like a self-sustaining fishery even with limited recruitment events because suckers are so fecund.
- C (CDFW): Scale surveys do not work for suckers. The fish can live 30 to 40 years, and once they attain adult size there is no correlation between size and age. Instead, you need to obtain samples of bony structures; the sample population should be about 30 adult fish.
- Q (SCE): Is it an agency objective to help the sucker population?
 - R (CDFW): They are a State Species of Special Concern, which is an administrative categorization that means they must be analyzed as if they were listed under CEQA but does not mandate how resource impacts must be mitigated.
 - R (CDFW): There is a lot of contradictory literature about whether they are beneficial to the brown trout. Anecdotally, it is believed that the presence of suckers results in bigger trout.
 - R (USFS): They can be an important food for avian species.
- C (USFS): There is no overall fish assemblage study proposed for in the reservoirs. This is needed to establish a baseline. CDFW would prefer to see two types of aquatic studies – one focused on reservoir species and one on riverine species. Currently, other than the Owens Sucker study, the plans only focus on riverine questions. CDFW would like to know more about what fish are present in the reservoirs, how project operations are impacting these fish, and the limnology of the lakes. We would also like to see bathymetric maps of the reservoirs.
 - C (CDFW): We do have some native trout in addition to the stocked fish in the reservoirs. We frequently get reports of fish we did not know were present in the area. A general fish study could be done via electrofishing in tandem with the sucker study.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We might want to schedule the study away from the spawning season if we are doing electrofishing.
 - C (USFS): Much electrofishing is done in the fall.
 - C (CDFW): You would want to do it in late August/early September before the trout spawn. Suckers congregate in June, so it might be easiest to get the number needed for samples at that time. Suckers are adequately abundant so that sacrificing 30 fish for age analysis is not a concern.
- C (CDFW): CDFW would like voucher fin samples collected from suckers for DNA analysis.

Re: Instream Flow Study Plan

- C (CDFW): IFIM is an expensive study that is not aligned with our concerns.

- C (CDFW): Our hypothesis is that stunted brown trout are the result of angler pressure or limited habitat for adults, rather than recruitment limitation, i.e. it may not be necessary to prioritize spawning and fry lifestages in flow analyses.
- C (CDFW): The first step should be to do field surveys of trout populations. If populations are robust, then we have the data to prove it. If the populations are smaller than expected, it may be that flows are not supporting the necessary habitat. Then, an IFIM study provides a tool to help us understand what flows would better support the population.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): If the population is small, you are assuming that habitat suitability from flows is the bottleneck, whereas it may be something else such as prey availability or natural population fluctuations.
 - Q (Kleinschmidt): Are you assuming that a self-sustaining brown trout population is a desired condition?
 - R (USFS): Yes, that is a recreation goal in the Forest Plan.
- Q (USFS): SCE has no information on the volume of woody debris and sediment being transported through the reservoirs or contained in them? Can't SCE make an estimate?
 - R (SCE): SCE only dredges enough to allow water to move through the system. We could come up with very rough numbers based on the amounts we move and how often.
 - R (Psomas): My experience in similar streams has been that 90% of the transport occurs in a very short period of time during high flow periods.

TWG participants provided additional comments about the general approach to study plans, as well as other study suggestions:

- C (USFS): Studies are supposed to address data gaps. It is difficult to determine what questions/objectives each study plan is trying to answer. If we had a tabled list with each topic in the PAD (e.g. geology and soils, fish and aquatics) and then the corresponding studies organized by subtopic, it would be obvious where there are gaps. Tristan Leong will share an example of this kind of table [ACTION ITEM]. Some of the current studies appear too specific, so that some pieces are missing.
 - C (CDFW): Perhaps the group should start with a list of questions and data gaps and then link studies directly to those questions, which would make the Project nexus obvious.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): The July 5th Study Title Memo listed the studies by subject area. SCE can revise that table so it clearly identifies the TWG resource area, the study, and the objectives [ACTION ITEM].
 - R (SCE): The Relicensing Team provided a template for suggesting additional study plans; if anyone has additional suggestions, we can discuss them.
- C (USFS): SCE has hydraulic control over the Project stream reaches; as a result, it changes natural flows in the reach, which changes quality and quantity of spawning gravel and woody debris. Yet we have no reference point of what this system would look like absent a project; there needs to be a way to establish a baseline understanding of system conditions.
- C (CDFW): There is an aquatic biodiversity plan for the Bishop Creek headwaters that aims to create refuges for native species. However, the frog populations above the Project are chytrid

positive. Therefore, if frogs were transplanted there, they would die, which essentially precludes any amphibian refuge in the Project area.

Schedule, Next Steps, Action Items

Under the current proposed schedule, draft study plans will be distributed for review and comment in mid-September and will be discussed in detail at the October meetings. The final draft study plans will be distributed in November for discussion in December. The plans will be finalized in early 2019 for submission along with the PAD in March. FERC's scoping visit will likely fall in late May/early June 2019, and ideally FERC will issue a study plan determination in early 2020, allowing data to be collected in 2020 and 2021.

Action items include:

- Kearns & West will:
 - Send out October TWG invitations.
- Kleinschmidt will:
 - Revise July 5th Study Title memo table so it clearly identifies the TWG resource area, the study, and the objectives. Provide to agencies as an editable Word document.
 - Provide full study plans in late September for agency review and comment.
- USFS will:
 - Provide an example of a tabled list organizing PAD topics and corresponding studies organized by subtopic and objective [Tristan Leong].
 - Provide any feedback on the Charter by 8/31.
 - Provide any additional comments on the annotated study plans by 8/31, with a specific focus on tying the plans to agency objectives.

III. Terrestrial Resource Technical Working Group

Attendees

Tristan Leong, USFS (phone)
 Sheila Irons, USFS
 Kary Schlick, USFS (phone)
 Blake Engelhardt, USFS
 Rose Banks, CDFW
 Nick Buckmaster, CDFW
 Justin Barrett, USFWS
 Shawna Theisen, USFWS
 Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt

Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt
 Matt Harper, Kleinschmidt
 Brad Blood, Psomas
 Edith Read, E. Read and Associates
 Matthew Woodhall, SCE
 Vince White, SCE
 Samantha Nelson, SCE
 Mike Harty, Kearns & West
 Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

Introductions

Mike Harty described the Relicensing Team's primary aim for the meeting: they hope to clarify agency resource objectives and to explicitly link them to study plan outcomes. They also want to identify and understand any objectives that the study plans are not yet addressing.

Review Draft Charter

Mike reminded participants that a draft Charter outlining the Technical Working Group purpose and process was circulated in July. To date, Kearns & West has not received any comments on the draft. Mike asked that comments be submitted before the end of August [ACTION ITEM].

Review of June Action Items

Finlay Anderson thanked TWG participants for the resources they have shared with the Relicensing Team since the June meetings; he noted that some of them are not yet reflected in the project documents, but they will be.

Finlay highlighted several items the Relicensing Team has worked on in response to requests made in June. The Team has developed and distributed a description of Project operations and maintenance; this will be incorporated into the Project Description section of the draft PAD. Vince White, SCE, has calculated the natural hydrograph for Bishop Creek, which the Team will use to inform modeling going forward.

Finlay noted that the Relicensing Team's approach to data sharing is still evolving: due to some technical difficulties with the Project website, the Team has been sharing documents via ShareFile. Now that the website is back online, they will likely use some combination of the two to share documents. They are developing an official protocol for information sharing, including GIS layers, which they will share with TWG participants.

Finlay also thanked the TWG participants for their feedback to the June meeting summary; in addition to corrections, they provided additional thoughts and perspectives that will help inform the study plans and PAD sections. The final notes, which include those comments and SCE responses, have been circulated and will be posted online.

Overview of Agency Resource Objectives & Relevant Management Plans

Finlay explained that the Relicensing Team would like a clear understanding of agency objectives in each resource area, so that the study plans reflect information agencies need to manage toward their desired future conditions for that resource.

Finlay pointed out that the Forest Plan has a range of terminology – e.g. goals, guidelines, desired future conditions -- and it is not always clear what the differences are. USFS explained that “desired future condition” is the highest-level term used to describe the aspired to condition of a resource or ecosystem service. “Objectives and goals” are actions USFS hopes to take to achieve that condition. “Standards” are requirements, whereas “guidelines” are best practices that should be implemented unless there is a site-specific reason not to. The new plan focuses a lot on variability – as a result, it will generally not mandate specific end goals (e.g. a number of cottonwoods/acre). The primary objective for watersheds in the plan (Chapter 2, page 12) is adequate timing and volume of water supply to make habitat in watersheds resilient.

USFS encouraged the Relicensing Team to focus on consistency of future operations and facilities with “desired future conditions” as they develop goals and objectives for the study plans.

TWG participants asked a series of clarifying questions about the purpose of study plans and the role of their interests in directing study plan questions, summarized below:

- Q (USFWS): It is unclear what SCE’s role is in terms of resource management. Are these studies intended to inform proactive conservation actions or just to establish baseline conditions?
 - R (Kleinschmidt): If a new action is taken during the license period, we want to have protocols in place so that the action will not disturb habitat or exacerbate any other resource issues. The studies produce data that inform those safeguards.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We are describing facilities and operations within a FERC boundary. Based on our studies and FERC’s NEPA analysis, FERC will issue a license, which will include operating constraints and mitigation that SCE must do for routine O&M and facility upgrades. Right now, we are identifying all the resources that will be regulated by FERC – as well as any data gaps that we need to fill in.
 - R (SCE): We are trying to understand agency objectives and see how they align with how SCE operates the Project. If they misalign, we may need to study that to better understand how we might be able to tweak project operations to serve management goals for a given resource. The operational model should help SCE evaluate how the system can be operated under different conditions and where alternative decisions are possible.
- C (USFWS): Generally, what is the role of USFWS in relicensing conversations?
 - R (Kleinschmidt): As provided in the Federal Power Act, USFWS can play a significant role where fish passage for native migratory species is an issue. Where fish passage is not an issue, as at Bishop Creek, USFWS often provides comments to improve management plans or where consultation is required for NEPA purposes. It would not be unusual for USFWS to play a less active role in the relicensing but to serve as a resource for other agencies and SCE.
 - C (USFWS): When you are dealing with migratory birds, you should reach out to USFWS migratory bird staff. We will provide their contact information [ACTION ITEM].
 - C (USFWS): Given what we now understand regarding issues and species in this watershed, it is likely we will not be heavily involved in the process until the Biological Assessment phase, which is under FERC’s purview.
- C (USFWS): USFWS noted that they will be interested in the options available to incorporate PM&E measures that reduce impacts on local species (e.g. using pulse flows to discourage nesting along the Creek during years of high snowpack).
- Q (USFWS): It is important to establish protocols to monitor how the species are doing long-term, given the length of the permit. Who is responsible for monitoring long term?

Review Updated PAD Resource Section

Brad Blood received management species lists from USFS, CDFW, and USFWS and incorporated much of that information into the updated terrestrial PAD. He noted he is still missing some management actions for mule deer. Edith Read will be incorporating missing species from the corresponding botanical lists into the botanical PAD section.

Blake Engelhardt and Nick Buckmaster committed to sending additional written comments on the draft PAD section [ACTION ITEM].

TWG participants provided comments, summarized below:

- C (USFS): The draft botanical PAD should incorporate the historical plant communities and how they may have changed since the pre-project period and an assessment of fuel build up around the project and resulting fire risk. USFS increasingly emphasizes the need for fuel management.
- C (CDFW): Remove the wolverine from the species list; they have not been in the area since 1910.
 - R (SCE): We can designate it “not likely.”
 - C (USFS): In general, we look at what species have been documented in the nearest quads, but even if a species is not documented, we do not rule it out if the area is in their range and suitable habitat exists.
- C (USFWS): In evaluating the likelihood of the Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frog to appear in the Project area, we will rely on existing information and coordinate with the local CDFW and USFS staff.
- Q (Kleinschmidt): Todd Ellsworth, USFS, mentioned that USFS had evaluated Bishop Creek’s reaches based on desired conditions, and they ranked well. Is that methodology available? Could we use that data to feed into our models?
 - C (CDFW): The reaches were evaluated using the Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) methodology, which uses a series of checklists to assess whether the surrounding vegetation could survive a 100 year storm event. It is generally used for grazing management. Given that Bishop Creek is not grazed and runs along hard bedrock, PFC would not be a helpful tool to assess riparian quality here.
 - C (USFS): PFC will continue to be part of our Forest Plan but only in the context of grazing management. The only place in the Project area that might apply would be some sites along McGee or Birch Creeks.

Discuss Annotated Study Plans

Brad and Edith presented a PowerPoint which outlined terrestrial and botanical study plan goals and objectives, project nexus, study plan area, methods, and schedule for each of their study plans. The detailed slides are provided in Appendix C.

Terrestrial Studies

Brad presented the Mule Deer Study and noted that it could be incorporated into a broader wildlife study; *TWG attendees indicated they supported that suggestion*. CDFW shared that their mule deer expert was not especially concerned with mule deer in the Project area, since most of their usage is above the project.

Brad explained that the Wildlife Survey will update the piecemeal surveys that have been done for specific projects over time; the survey area will include each of the facilities along with an approximately 500 foot buffer depending on the habitat. He noted that the only change he made from past surveys was to include an acoustic bat survey. Bats live in the powerhouses, but they do not know what species they are. CDFW suggested that Brad reach out to Pat Brown, a local bat expert [ACTION ITEM].

Given that Sierra Nevada Yellow Legged Frogs are not believed to be extant in the area, Brad proposed to eliminate that survey. CDFW confirmed that they surveyed the entire Bishop Creek area and the only suitable habitat was in the upper basin at Treasure Lakes 5 and 6; while they should be able to survive below the reservoirs, they face predation by non-native trout which will never be removed. *TWG attendees agreed to eliminate the survey.*

TWG participants asked questions and provided comments throughout the presentation, summarized below:

- Q (CDFW): Could you add a riparian bird nesting assessment to the study plan?
 - R (SCE): It would be good to plan studies to cover multiple species at once; for instance, we could survey for cottonwood and flycatchers at the same time.
- C (CDFW): CDFW did a habitat suitability model for willow flycatcher in the Owens basin. If we could match some of the data being collected to that model, we could determine whether there are any conditions we want to bring to the forefront along Bishop Creek to provide habitat and recruit Willow Flycatchers.
- Q (USFWS): Is there any risk of electrocution for avian species around hydroelectric facilities?
 - R (SCE): We have a company-wide list of avian electrocutions, since SCE policy is to identify areas where mortality is high and retrofit them. We are not aware of any areas in this project high mortality, but we will pull that data [ACTION ITEM].
- Q (USFS): Both the Southwest Willow Flycatcher and the Yellow-billed Cuckoo are listed species?
 - R (Psomas): Yes, but it is unclear whether either are in the Project area. It might be only Willow Flycatchers that are in the Project Area – the two species are difficult to distinguish.
 - R (CDFW): However, Bishop has a large resident breeding population of Southwest Willow Flycatchers. We will provide that survey [ACTION ITEM].
 - C (USFWS): We will assume that both species are present unless we hear differently.
 - C (Psomas): SCE has existing procedures to protect avian species; for instance, most O&M does not involve tree trimming or other activities that could disrupt habitat.

Botanical Studies

Edith presented the Black Cottonwood Study, which is intended to dig into the causal factors of the decline of these species in some Project reaches. She noted that next year there will be another round of compliance monitoring, which will provide additional information on the cottonwood's status at present. She requested that agencies share any information they have on local plant diseases or mortality unrelated to flow or indirectly related.

Edith introduced the Invasive Study Plan which analyzes the invasive plant potential for the project and how O&M could be contributing to the spread of invasive plants. She also noted that the California

Invasive Plant Council (Cal IPC) ratings for plants need to be considered within the context of this particular ecosystem; for instance, they rank tumbleweed and robinia as the same level of threat. USFS explained that they have a treatment plan for invasive plants across the forest; USFWS suggested that SCE could build on that plan.

For the Sensitive Plant Species Plan, Edith does not anticipate needing additional field surveys. Rather, they will finalize the list of sensitive species and their potential to occur and then create protocol for surveys if they need to be done at any point. USFS suggested conducting an updated survey around the facilities, which could be combined with the invasive plant survey. Edith agreed that would be feasible but clarified that it would likely be limited to a single survey rather than surveys in each season. USFS also suggested surveying around recreation sites, though Edith noted that it can be hard to distinguish SCE impacts from public impacts in those areas.

TWG participants asked questions and provided comments throughout the presentation, summarized below:

- C (USFS): SCE's long term monitoring data suggests that at some sites water birch has taken over formerly cottonwood-dense areas. This prompted our discussion in June about what is initiating changes in woody recruitment.
 - R (CDFW) Bishop Creek is upstream of a very dense Willow Flycatcher population, a species that depends on multi-tiered riparian canopies. Given that we expect species to migrate upstream due to climate change, cottonwood areas may be increasingly important as refuges.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We may also find that there are ecological reasons water birch has taken over cottonwoods in some areas, while in others cottonwoods remain dominant.
- Q (USFS): Is the study area for cottonwood and invasive plants comprehensive enough? For instance, if we only survey facilities, do we know how the species are distributed along the reaches?
 - C (E. Read): The monitoring sites were selected to be representative of each reach. Some reaches are small enough for us to walk between the sites.
 - C (E. Read): There are some sites where we were not seeing any recruitment, but it was unclear whether that was due to public pressure or project operations.
 - C (USFS): If you did a broader survey of distribution, you might observe that recruitment is not occurring around campgrounds and public areas but is occurring elsewhere. Then you may have a reliable causal relationship.

Schedule, Next Steps, Action Items

Under the current proposed schedule, draft study plans will be distributed for review and comment in mid-September and will be discussed in detail at the October meetings. The final draft study plans will be distributed in November for discussion in December. The plans will be finalized in early 2019 for submission along with the PAD in March. FERC's scoping visit will likely fall in late May/early June 2019, and ideally FERC will issue a study plan determination in early 2020, allowing data to be collected in 2020 and 2021.

Action items include:

- Kearns & West will:
 - Send out October TWG invitations.
- Kleinschmidt will:
 - Reach out to Pat Brown re: local bats [Brad Blood].
- SCE will:
 - Pull data on avian electrocutions to find out if there are any high mortality areas in the Project.
- USFWS will:
 - Provide contact information for their migratory bird specialists.
- USFS will:
 - Provide any feedback on the Charter by 8/31.
 - Provide any additional comments on the annotated study plans by 8/31, with a specific focus on tying the plans to agency objectives.
- CDFW will:
 - Provide their survey on SW Willow Flycatchers.

IV. Recreation & Land Management Technical Working Group**Attendees**

Tristan Leong, USFS (phone)
 Sheila Irons, USFS
 Diana Pietrasanta, USFS
 Nora Gamino, USFS
 Kelly Larimer, Kleinschmidt
 Finlay Anderson, Kleinschmidt

Matt Harper, Kleinschmidt
 Matthew Woodhall, SCE
 Vince White, SCE
 Al Partridge, SCE
 Mike Harty, Kearns & West
 Terra Alpaugh, Kearns & West

Review Draft Charter

Mike Harty reminded participants that a draft Charter outlining the Technical Working Group purpose and process was circulated in July. To date, Kearns & West has not received any comments on the draft. Mike asked that comments be submitted before the end of August [ACTION ITEM].

Review of June Action Items

Finlay Anderson thanked TWG participants for the resources they have shared with the Relicensing Team since the June meetings. USFS acknowledged that they still owe the Team several items. Matt Harper will follow up with a list of information the Relicensing Team still needs from USFS [ACTION ITEM].

Finlay noted several items the Relicensing Team has worked on in response to requests made in June, highlighting their documentation of the changes to the Project boundary during the last license term in the newest PAD draft.

Overview of Agency Resource Objectives & Relevant Management Plans

Finlay explained that the Relicensing Team would like a clear understanding of agency objectives in each resource area, so that they can make sure the study plans will deliver the information agencies need to assess proposed facilities and operations relationships to desired future conditions for that resource.

USFS explained that the new Forest Plan focuses on ensuring the “sustainability” of recreation, i.e. ensuring the type and amount of recreation in an area can be sustained over the long term without damaging the ecosystem. USFS noted that the Relicensing Team instead uses the word “suitable” in their documents, which does not have the same lasting connotation.

USFS also highlighted the Forest Plan’s focus on containing infrastructure within an existing “developed” footprint, as opposed to allowing scattered developments. Any new development should be within or adjacent to existing facilities.

Review Updated PAD Resource Section

Kelly Larimer explained that there have been few changes to the Recreation PAD section since June, other than some discussion of climbing in the Project area. There are items from the transportation study as well as concessionaire and wilderness permit data that will be incorporated in the next draft.

Matt Harper asked USFS for suggestions on where to find accurate information about winter recreational use [ACTION ITEM].

Discuss Annotated Study Plans

Kelly presented a PowerPoint which outlined study plan goals and objectives, project nexus, study plan area, methods, and schedule for each of three study plans. The detailed slides are provided in Appendix D.

Kelly noted their intention to use USFS Site IDs in the next draft of the plans to maximize consistency. She also explained the “project-required facility” designation, which only applies to facilities within the project boundary (e.g., a boat ramp) that have been required by the current license. Other facilities can have a project nexus (e.g., areas around the lake), but if they are not within the boundary and required by the current license, they are not “project-required.”

TWG participants asked questions and provided comments throughout the presentation. Those comments have been summarized and organized by topic area below:

Re: Recreation Facilities Condition and Public Accessibility Study Plan

- C (USFS): We are particularly interested in the fourth objective of this study plan, “Analyze economics of current and future operation and maintenance of recreation facilities.” Our concessionaires do not spend enough on O&M; therefore, we do not want you using existing costs as the appropriate baseline. More investment is needed.
- C (USFS): USFS noted that the 200 foot buffer around each recreational site to assess indirect impacts seems arbitrary.

- R (Kleinschmidt): It is an arbitrary starting point to be refined as we have more information.
- C (USFS): We would like to make the general study area buffer larger than 200 feet.
- R (Kleinschmidt): This is more of a methods question. Maybe we can revise this so there is no specific buffer value stated since the degree of dispersed use will vary by site; instead, we can generally analyze where there appears to be dispersed use adjacent to sites using remote sensing and then ground truth that data during the study.
- C (USFS): McGee Creek is not included in the study area and has fewer, more remote facilities, but we may want to consider its hiking facilities and roads, which are used for both mountain biking and hiking.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We will assess whether facilities or sites associated with McGee Creek, most notably the trailhead for Longley Lake, should be included in this and the RUNS study areas.
- Q (USFS): Where are trails being captured in terms of this inventory? Will it include user-created trails?
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We have included trailheads within this list that we think have a project nexus. Identifying user-created trails will be part of the assessment of dispersed recreation impacts around each individual site.
 - C (USFS): USFS will provide a shapefile of their official trail system. However, there is an informal trail that extends three quarters of the way around Lake Sabrina that should be included in the study as it is not an official USFS trail and receives no maintenance money.

Re: Recreation Use and Needs Study

- C (USFS): USFS would like to emphasize sustainability in terms of how it plans for future recreation.

Re: Project Boundary and Lands Study

- C (USFS): USFS would like to identify where there are multiple roads to the same resource area and where public access could be limited to a single road.
 - R (Kleinschmidt): We can plan to have a conversation about inventorying roads.
 - C (USFS): Contact Diana Pietrasanta for an updated GIS roads layer [ACTION ITEM].

Schedule, Next Steps, Action Items

Under the current proposed schedule, draft study plans will be distributed for review and comment in mid-September and will be discussed in detail at the October meetings. The final draft study plans will be distributed in November for discussion in December. The plans will be finalized in early 2019 for submission along with the PAD in March. FERC's scoping visit will likely fall in late May/early June 2019, and ideally FERC will issue a study plan determination in early 2020, allowing data to be collected in 2020 and 2021.

Action items include:

- Kearns & West will:
 - Send out October TWG invitations.
- Kleinschmidt will:
 - Send USFS a list of all recreation-related data Kleinschmidt still needs.
 - Contact Diana Pietrasanta for updates to the GIS roads layer.
- USFS will:
 - Provide any relevant resources on winter recreation use in the Project area.
 - Provide any feedback on the Charter by 8/31.
 - Provide any additional comments on the annotated study plans by 8/31, with a specific focus on tying the plans to agency objectives.

FOR YOUR REFERENCE:

Draft October TWG Schedule

- PENDING CONFIRMATION

Remaining TWG Calendar

- October 9 – 11, 2018 (in-person), TWG Meeting (specific meeting times/date TBD)
- December 4 – 6, 2018 (in-person), TWG Meeting (specific meeting times/date TBD)
- January 23, 2019, Oversight Committee (phone) (specific meeting time TBD)