

**REVISED LAND-2 VISUAL RESOURCE
ASSESSMENT
TECHNICAL STUDY PLAN**

**LEE VINING HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
*FERC PROJECT No. 1388***



April 2023

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1.0 POTENTIAL RESOURCE ISSUE

This study will characterize the potential effects of Lee Vining Hydroelectric Project (Project) operations, maintenance, and construction activities on the existing visual quality of key viewing areas of Project lands.

2.0 PROJECT NEXUS AND HOW THE RESULTS WILL BE USED

Operation, maintenance, and construction activities associated with the Project may affect scenic resources associated with Project lands. The Visual Resource Assessment will characterize existing visual resources within the existing Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project Boundary.

3.0 STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this study is to characterize the existing visual resources of Project lands, document the associated visual quality and management objectives identified in the *Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest* (USFS, 2019), and document the existing visual character of Project facilities and features from affected viewsheds and representative Key Observation Points (KOPs).

4.0 EXTENT OF STUDY AREA AND STUDY SITES

The study area includes key viewsheds and representative KOPs from which the Project facilities and features are visible. Southern California Edison (SCE) consulted with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to identify viewsheds and representative views (KOPs) for assessment that may be influenced by future Project operations, maintenance, or construction activities. Identified KOPs include representative viewing locations along key access roadways (i.e., State Route 120 National Forest Scenic Byway), and representative recreation and overlook areas that provide views of Project facilities and features (i.e., Project reservoirs, dams, and facilities). SCE met with the Recreation and Land Use Technical Working Group (TWG) in March 2023 to review the proposed KOPs. The final list of KOPs are shown in Table 1-1 and Figure 1-1.

Table 1-1. Proposed KOPs and Rationale

Proposed KOP Location	Specific Location	Rationale
Saddlebag Lake Day Use Area / Campground	37.965798, -119.271445	High public-use area, views of Saddlebag Lake and Dam
Ellery Lake Campground	37.937329, -119.243373	High public-use area, views of Ellery Lake and Rhinedollar Dam
Tioga Lake Campground	37.926834, -119.254349	High public-use area, views of Tioga Lake and Dams
Tioga Lake Overlook	37.921544, -119.254595	High public-use area, views of Tioga Lake and Dams
Hwy 120 pull-off west of Warren Fork trailhead, where the Powerhouse parking lot is visible	37.949516, -119.224558	High public-use thoroughfare, potential views of Ellery Lake, Rhinedollar Dam, and Poole Powerhouse
Junction Campground / Bennettville trailhead	37.938428, -119.250431	High public-use area in the middle of the Project
Poole Powerhouse gate	37.944238, -119.215256	View of the powerhouse from the public access road
Pull off north of Ellery Lake	37.937754, -119.236781	Industrial-looking area with old SCE building

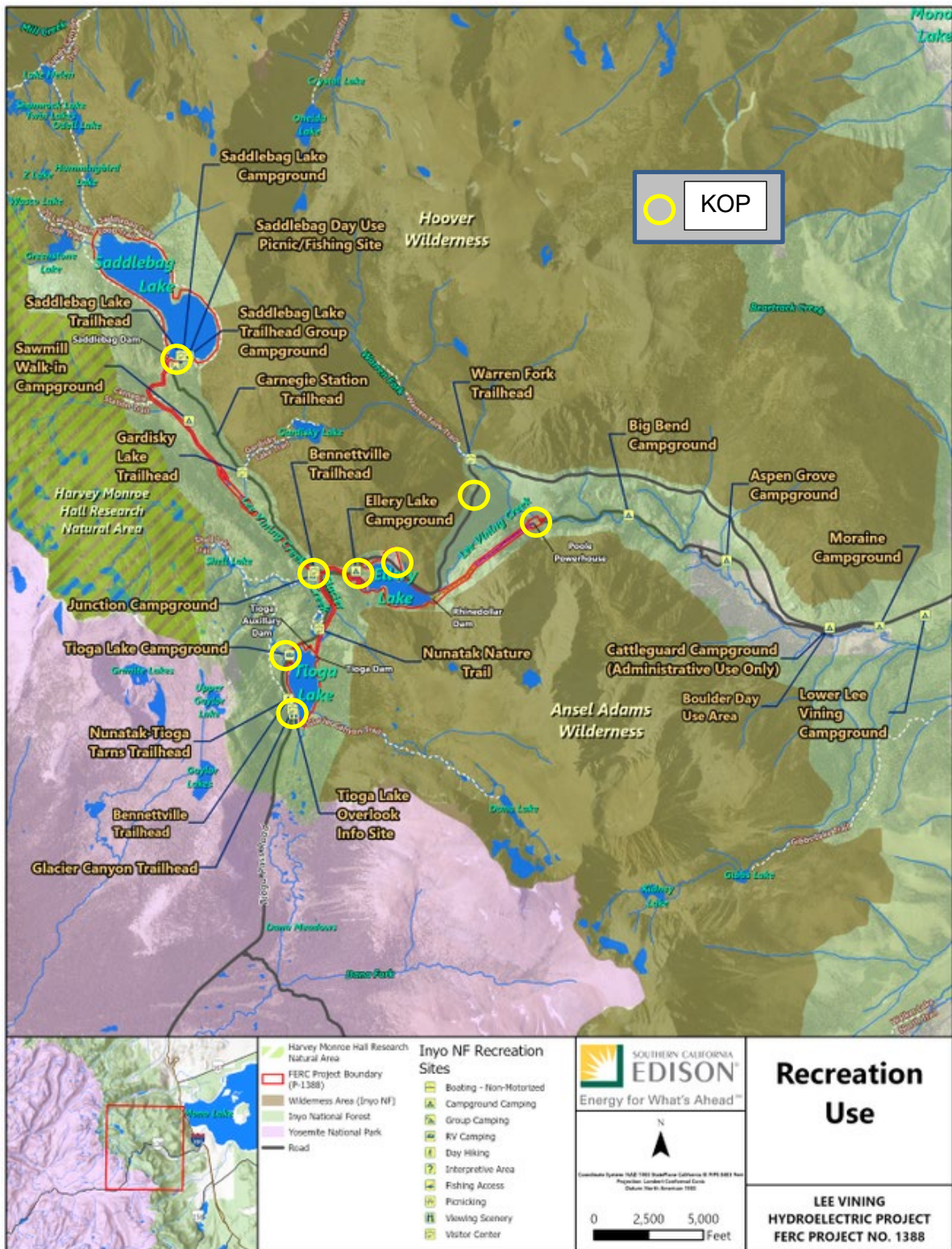


Figure 1-1. Visual Resources Study KOPs in Relation to Recreation Use Survey Sites

5.0 EXISTING INFORMATION

The *Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest* (USFS, 2019) identifies desired conditions for scenic character and scenic integrity objectives (desired conditions) for the management and preservation of scenic character within the Inyo National Forest. The designated scenic integrity objectives in the Project Vicinity are defined by the USFS as “High” (landscapes where the valued scenic character appears unaltered; deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern common to the scenic character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident) and “Very High” (landscapes where the valued scenic character “is” intact with only minute, if any, deviations; the existing scenic character and sense of place is expressed at the highest possible level). Additional information is needed to characterize the existing visual resources and potential effects of Project operations, maintenance, and construction activities.

6.0 STUDY APPROACH

The visual resource assessment includes the following components:

- Inventory, map, and describe existing Project infrastructure, operation, maintenance and construction activities that may have the potential to affect visual resources of the Project Area.
- Document existing Protection, Mitigation, and Enhancement measures, including the existing Visual Resource Protection Plan (Section 4(e) Condition 11) implemented under the existing license.
- Obtain (from the USFS), map (via geographic information system [GIS]) and characterize existing visual resource inventories and management objectives associated with the Project lands as developed under the *Land Management Plan for the Inyo National Forest* (USFS, 2019). Summarize any available information pertaining to variety classes, sensitivity levels, distance zones, and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifications.
- Conduct a viewshed analysis (via GIS) and determine what portion and acreages of the Project lands and associated landscape are potentially visually affected by Project-related activities based on the inventory conducted under Task 1.
- In consultation with the USFS, KOPs have been identified from representative locations such as Project-related travel corridors and recreation sites within the identified viewshed areas for additional analysis. Eight KOPs have been selected through consultation with the Recreation and Land Use TWG in March 2023, prior to the 2023 field season.
- Map and assess the KOP locations to include documentation of the existing scenic character and potential use of the selected KOPs. The majority of the identified KOPs are also user survey locations included in the *REC-1 Recreation Use Assessment*, so

that the sites can be assessed to determine frequency and duration of visits at the KOP locations.

- Prepare a study report that documents the study findings and characterizes the existing visual conditions as they relate to Project facilities and Project-related activities.

7.0 SCHEDULE

Date	Activity
2023 – Winter	Consult with TWG on KOP locations and 2023 REC-1 field work
2023 – Summer	Conduct field surveys
2023 – Fall	Compile study results and prepare draft report
2024 – Spring	Distribute draft report to TWG
2024 – July/Aug	Resolve comments and prepare final report
2024 – September	Distribute final report in Draft License Application

KOP = Key Observation Point; TWG = Technical Working Group

8.0 CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Prior to filing the Pre-Application Document (PAD) and Notice of Intent (NOI), SCE hosted Recreation and Land Use Resources TWG Meetings on January 28, February 25, April 1, and May 27, 2021, which resulted in study requests from Stakeholders to address questions regarding visual quality. Notes and materials from these meetings are available at www.sce.com/leevining. Stakeholder comments are summarized in the consultation summary table below (Table 8-1). SCE filed draft Study Plans with the PAD and NOI on August 12, 2021. SCE reviewed all comments received and drafted Revised Technical Study Plans, which were distributed to the TWGs on February 18, 2022, for another 30-day review period. All comments received related to this Study Plan are included in Table 8-1 below and were incorporated into the Final Study Plan where appropriate, which was filed with FERC on April 25, 2022.

On January 23, 2023, SCE distributed a Draft 2022 Progress Report and Technical Memos to Stakeholders for a 30-day review period. The memos included preliminary data from 2022 study implementation; a meeting to discuss those memos was held on February 1, 2023. No field studies occurred in 2022 for LAND-2 and no comments were received. A response to comments matrix, along with the original Progress Report and Technical Memos were filed with FERC on March 31, 2023.

Recreation and Land Use TWG meetings were held on March 1, 2023, and March 15, 2023, to address implementation of these studies. Relevant comments and suggestions raised in these TWGs are included in Table 8-1 below.

Table 8-1. Consultation Summary—Response to Comments

Comment Number	Entity	Date/Forum	Comment	SCE Response
1	USFS	4/22/2021 Formal Study Request (Emailed Document)	<i>[Formal request for visual resource assessment]</i>	In response to USFS request, SCE is proposing a Visual Resource Assessment study as described in this Study Plan.
2	Adam Barnett USFS	5/27/2021 TWG Meeting	<i>Paraphrase of comment in meeting:</i> The visual resources study request was targeted at SCE facilities, but visual quality observations would likely also capture some USFS facilities, to some extent. It would be good to be clear about who is responsible for what.	While USFS facilities would have no nexus to the Project in this scenario, SCE understands that there may be efficiencies during the process of conducting the visual resources assessment on SCE facilities to also include certain USFS facilities in the area. SCE will continue to consult with the USFS on detailed methods and delineation of responsibilities.
3	Monique Sanchez USFS	5/27/2021 TWG Meeting	<i>Paraphrase of comment in meeting:</i> Usually landscape architects work with the visual study team to figure out how the visual quality impacts visitors' experience. We have done this in other projects.	SCE understands that there is usually a cross-over between recreation use and visual assessment and an opportunity to efficiently combine efforts. Opportunities to obtain visual quality assessment data will be considered in the selection of REC-1 survey and data collection methods and locations for the 2023 field season.
4	Adam Barnett USFS	3/1/2023 TWG Meeting	<i>Paraphrase of comment in meeting:</i> There is an SCE area north of Ellery Lake that is "industrial looking" not USFS property and is in the project area. It is a bare area north of the lake with some old structures and pull offs. We would like you to include that in the Aesthetics survey.	SCE has added the "industrial" area on the north side of Ellery Lake as a Key Observation Point (KOP) to the Aesthetics survey, as shown on Figure 1-1.

SCE = Southern California Edison; TWG = Technical Working Group; USFS = U.S. Forest Service

9.0 REFERENCES

SCE (Southern California Edison). 2021. *Lee Vining Project (P-1388) Preliminary Application Document (PAD), August 2021.*

USFS (U.S. Forest Service). No Date. *Appendix J Recommended SMS Refinements.* Accessed: April 11, 2023. Available online: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Appendix-J-Recommended-SMS-Refinements.pdf>.

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**ATTACHMENT 1
AESTHETIC INVENTORY FORM**

Site Location and Characteristics

Project Name and Development _____

Site Name/Location of Key Observation Point (KOP):

GPS Coordinates _____

Date & Time: _____ Weather: _____

Lee Vining Creek flow on this date/time: _____

Site primary use (i.e., recreation, highway, parking area) _____

Scenic Integrity Objective for KOP Location (USFS, 2019) (i.e., High, Medium, or Low) _____

Landscape Scenic Character

Provide a brief description of the key characteristics of the following:

General visual/aesthetic description of site: _____

Topography and notable landforms visible from the site: _____

Unique geographic or rock features visible from the site: _____

Type and extent of vegetation and vegetation patterns visible from this site: _____

Type and extent of Project waters visible from this site: (reservoir, creek segment): _____

Unique/focal point water features (waterfalls, wetlands, creek segment): _____

Land Use Patterns and Cultural Features

Identify the type of visible development (campgrounds, Project facilities, etc.):

Identify the level of development _____

1. No noticeable development
2. Very limited primitive development
3. Five or fewer buildings/structures in view
4. 5–10 (or more) buildings/structures in view
5. Highly developed

Describe adjacent landscape and land use features: _____

Identify any unique visual/aesthetic features noted at this site: _____

Landscape Visibility

Distance Zones: Characterize predominate viewing distances from this site: _____

1. Foreground (up to ½ mile from viewer)
2. Middleground (approx. ½ to 4 miles from viewer)
3. Background (greater than 4 miles from viewer)

Describe prominent vegetation, key features, and degree of discernable detail of each distance zone:

Foreground views _____

Middleground views _____

Background views _____

Description of context of view (i.e., recreation, roadway) _____

Description of duration of view (i.e., short, medium, long) _____

Photographs

(Take photos looking in each direction)

Enter photo names and the number of photos taken looking in each direction.

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