

REC-2 RECREATION FACILITIES USE ASSESSMENT STUDY PLAN

**KERN RIVER No. 3 HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT
*FERC PROJECT No. 2290***

PREPARED FOR:



Energy for What's Ahead®

KERNVILLE, CALIFORNIA

July 2022

Page Intentionally Left Blank

1.0 POTENTIAL RESOURCE ISSUE

Recreation use and opportunities at developed and dispersed¹ recreation sites (i.e., campgrounds, day use facilities, and whitewater boating access locations) along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach² and within the Kern River No. 3 (KR3) Hydroelectric Project (Project) Area.

2.0 PROJECT NEXUS AND HOW THE RESULTS WILL BE USED

- Current Project operations may promote use of the Project Area for recreational purposes.
- The study results will be used to document recreation use (e.g., type, volume, and location), assist in the development of recreation use and density estimates, and estimate future Project-related recreational demand and needs for the Project Area.

3.0 STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal is to collect information on recreation use within the FERC Project Boundary and along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach. The objectives of this recreation study are to:

- Evaluate recreation use at recreation sites within the FERC Project Boundary and along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach, including both an assessment of the amount of recreation use that each site is receiving (including percent of capacity) and the recreation activities that occur at the site.
- Collect visitor feedback regarding their perception and experience at recreation facilities within the study area including but not limited to facility condition, level of crowdedness, angling opportunities, and the scenic landscape.
- Estimate future recreational demand and needs, including the need for additional recreation facilities and access enhancements.
- Assess consistency of current recreation opportunities with the laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines described in the *Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (USFS, 1988).

4.0 STUDY AREA AND STUDY SITES

The North Fork Kern River (NFKR) is an active recreation corridor, with numerous recreation facilities developed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Sequoia National Forest

¹ Dispersed camping is available free of charge but has little or no amenities such as potable water, picnic tables, or fire pits, and trash or restroom services may only be seasonally available.

² The Fairview Dam Bypass Reach is defined as the 16-mile bypass reach of the North Fork Kern River (NFKR) between Fairview Dam and the KR3 Powerhouse trailrace.

(SQF). Two recreation sites within the FERC Project Boundary include Willow Creek Take-Out above the Fairview Dam on USFS lands, and the KR3 Powerhouse Put-in/Take-out downstream of the KR3 Powerhouse on Southern California Edison (SCE)-owned lands. The remaining recreation sites along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach are on USFS lands located outside the FERC Project Boundary.

The study area and specific study sites include developed and dispersed campgrounds, day-use areas, river access points and trailheads within the FERC Project Boundary and along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach. The locations are listed below and shown on Figure 4-1. The recreation study area is sub-divided into 2 areas: Upper Canyon and Lower Canyon.

- **Upper Canyon Recreation Sites**

- Willow Point Whitewater Take-out (developed)
- Roads End Picnic Site and Whitewater Put-in (developed)
- Packsaddle Trail Trailhead
- Fairview Campground (developed)
- Whiskey Flat Trailhead
- Calkins Flat Dispersed Camping
- Chamise Dispersed Camping
- Rincon Trailhead
- Ant Canyon Dispersed Camping
- Old Goldledge Dispersed Camping
- Goldledge Campground and Whitewater Put-in/Take-out (developed)
- Springhill Dispersed Camping

- **Lower Canyon Recreation Sites**

- Corral Creek Picnic Site and Whitewater Take-out (developed)
- Corral Creek Dispersed Camping
- Hospital Flat Campground (developed)
- Chico Flat Dispersed Camping
- Thunderbird Group Campground and Whitewater Put-in/Take-out (developed)
- Camp 3 Campground and Whitewater Put-in/Take-out (developed)
- Halfway Group Campground and Whitewater Put-in/Take-out (developed)
- Headquarters Campground (developed)
- Riverkern Beach Picnic Site (developed)
- KR3 Powerhouse Whitewater Put-in/Take-out (developed)

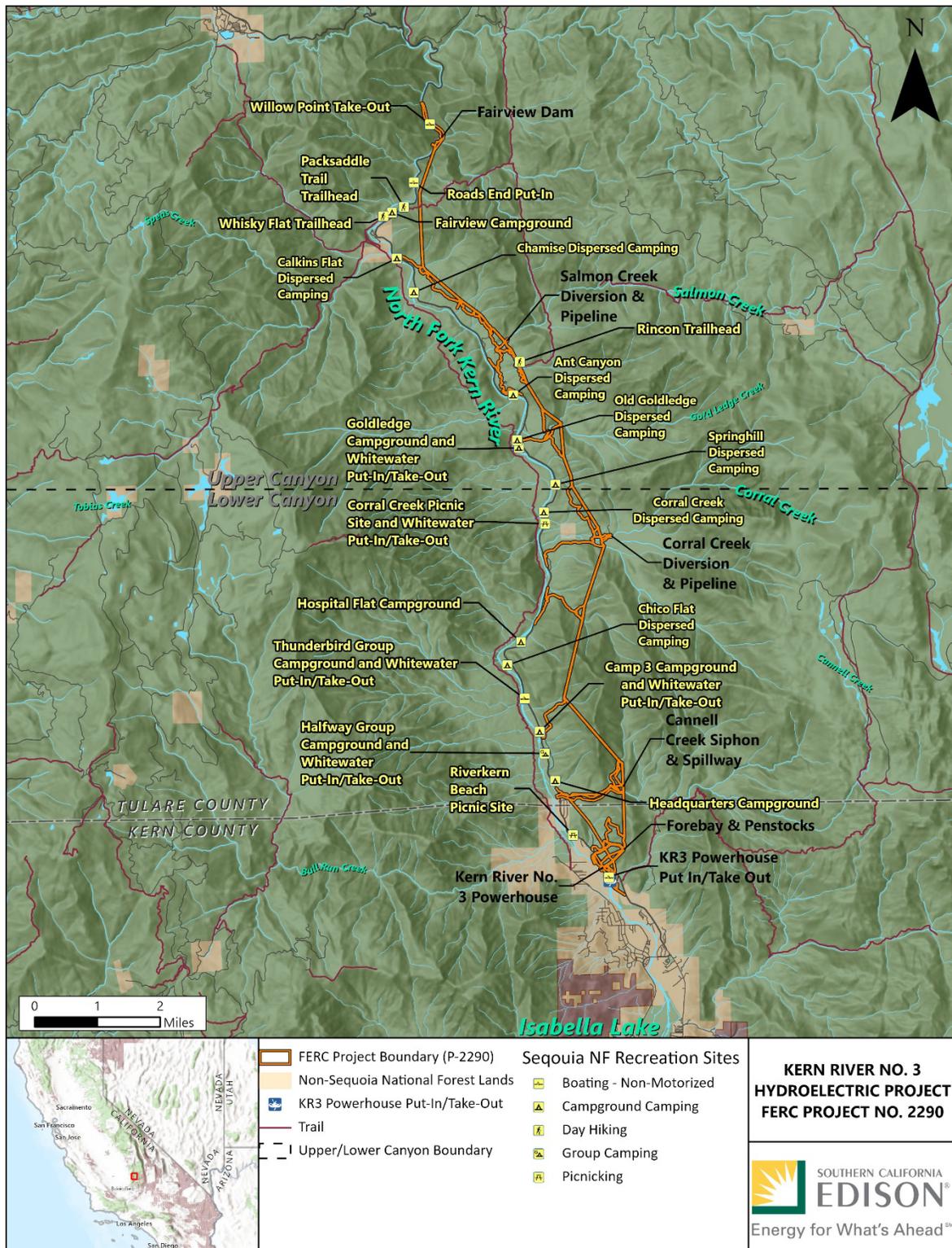


Figure 4-1. Recreation Study Sites within the FERC Project Boundary and along the Fairview Dam Bypass Reach.

5.0 EXISTING INFORMATION

The following sources will be used and reviewed when developing this study and when analyzing the survey results:

- *Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (USFS, 1988)³
- *Comprehensive Management Plan—North and South Forks of the Kern Wild and Scenic River* (USFS, n.d.)
- *California’s 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (CDPR, 2020)
- National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) Reports for SQF⁴
- SQF Concessionaire data

6.0 STUDY APPROACH

To accomplish the goals and objectives of this study, SCE is proposing a variety of data collection techniques: (1) compile information on the historical trends (i.e., past 10 years) of recreation use and use patterns in the Project Area, and (2) collect current recreation use data in the study area through visitor use surveys, both in person and online, and spot counts. The combination of historical and current recreation use and use patterns will support analysis on future recreation estimates and needs. A description of each collection technique is provided below.

6.1. VISITOR USE SURVEYS

6.1.1. INTERCEPT SURVEY

Visitor intercept surveys will be conducted on-site using a questionnaire (available in both English and Spanish) at the sites identified in Section 4.0 to collect recreation user demographics, activities, perception and experience, feedback (conditions and needs), and socioeconomic data. The data collected will be used to provide a general pattern of recreation use (e.g., type, volume, and location) and assist in the development of recreation use estimates for the Project Area. SCE has developed a questionnaire (see Appendix A of this Study Plan) for use during the visitor intercept surveys.

SCE will conduct visitor intercept surveys on 2 days per month (1 weekday and 1 weekend day) from April to September 2023, and 1 day of each holiday weekend for a total of 15 days throughout the study period. For the purposes of this study, the holidays

³ A revised Land Management Plan is currently under development with the SQF and will supersede the 1988 Plan when finalized.

⁴ 2021 NVUM data is currently being analyzed by the USFS. A report will be made available once analysis is complete.

include the 3 days of the holiday weekends: Memorial Day (May 28 to 30, 2023); Fourth of July (July 2 to 4, 2023); and Labor Day (September 3 to 5, 2023).

The surveys will be conducted following a bus route method (e.g., Pollack et al., 1994); the shift, the starting recreation site for each circuit, and the direction of travel (i.e., clockwise or counterclockwise) will be selected randomly on the days the surveys are conducted. One visitor intercept survey circuit includes conducting surveys at the recreation sites in either the upper canyon or lower canyon identified in Section 4.0, *Study Area and Study Sites*. There will be three 4-hour shifts: Shift 1 (7 a.m. to 11 a.m.), Shift 2 (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.), and Shift 3 (3 p.m. to 7 p.m.). On each of the 15 survey days, two circuits (one at the upper canyon recreation sites and one at the lower canyon recreation sites) will be completed within a 4-hour shift. SCE anticipates each circuit will take approximately 2 hours. Within each shift, once the first circuit is completed, the second circuit will commence. A survey day is assumed to be an 8-hour period (two 4-hour shifts) occurring between 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in an attempt to encounter the most recreationists and gather surveys from recreationists exiting in the morning, afternoon, and evening. Calculations for the number of surveys assume an average of four surveys completed per hour.

All survey clerks will be trained thoroughly as a means of quality control. Survey clerks will be provided with detailed information on the study schedule, appropriate materials to aid in data collection, and direction on appropriate interviewing techniques and attire. In the event a recreationist declines to participate in the survey, the survey clerk will offer a hard copy of the survey (in English or Spanish) with the QR code to the recreationist. Instructions will be given as to where they can drop off their completed hard copy survey (if they choose to accept the survey) at their convenience.

6.1.2. ONLINE SURVEY

An online survey option will be made available via a QR code advertised at all sites identified in Section 4.0, *Study Area and Study Sites*, in addition to posting a link to the survey on the Project relicensing website. The QR code will be posted for a 12-month period (approximately from April 2023 to March 2024) in order to capture visitor use through the shoulder seasons (fall/spring) and winter season.

The online survey will collect recreation user demographics, activities, perception and experience, feedback (conditions and needs), and socioeconomic data. The data collected will be used to document recreation use (e.g., type, volume, and location) and assist in the development of recreation use estimates for the Project Area, similar to the visitor intercept surveys.

6.2. SPOT COUNTS

Spot counts will be conducted at each recreation site identified in Section 4.0. During each spot count, the following information will be recorded: date, time, weather conditions, number of vehicles observed at the site, license plant (state of origin), number of visitors

observed at the site, and type of recreation activities observed. SCE has developed a spot count form (see Appendix B of this Study Plan) for use during the spot counts.

SCE will conduct spots counts 2 days per month (1 weekday and 1 weekend day) from April 2023 to March 2024, and 1 day of each holiday weekend for a total of 27 days throughout the study period. For the purposes of this study, the holidays include the 3 days of the holiday weekends: Memorial Day (May 28 to 30, 2023); Fourth of July (July 2 to 4, 2023); Labor Day (September 3 to 5, 2023). One circuit includes conducting spot counts at each of the sites identified in Section 4.0. There will be three 4-hour shifts: Shift 1 (7 a.m. to 11 a.m.), Shift 2 (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.), and Shift 3 (3 p.m. to 7 p.m.). On each of the 27 spot count days, two circuits will be completed within a 4-hour shift and two 4-hour shifts will be randomly selected, resulting in 4 circuits per day. The spot counts will be conducted following a bus route method (e.g., Pollack et al., 1994); the shift, the starting recreation site for each circuit, and the direction of travel (i.e., clockwise or counterclockwise) will be selected randomly on the days the spot counts are conducted.

7.0 REPORTING

The following sections provide a description of the approach to estimating existing and future recreational use, recreation site capacity and use density percentages, and recreation needs. A report will be prepared documenting the analysis results and will include a summary of all collected information and discussion of the analyses described below. The report will address all applicable laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines of the *Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (USFS, 1988).

7.1. CURRENT RECREATION USE AND DENSITY ESTIMATES

Average recreation use will be calculated using data collected from the visitor intercept surveys, online surveys, and spot counts. Recreation user day estimates based on vehicle counts will use an average party size of 2.4 people per vehicle, per the SQF's most recent NVUM report (USFS, 2018). Estimates will be categorized by site; site type; and activity based on weekday, weekend, holiday, morning, afternoon, or evening use, as well as by monthly total use.

For the purposes of this study, the carrying capacity for a recreation site is defined as the number of vehicles that can be parked at a recreation site at one time, based on the number of available parking spaces associated with the particular site. For paved parking lots, this will be achieved by counting the number of designated parking spaces available at the recreation site. For unmarked parking, maximum vehicle space will be estimated. Peak and average use density at each site will be estimated based on the average number of vehicles observed divided by the parking capacity of that site.

7.2. FUTURE RECREATION USE ESTIMATES

Estimated projections of future recreation use will be developed using the average annual increase in population growth over the past 10 years, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. These estimates will be augmented with discussion of trends reported in *California's 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (CDPR,

2020); 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 (when available) NVUM reports for SQF (USFS, 2006, 2011, 2018), and the *Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (USFS, 1988). Estimated projections will be provided in 10-year intervals for the anticipated term of the license up to 50 years into the future.

While it is acknowledged that future changes in the supply of recreation resources either in their quantity, accessibility, and/or quality may influence future demand and use, the demand analysis undertaken for this study does not attempt to predict future changes or how they might specifically affect levels of use at Project facilities. Therefore, the demand analysis results should be viewed as a general guide of potential future recreation pressure developed for planning purposes only.

7.3. RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Estimates of future Project-related recreational demand and needs will rely on the results provided by the recreation use assessment and visitor surveys for user preferences and opinions on needs and crowding.

The need for new recreation opportunities, new site development, or modification of existing recreation resources will be assessed based on the results of site capacity estimates and user surveys that provide user preferences and opinions on needs and crowding at each site and the Project as a whole.

SCE will file an Initial Study Report (ISR) within 1 year following FERC’s Study Plan Determination (estimated August 3, 2023) and an Updated Study Report (USR) no later than 2 years after FERC’s Study Plan Determination. The ISR and USR will provide an update on SCE’s overall progress in implementing the Study Plan and schedule and the data collected, including an explanation of any variance from the Study Plan and schedule. A Technical Memo will be appended to either the ISR or USR filing, as applicable. The information provided in the Technical Memo will be summarized in, and appended to, the Application for New License.

In addition, SCE may prepare interim reports during the study year to apprise Stakeholders on study implementation progress and to support consultation with Stakeholders.

8.0 SCHEDULE

SCE is proposing to conduct this study as outlined below.

Date	Activity
Fall 2022–Spring 2023	Consult with the USFS to review visitor intercept survey and online survey
Summer 2023	Conduct on-site recreation visitor intercept surveys
Spring 2023– Spring 2024	Conduct online recreation user surveys and spot counts
August 2023	Provide overall study plan progress and schedule update with ISR

Date	Activity
Spring/Summer 2024	Analyze data and prepare Technical Memo
August 2024	Provide Technical Memo with USR

ISR = Initial Study Report; USFS = U.S. Forest Service; USR = Updated Study Report

9.0 LEVEL OF EFFORT AND COST

The estimated cost (2022 dollars) for the study is \$200,000, which includes study-specific consultation, field work, data compilation and analysis, and reporting.

10.0 REFERENCES

CDPR (California Department of Parks and Recreation). 2020. *California’s 2021–2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. California Department of Parks and Recreation, Sacramento, CA.

Pollack, K.H., C.M. Jones, and T.L. Brown. 1994. “Angler Survey Methods and Their Applications in Fisheries Management.” *American Fisheries Society Special Publication 25*. American Fisheries Society, Bethesda, MD.

SCE (Southern California Edison). 1997. *Recreation Plan*. FERC Project No. 2290. Rosemead, CA.

USFS (U.S. Forest Service). 1988. *Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest. March 1988. Accessed: July 2022. Available online: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5400303.pdf.

_____. 2006. Visitor Use Report, Sequoia NF, USDA Forest Service, Region 5, National Visitor Use Monitoring Data collected FY 2006. United States Department of Agriculture.

_____. 2011. Visitor Use Report, Sequoia NF, USDA Forest Service, Region 5, National Visitor Use Monitoring Data collected FY 2011. United States Department of Agriculture.

_____. 2018. Visitor Use Report, Sequoia NF, USDA Forest Service, Region 5, National Visitor Use Monitoring Data collected FY 2016. United States Department of Agriculture.

_____. No Date. *Comprehensive Management Plan—North and South Forks of the Kern Wild and Scenic River*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Sequoia and Inyo National Forests. Accessed: May 2020. Available online: <https://www.rivers.gov/documents/plans/kern-plan.pdf>.

APPENDIX A
VISITOR INTERCEPT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Page Intentionally Left Blank

**Recreation User Survey
Kern River No. 3 Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2290)**

To be filled out by survey technician

Clerk: _____ **Site:** _____ **Date:** _____

Time: _____ a.m./p.m.

Weather: Sunny Partly Cloudy Cloudy Light Rain
Heavy Rain

RESPONDENT REFUSED INTERVIEW:

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN VEHICLE: _____

RESPONDENT'S PRIMARY LANGUAGE: _____

VEHICLE HAS WATERCRAFT RACK:

RESPONDENT HAS BEEN INTERVIEWED AT THIS SITE PREVIOUSLY:

Introduction: Good Morning/Afternoon. My name is _____ and I am surveying visitors at the (SITE LOCATION) on behalf of Southern California Edison to collect information on recreation use in the area surrounding the Kern River No. 3 Hydroelectric Project (share map to show area described) and would like to obtain your feedback about your current visit and recreation experience. Your input will help us to better understand recreation use and needs in the area.

Any information you provide us today will remain anonymous. The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes, would you mind answering some survey questions?

Section 1 – Demographics

1. What is your home zip code? _____

2. How far did you travel to get to this site today?
 0–25 miles 26–50 miles 51–75 miles 76–100 miles 101+ miles

3. What is your age?
 Under 16 16–19 20–29 30–39 40–49 50–59 60–69 70+

4. Including yourself, how many people 18 or older are in your party today?
_____ people in party

5. How many people under 18 are in your party today?
_____ people in party

Section 2 – User Activities

6. What day did you arrive at this recreation site?

7. How many days have you been on this recreation trip, including today?
_____ day(s)
8. How many total days do you expect your trip to last?
_____ day(s)
9. How many recreation trips have you made to the area between the Fairview Dam and the Kern River No. 3 Powerhouse in the past 12 months?
_____ trip(s) in the last 12 months
10. In the last 12 months, have you visited the area between the Fairview Dam and the Kern River No. 3 Powerhouse more, less, or about the same as you normally would?
(Circle one)

MORE

ABOUT THE SAME

LESS

- a. What is the primary reason for the answer you gave?

11. What was your primary reason for selecting this location?

12. What is the primary recreation activity that you participated in today at this recreation site? *(Please read the list to respondents. Check only one main activity in the first column.)* What other activities did you participate in today at this recreation site? *(Check all that apply in the second column.)*

Check only <u>one</u> main activity	Check all other activities	Types of Activities
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	a. biking
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	b. camping
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	c. fishing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. hiking/walking/trail use
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. white water boating/rafting
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. boating (non-motorized)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Photography
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	h. picnicking
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	i. relaxing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	j. scenic driving
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	k. viewing scenery
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	l. viewing wildlife
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	m. other:

[Ask Q 13–15 only if respondent selects c. fishing]

13. Are you fishing for fun or to catch food to eat (circle one)? If you are planning to eat your fish but are mostly fishing for fun, please choose fun. If you enjoy fishing, but are mostly fishing to catch food, please choose food.

Food

Fun

14. What was your primary reason for selecting this location to fish?

15. Have you fished along this reach of the river before? YES NO

If yes, how often have you fished this reach in each season over the past 12 months?

- b. Spring (March-May) # _____
- c. Summer (June-August) # _____
- d. Fall (September-November) # _____
- e. Winter (December-February) # _____

[Ask Q 16–18 only if respondent selects: g. photography, j. scenic driving, k. viewing scenery, or l. viewing wildlife]

16. What are the scenic features that most attracted you to this area? Provide top 1 or 2.

17. Over the past 12 months, how often have you visited the area to partake in these activities?

- f. This is my first time _____
- g. Spring (March-May) #_____
- h. Summer (June-August) #_____
- i. Fall (September-November) #_____
- j. Winter (December-February) #_____

18. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being very good, how would you rate the scenic quality of the area? **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

k. If you selected a 1 or 2, please explain:

Section 3 – User Perception and Experience

19. How would you rate your overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your recreation experience today on a 1-5 scale, with 1 indicating very dissatisfied and 5 indicating very satisfied? If not applicable, check N/A. Next, rate the importance of each item to the overall quality of your recreation experience on this trip in the far-right column, with 1 being unimportant and 5 being very important:

	1 Very Dissatisfied	2 Dissatisfied	3 Neutral	4 Satisfied	5 Very Satisfied	N/A	Importance (1–5)
1. Overall satisfaction of your trip							
2. Satisfaction of your primary activity, as noted above							
3. Cost of facility access fees							
4. River access							
5. Number of people encountered/crowdedness							
6. Available parking when you arrived							
7. Feeling of safety							
8. Disability access							
9. Scenery at this site/area							
10. Maintenance of facilities							
11. Cleanliness of facilities							
12. Access to restroom/shower/drinking water							
13. Interpretive/educational opportunities							
14. Flows in the river							

- a. If you marked a 1 or 2 for any of the items listed above, please explain.

20. If you participated in a water-related activity, did the flows in the NFKR affect your ability participate?

Yes (select one): flow was too high flow was too low other (explain)

No, flow did not affect planned activities

NA-did not partake in water-related activity

Section 4 – User Feedback

21. Are there any improvements that you would recommend for this site?

YES

NO *(If no, skip to Question 18.)*

- a. What improvements do you recommend?

22. Are there any additional recreation facilities needed in the area between the Fairview Dam and the Kern River No. 3 Powerhouse?

23. Do you have any additional comments about this recreation site, including comments on existing or needed recreation facilities? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Section 5 – Socioeconomics

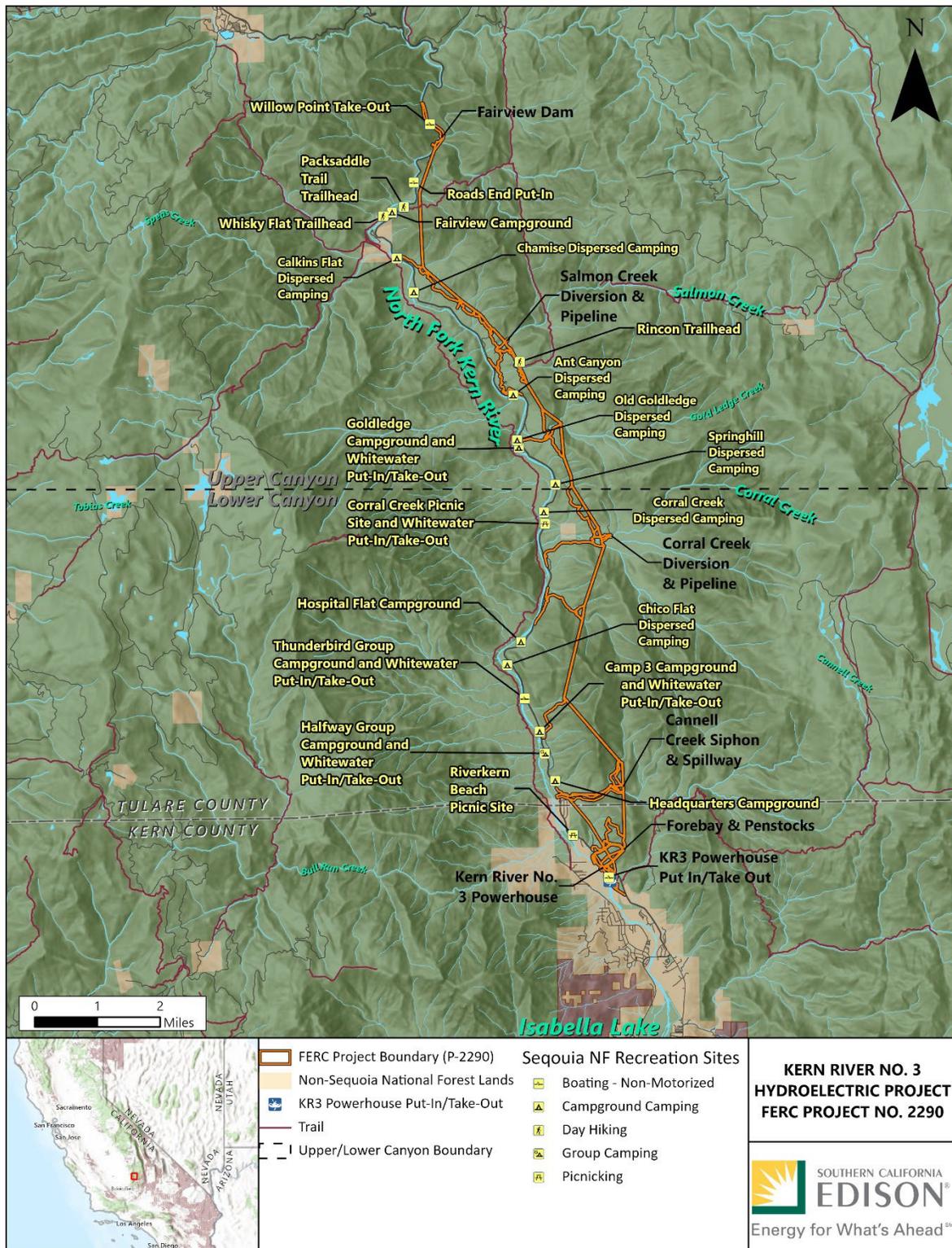
This portion of the survey will ask about your expenditures for your recreation trip. These questions will be used to help estimate how recreation spending contributes to the local community, businesses, and economy. Your answers will be kept confidential.

For these questions, please include anything you bought or expect to buy in the local area during this trip. By local area, I mean areas and towns within 50 miles of here, including Johnsondale, Roads End, Kernville, Wofford Heights, Mountain Mesa, Lake Isabella, South Lake, Weldon. Please do not include expenditures at any other locations outside this area.

If there is more than one person in the party: Please provide the total cost for your party, even if someone else paid for you, or you paid for someone else.

24. For your whole trip, how much do you expect to spend in the local area on each of the following things? Please include any purchases you expect to make before you go home.
- a. (read only if on a multiple day trip) Lodging at hotels, motels, lodges?
\$ _____
 - b. (read only if on a multiple day trip) Lodging at cabins, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, Airbnbs, etc.?
\$ _____
 - c. Food and drink at restaurants and bars?
\$ _____
 - d. Food and drink at grocery stores?
\$ _____
 - e. Food and drink at gas stations or convenience stores?
\$ _____
 - f. Gas? As a reminder, please include any purchases you expect to make before you go home.
\$ _____
 - g. Vehicle rentals—car, SUV, camper or RV, truck, trailer, or ATV?
\$ _____
 - h. Local transportation—buses, shuttles, car service such as Uber?
\$ _____
 - i. Entry, parking, permit or recreation use fees?
\$ _____
 - j. Guide fees, pack trip fees, or outfitter costs? This includes costs for guided white water rafting trips, outdoor adventure trips, horseback riding, etc.
\$ _____
 - k. Equipment rentals, such as boats, bikes, camping equipment, etc.?
\$ _____
 - l. Sporting goods purchases for use on your trip, such as equipment for camping, hunting, boating, hiking, fishing, etc?
\$ _____
 - m. Souvenirs, clothing, and other miscellaneous purchases?
\$ _____
 - n. Any other costs that I haven't asked about? (list amount and what was purchased)
\$ _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP! WE APPRECIATE YOUR TIME TODAY.



Page Intentionally Left Blank

APPENDIX B
SPOT COUNT FORM

Page Intentionally Left Blank

Page Intentionally Left Blank