

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes consultation conducted with the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) regarding the Sno-Park program and the five Sno-parks located in the study area. State Parks does not manage recreation resources in the study area, the United States Forest Service (USDA-FS), the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), and the California Highway Patrol (CHP) share in the responsibility to manage the Sno-Parks. The State Parks Department funds the Sno-Park program which provides access locations to snowmobile and cross-country ski trails. There are five Sno-Parks in the Project area that are funded through the State Parks program.

This report also summarizes the results of a future trends evaluation conducted for winter recreation activities.

2.0 STUDY OBJECTIVE

Evaluate the current uses and future demands of winter recreational opportunities at trails, trailheads, and Sno-Parks near Project facilities and nearby recreational facilities.

3.0 STUDY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 STUDY ELEMENTS COMPLETED

- Additional consultation was conducted with State Parks regarding the Sno-Parks within the study area.
- Data was used from the winter recreation survey to characterize the future recreational needs.

3.2 OUTSTANDING STUDY ELEMENTS

- Identify and document potential improvements to meet existing and future winter recreation uses.

4.0 STUDY METHODOLOGY

4.1 CONSULTATION (PHONE INTERVIEWS) ON WINTER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STUDY AREA

A telephone interview was conducted with a representative from State Parks to complete the consultation called for in the REC 21, Winter Recreation Study Plan. The standard survey questionnaire was used, consistent with prior interviews that were conducted with the representatives from the Pine Ridge Nordic Ski Patrol, Sierra Snowmobile Association, and the Sierra National Forest in 2002 and reported in the 2003 REC 21 Winter Recreation Technical Study Report. Barry Jones, the Sno-Park

Program Manager was interviewed on July 25, 2003 to complete the telephone interviews consultation.

4.2 FUTURE DEMANDS/FUTURE TRENDS EVALUATION

In an attempt to try and define the future winter recreation trends in the study area, the Recreation Working Group developed an approach to estimate the future demand for winter recreation opportunities in the study area. The approach initially consisted of an Internet based search of winter recreation equipment vendors and winter activity organizations to identify if there were any publications on future winter recreation opportunities trends. In addition the USDA-FS was consulted to determine if they had any guidance documents or established protocols that are used to estimate the future recreational demands, including winter recreation. Neither the Internet based search nor the consultation activities yielded information regarding future winter recreation trends on a national, regional, or local study area level. The Recreation Working Group then agreed on an alternate approach, which was based on determining the origin counties of the people recreating during the winter in the study area. The origin county data was collected during the 2001 winter recreation surveys that were conducted in the study area. The resident county origin data was then evaluated to determine the percent distribution of origin counties and subsequently compared to the projected population change in the origin counties. The population growth in the resident counties of origin could be used as an indicator of potential future winter recreation opportunities needs.

A literature review was conducted to further identify the potential trends in winter recreation. No publications with information specific to winter recreation were identified as part of this review. The results of the literature review did identify three publications with general information on summer recreation type activities as follows: (1) Outdoor Recreation in American Life: A National Assessment of Demand and Supply Trends (Cordell et al. 2002); (2) 1993 California State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (California Department of Parks and Recreation 1994); and (3) Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California – 1997 – An Element of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program (California Department of Parks and Recreation March 1998). The Cordell report focuses on national and regional use trends in outdoor recreation. The SCORP survey reports examined outdoor recreation participation trends in California from 1987 to 1997, and examined differences between Hispanic and Anglo respondents.

These three publications on recreational trends only provide information on a generic or regional level and do not provide information specific to the study area. In order to relate the trends described in the literature back to the study area it is important to understand where the study area visitors are traveling from and what the ethnic distribution is in those areas. The residence county information for the winter recreation user groups in the Big Creek Study area was obtained from the results of the 2001 winter recreation surveys conducted for the Big Creek Alternative Licensing Process (ALP) (SCE 2003). County population data on projected county population growth rates were obtained from the State of California, Department of Finance, June 2001,

(www.dof.ca.gov). Winter recreation survey responses collected in 2001 in the Study area were reviewed to identify the residence county of recreation visitors and the proportion of survey respondents representing each county. The survey, did not collect information on the ethnic diversity of people participating in winter recreation activities in the study area. and as such, the surveys could not be used to accurately determine if there is an ethnic difference in the importance of winter recreational use.

Any determination of future winter recreation trends in the study area can only be based on the projected change in the population of the origin counties of visitors to the study area, and not on ethnic diversity.

5.0 STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 CONSULTATION (PHONE INTERVIEW) ON WINTER RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES IN THE STUDY AREA

California Department of Parks and Recreation

A telephone interview was conducted with the State Parks Sno-Park Program Manager (Appendix A). The primary purpose of the Sno-Parks is to provide access to snowmobile and cross-country ski trails by offering a staging area for these activities. The components of a Sno-Park staging area include a paved parking area at a snowmobile and/or cross-country ski trailhead and a restroom. In addition to access, the Sno-Park program funds also go toward trail grooming, law enforcement, and restroom maintenance. Some Sno-Parks have areas that are well suited for snow play as well.

The objectives of the State Parks Sno-Park program are to:

- Provide access to winter recreational resources;
- Provide law enforcement funding at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide visitor information at Sno-Park sites;
- Promote conservation at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide trail grooming funds at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide funding for the plowing of Sno-Park sites; and
- Provide funding for restroom maintenance at Sno-Park sites.

A Sno-Park permit is required for each vehicle parked at a Sno-Park from November 1 through May 30. Both day and season permits are available from local area merchants and through the California State Parks Website.

Several of the questions from the standard telephone survey were not pertinent to State Parks' involvement with Project area recreation. This is because State Parks does not manage any recreation activities in the area, it only provides financial support for the area's Sno-Parks. The State Parks provides funding to the Forest Service to maintain

the kiosks and restrooms at the Sno-Parks, to Cal Trans to plow the Sno-Parks, and to the California Highway Patrol to enforce parking violations in the Sno-parks. The following statements summarize the State Parks responses to the interview questions.

The primary reason for winter recreation in the region is due to the amount of snowfall normally received in the area. A secondary reason is that it is close geographically to the large population center in the Fresno area. The quality of the winter recreation opportunities in the area is excellent. Trails and restrooms are considered good to excellent condition, but parking is considered below average. The area is particularly attractive to winter recreationists in the Fresno area because it is easily accessible. All of the Sno-Parks can be reached within two hours from Fresno, under good road and weather conditions.

The State Parks goal for the area is to keep all 182 miles of trails and the associated support facilities open for public use. The Balsam Meadows Sno-Park could be improved by reconfiguring the parking lot and constructing new restrooms. In general, the Sno-Parks could all be improved by providing more parking spaces.

The results of this telephone interview, and interviews previously conducted with agency and user group representatives, confirm the results of the winter survey. The primary use of the Sno-Parks is to provide access to snowmobile and cross-country ski trails by offering a staging area for these activities. This is consistent with the primary activity types reported by self-census survey respondents at these locations.

5.2 FUTURE TRENDS EVALUATION

Out of 378 winter recreation surveys that were completed, 349 respondents indicated they were residents of California counties. There were nine counties from which 2% or more of the survey respondents lived. These nine counties included Fresno (50.4%), San Luis Obispo (7.9%), Madera (6.1%), Kings (5.0%), Los Angeles (3.2%), Tulare (2.4%), Santa Barbara (2.1%), Santa Clara (2.1%), Ventura (2.1%). Table REC 21-1 summarizes the originating counties of the winter recreation survey respondents.

County population and projected population growth for each county was obtained from the Interim County Population Projections (California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit 2001). Table REC 21-2 summarizes the projected population change in the nine visitor origin counties from 2000 through the year 2040 on ten year increments.

The results found in the Interim County Population Projections in the Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California – 1997 – An Element of the California Outdoor Recreation Planning Program (California Department of Parks and Recreation 1998) indicated that “the Hispanic population will be the primary group that increases in population size in California”. The Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California – 1997 report had many significant findings with respect to opinions and attitudes on general outdoor recreation as related to Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations and these results are summarized in the 2003 REC 10 Recreation

Opportunities and Needs Assessment (Developed)/REC 17 Dispersed Recreation Opportunities and Needs Assessment Technical Study Reports (SCE 2004).

The future demand and trends projections address general recreational preferences and future trends. Specific recreation activity trends are not addressed. How future trends will affect specific activities such as winter recreation is not well defined and may be dependent upon how support facilities associated with these recreational activities are developed.

6.0 LITERATURE CITED

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- California State Parks. 1998. Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California 1997.
- Dwyer, J.F. 1994. Customer Diversity and the Future Demand for Outdoor Recreation. U.S. Forest Service General Technical Report RM 252.
- Southern California Edison. 2003. 2002 Technical Study Report Package for the Big Creek Hydroelectric System Alternative Licensing Process. October 2003.
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TABLES

Table REC 21-1. Summary of Origin Counties of Winter Recreation Survey Respondents.

Origin County	No. of Survey Respondents	% of Total Survey Responses
Fresno	191	50.4%
San Luis Obispo	30	7.9%
Madera	23	6.1%
Kings	19	5.0%
Los Angeles	12	3.2%
Tulare	9	2.4%
Santa Barbara	8	2.1%
Santa Clara	8	2.1%
Ventura	8	2.1%
Kern	6	1.6%
Mariposa	5	1.3%
Monterey	5	1.3%
Alameda	4	1.1%
Sacramento	4	1.1%
Santa Cruz	3	0.8%
Contra Costa	2	0.5%
Orange	2	0.5%
San Diego	2	0.5%
San Mateo	2	0.5%
Sonoma	2	0.5%
El Dorado	1	1.1%
Mendocino	1	0.3%
San Francisco	1	0.3%
San Joaquin	1	0.3%
Total	349	

¹Source of population and growth rates: Interim County Population Projections Report, Dept. of Finance, June 2001 (www.dof.ca.gov).

Table REC 21-2. Summary of Winter Recreation Respondent Origin County Population and Projected Growth (2000 - 2040).

County	2000	2010			2020			2030			2040		
	Total Population	Total Population	Net Change in Population ⁽¹⁾	Total Population % growth ⁽¹⁾	Total Population	Net Change in Population ⁽¹⁾	Total Population % growth ⁽¹⁾	Total Population	Net Change in Population ⁽¹⁾	Total Population % growth ⁽¹⁾	Total Population	Net Change in Population ⁽¹⁾	Total Population % growth ⁽¹⁾
FRESNO	811,179	953,457	142,278	#REF!	1,114,403	303,224	37.4%	1,308,767	497,588	61.3%	1,521,360	710,181	87.5%
SAN LUIS OBISPO	254,818	324,741	69,923	#REF!	392,329	137,511	54.0%	461,839	207,021	81.2%	535,901	281,083	110.3%
MADERA	126,394	175,132	48,738	#REF!	224,567	98,173	77.7%	281,300	154,906	122.6%	346,451	220,057	174.1%
KINGS	126,672	154,617	27,945	#REF!	186,611	59,939	47.3%	223,914	97,242	76.8%	265,944	139,272	109.9%
LOS ANGELES	9,838,861	10,604,452	765,591	#REF!	11,575,693	1,736,832	17.7%	12,737,077	2,898,216	29.5%	13,888,161	4,049,300	41.2%
TULARE	379,944	469,509	89,565	#REF!	569,896	189,952	50.0%	692,981	313,037	82.4%	836,973	457,029	120.3%
SANTA BARBARA	412,071	468,457	56,386	13.7%	552,846	140,775	34.2%	658,223	246,152	59.7%	779,247	367,176	89.1%
SANTA CLARA	1,763,252	2,021,417	258,165	#REF!	2,196,750	433,498	24.6%	2,400,564	637,312	36.1%	2,595,253	832,001	47.2%
VENTURA	753,820	854,580	100,760	13.4%	981,565	227,745	30.2%	1,127,592	373,772	49.6%	1,278,426	524,606	69.6%
TOTALS	14,467,011	16,026,362	1,559,351	10.8%	17,794,660	3,327,649	23.0%	19,892,257	5,425,246	37.5%	22,047,716	7,580,705	52.4%

Source: Race/Ethnic Population Projection by Age and Sex 1970-2040, CA Department of Finance, 1998

⁽¹⁾ Net change in population and total population growth is based on comparison to 2000 total population

APPENDIX A
Winter Recreation Survey (Barry Jones)

Southern California Edison
Big Creek Alternative Licensing Process
Winter Recreation Use Telephone Survey

Agency Form – (Sierra National Forest, CA State Parks, SCE)

Southern California Edison and the Big Creek Collaborative are conducting a winter recreation use survey as part of the relicensing of the Big Creek Hydroelectric System. A component of the survey involves conducting telephone survey interviews with several agencies and special-interest recreation groups. Your responses to this survey will assist us in determining winter recreation use, opportunities and facilities in the area. This survey interview will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The results of the winter recreation survey will help determine future recreation conditions for the Big Creek Hydroelectric System.

Date: 7/25/03 Surveyor Name: Dave Martinez

Group/Agency: California Department of Parks and Recreation

Name of representative surveyed: Barry Jones

Phone number: _____

Barry Jones, the California Department of Parks and Recreation Sno-Park program manager, was contact by phone at 4:05pm on July 25, 2003 by David Martinez. The Big Creek Relicensing project was explained and a general overview of the recreation studies presented. The winter recreation study was explained in more detail and Mr. Jones was asked to participate in the Winter Recreation Use Telephone Survey.

Upon initiating the survey it became clear to both parties that most of the questions were not pertinent to CDPR. The primary reason is that CDPR does not manage any activities in the Project Area. Instead, CDPR provides support to the Sno-Park program.

The Sno-Park program is designed to provide access, parking, and staging areas for winter recreation activities. Sno-Parks are generally parking areas that are kept clear by contract snow plowing. In addition, they have maintained restrooms. The funding for the Sno-Park program is derived from "Green Sticker" funds generated from the Off Highway Vehicle program which is a component of the CDPR.

The Sno-Parks are usually sited near trailheads for snowmobile and cross-county ski trails. They sometimes have open "snow-play" areas.

There five Sno-Parks in the Project area. Balsam Meadows, Tamarack, and Coyote Sno-Parks are located along Highway 168 between Shaver Lake and Huntington Lake. Huntington Lake Sno-Park is located at the USFS Huntington Lake boat ramp and Eastwood Sno-Park is located at the Eastwood Visitor Center at the intersection of Highway 168 and Kaiser Pass Road.

As previously stated, CDPR does not manage or promote winter recreation activities in the Project Area. Instead, the department provides access to snowmobile and cross-county ski trails. In addition to access, the Sno-Park program also funds trail grooming, law enforcement, and restroom maintenance.

The objectives of the Sno-Park program are to:

- Provide access to winter recreational resources;
- Provide law enforcement funding at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide visitor information at Sno-Park sites;
- Promote conservation at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide trail grooming funds at Sno-Park sites;
- Provide funding for the plowing of Sno-Park site; and

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- Provide funding for restroom maintenance at Sno-Park sites.

1. What type of winter recreation activities does your agency manage? **N/A**

- Snow mobiling
- Cross-country skiing
- Snow shoeing
- Downhill skiing
- Snowboarding
- Dog sledding
- Snow play (sledding, tubing, etc.)
- Snow camping
- Other: _____

2. In which of these regions does your agency encourage or promote winter recreation activities? **N/A**

- Region 1 - Shaver Lake/Camp Edison
- Region 2 - Tamarack Ridge/Coyote Trail
- Region 3 - Huntington Lake
- Region 4 - Kaiser Ridge
- Region 5 - High Sierra Station/Mono Hot Springs
- Region 6 - Florence Lake
- Region 7 - Lake Edison
- Region 8 - Stump Springs Rd./Mt. Tom

3. What is the primary type of trail used by your agency or that is under the management responsibility of your agency? **N/A**

- Groomed snowmobile trail
- Ungroomed snowmobile trail
- Nordic ski trail
- Off trail access
- Other: _____

4. What are the most popular destinations for winter recreation in the area?

N/A

5. What staging areas are used most for winter recreation in the area?

N/A

6. What are two primary reasons for recreation in this region?

- Groomed trails
- Challenging trails
- Vistas/pristine setting
- Variety of trails
- Uncrowded
- Close to home **(secondary reason)**
- Accommodations/local services
- Ice covered reservoirs
- Other: **snow (primary reason)** _____

7. How does your agency rate the quality of the winter recreation opportunities in the area?

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Excellent Above average Average Below average Poor

8. What is the quality of the winter recreation support facilities (such as trails, restrooms, parking, etc.) in the area?

Excellent Above average Average Below average Poor

Trails and restrooms are characterized as good to excellent. Parking is characterized as below average.

9. What characteristics of the area make it particularly attractive for winter recreation?

Easily accessible snow area to Fresno

10. What is your agency's winter recreation management goal for this area?

"Keep 182 miles of trails and the support facilities open for public use."

11. What would your agency like to change to enhance winter recreation in the area?

- **In general, provide more parking at the sites.**
- **Enter into a long-term agreement with SCE at the Balsam Meadows site to reconfigure the parking lot and provide new restrooms.**

12. Does your agency have any programs that provide or maintain parking, staging, or trails to be used for winter recreation activities?

N/A

13. Do you know of any special-interest recreation user groups that use the area for winter recreation?

N/A

14. Do you have any other comments or information that you would like to share regarding winter recreation in the region?

N/A

Thank you for your cooperation and time in completing this survey interview.

[Note for Surveyor: The Big Creek Collaborative is a collaboration of stakeholders representing state and federal resource agencies, Native American Tribes, local and regional authorities, non-government organizations, local communities, local businesses, and other members of the public. More information can be found at SCE's Hydro Relicensing website at: www.sce.com/bigcreek/index.shtml]