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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWW	American Whitewater
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic feet per second
FERC or Commission	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Forest Service LWCF	United States Forest Service
NPS	Land and Water Conservation Fund
Parks	National Park Service
Project	California Department of Parks and Recreation
ROS	Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project
SCE	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SCORP	Southern California Edison Company
SQF	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Sequoia
SPOA	National Forest
	Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor
SR	Recreation
USACE	State Route
	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

3.11 RECREATION RESOURCES

This section describes the recreation resources in the vicinity of Southern California Edison Company's (SCE) Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project (Project). The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) regulations require the applicant to provide information regarding both recreation and land use. This section provides an overview of the recreation setting, including existing recreational facilities and opportunities; recreation use of Project lands; United States Forest Service's (Forest Service) management objectives and other pertinent federal and state recreation designations; and summarizes current and future recreation needs identified in existing management plans. Non-recreation land use within and adjacent to the FERC Project boundary is discussed separately in Section 3.10, Land Use. The FERC requirements for this section are specified in Title 18 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Chapter I § 5.6(d)(3)(viii).

3.11.1 Information Sources

This section was developed using existing information available in the following primary documents. Additional references are cited in the text, as appropriate.

- Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Forest Plan (Forest Service 1988)
- Application for New License, Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 1930 (SCE 1994)
- Final Environmental Assessment for Hydropower License, Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 1930-014 (FERC 1998a)
- FERC Order Issuing New License (Major Project), FERC Project No. 1930-014 (FERC 1998b)
- Five-Year Recreation Use Report, Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project – FERC No. 1930 (TCW 2005)
- Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest, Pre-Objection Version (Forest Service 2022a)
- The Best Whitewater in California (Holbeck, L. and Stanley, C. 1998);
- California Whitewater, A Guide to the Rivers (Cassady J. and Calhoun F. 1995);
- Various state and federal agency websites; and
- Various whitewater boating websites.

3.11.2 Setting

The Project is located along a section of the lower Kern River¹ on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, approximately 15 miles east of the City of Bakersfield in Kern County, California. The Project is almost entirely on lands within the Sequoia National Forest (SQF).

SCE operates the Project in a run-of-river mode for hydroelectric generation. Water is diverted from the Kern River at Democrat Dam and directed through the Project's water conveyance system, comprised of approximately 8.5 miles of tunnels, flumes, and conduits. Water within the conveyance system is directed to a small concrete forebay, through a buried penstock, and into the Project powerhouse. Water exiting the powerhouse is returned to the Kern River via the Kern River No. 1 Tailrace.

3.11.2.1 Bypass Reach

The bypass reach² is an approximately 10.2-mile reach of the lower Kern River from Democrat Dam downstream to the Kern River No. 1 Tailrace. The bypass reach is characterized by swift flowing water and difficult rapids.

3.11.2.2 Flows within the Bypass Reach

As noted in Section 3.3, Water Use and Hydrology, the hydrology of the lower Kern River is dominated by reservoir operations at Lake Isabella (the large reservoir in the Kern River Basin). As a result of reservoir operations by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at Lake Isabella, flows are high in summer when agricultural releases are made, and low in the winter when the dam retains water to refill the reservoir.

The period of record used to characterize recent historical flows associated with the Project extends from Water Year 1999 through Water Year 2021 (October 1, 1998, through September 30, 2021). This time period represents Project operations since issuance of the current FERC License in 1998. Total annual inflow into the Project in Water Years 1999–2021 ranged from approximately 135,000 acre-feet to over 1,735,000 acre-feet. The median total annual inflow was approximately 455,000 acre-feet during this period (Figure 3.3-1).

The Project has diversion rights of 412 cubic feet per second (cfs) from the Kern River, which is the maximum capacity of the diversion. Minimum instream flow release requirements in Article 401 of the current FERC License (FERC 1998a) requires 50 cfs to be released to the bypass reach from June 1 to September 30 and 15 cfs to be released between October 1 and May 31, or inflow if lower than the seasonal flow requirement.

¹ The lower Kern River begins at Lake Isabella and travels down Kern Canyon to the City of Bakersfield.

² A bypass reach is a segment of a river downstream of a diversion facility where Project operations result in the diversion of a portion of the water from the river.

3.11.2.3 Democrat Dam Impoundment

Democrat Dam Impoundment is located upstream of Democrat Dam and covers approximately 27 acres, with a gross storage capacity of 247 acre-feet when full. Because Democrat Dam is a run-of-river dam and its whole crest is a spillway, the dam regularly spills, and the impoundment water elevation is governed by inflow from the Kern River and downstream FERC minimum flow requirements.

3.11.2.4 Kern River Access

State Route 178 (SR-178) is the main transportation route between the metropolitan Bakersfield area and the communities and recreation areas around Lake Isabella and is the primary road providing access to the lower Kern River and Project facilities. SR-178 parallels the lower Kern River along the river's southern bank from the Kern River No. 1 Powerhouse to the terminus of the FERC Project boundary above the Democrat Dam Impoundment, continuing easterly (Map 3.11-1a, b).

3.11.3 Recreational Facilities

SCE does not own or operate developed recreation facilities in the vicinity of the Project. Other recreation facilities and improvements are relatively limited along the lower Kern River owing to the steep and rugged topography and the proximity of the highway. Developed recreation facilities along the bypass reach include four day use areas and one privately owned recreation site at Democrat Hot Springs (Map 3.11-1a, b). The day use areas are on SQF land and administered by the Forest Service or a concessionaire to the Forest Service. These recreational facilities are described below.

3.11.3.1 Day Use Facilities

The four Forest Service day use areas in the vicinity of the Project include:

- Democrat Raft Take-Out Boating Site at the Project's impoundment;
- Upper Richbar Day Use Area (bypass reach);
- Lower Richbar Day Use Area (bypass reach); and
- Live Oak Day Use Area (bypass reach).

The day use sites along the bypass reach are located on narrow flats of land between SR-178 and the river and are all accessed from SR-178. The sites are operated under a concessionaire permit with Rocky Mountain Recreation (as are all developed campground areas on the SQF). None of the day use facilities are included in SCE's license.

Democrat Raft Take-Out Boating Site

The Democrat Raft Take-Out Boating Site (Democrat Take-out) is located on the left bank of the impoundment approximately 0.8 mile upstream from the dam, just upstream of Prefedio Creek confluence. Democrat Take-out features two boat ramps. One is about 100 yards upstream from the slightly larger take-out. The boat ramps serve as a take-out for the boaters rafting upstream of the Project, and as a put-in for boaters fishing the impoundment. Parking is available in the dirt lot, located uphill from the bus turn around area. There is a pit-toilet available in the parking lot (The River Travel Company 2022). The Democrat Raft Take-Out Boating Site is not included in SCE's license.

Upper Richbar Day Use Area

The Upper Richbar Day Use Area is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Bakersfield along SR-178, just upstream of where Dougherty Creek flows into the Kern River. It has a paved road, picnic tables, toilets, and dumpsters. There is no potable water available. The elevation is 1,400 feet. It is open all year. Day use hours are between 6am until 10am daily. Use fees are \$12 per day (Forest Service 2022c). The Upper Richbar Day Use Area is not included in SCE's license.

Lower Richbar Day Use Area

The Lower Richbar Day Use Area is located approximately 20 miles northeast of Bakersfield along SR-178, just upstream of where Dougherty Creek empties into the Kern River. It has a paved road, picnic tables, toilets, and dumpsters. There is no potable water available. The elevation is 1,400 feet. It is open from March to October. Day use hours are between 6am until 10am daily. Use fees are \$12 per day (Forest Service 2022c). The Lower Richbar Day Use Area is not included in SCE's license.

Live Oak Day Use Area

The Live Oak Day Use Area, also known as Live Oak Picnic Area, is located approximately 19 miles northeast of Bakersfield along SR-178, about one-half mile downstream from the Lower Richbar site. It has a paved road, picnic tables, toilets, and dumpsters. There is no potable water available. The elevation is 1,400 feet. It is open March to October. Day use hours are between 6am until 10am daily. Use fees are \$12 per day (Forest Service 2022c). The Live Oak Day Use Area is not included in SCE's license.

3.11.3.2 Private Recreation Facility

Democrat Hot Springs

Democrat Hot Springs was constructed in 1904 providing a hotel and cottages to accommodate hot springs guests that came in stagecoaches from Bakersfield to dine and relax during the early 1900's. It is located at 30401 Hwy 178, near the Democrat Raft Take-Out. Five springs on the property flow at 115 degrees into large soaking tubs and a swimming pool (Kernvalley.com 2023). It is privately owned and not open to the public (Facebook, Democrat Hot Springs 2023).

3.11.4 Recreation Opportunities

The lower Kern River is the key recreational attraction in the vicinity of the Project with streamside activities including picnicking, swimming and wading, and fishing. Upstream of the Project, the lower Kern River is an important regional whitewater boating attraction, and summer irrigation flow releases from Lake Isabella provide relatively high flows for boating when other comparable resources in southern California have limited water (TCW 2005). In the bypass reach, limited whitewater boating activities (primarily kayaking) also occur (SCE 1994; TCW 2005; AWW 2009).

3.11.4.1 Fishing and Swimming

Fishing along the lower Kern is open all year; however, fishing does not typically begin until October when water temperatures cool. Fishing continues to be good until April, prior to increased flows from runoff (Flyfishingthesierra.com 2021). There are three sections designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for fish planting: Section #1 is from Democrat Beach to Lower Richbar; Section 2 is from Sandy Flat to Democrat Beach; and Section 3 is from Sandy Flat to the Isabella Dam. Most of the lower Kern consists of stocked rainbow trout with wild populations of bass and brown trout (Flyfishingthesierra.com 2021).

Swimming and wading are also a frequent recreation activity. However, the Forest Service discourages swimming due to powerful currents, cold water temperatures, and underwater hazards, (Forest Service 2022c). Optimum conditions for swimming are in the 600 to 800 cfs range based on surveys of recreators seeking swimming as a recreation activity (TCW 2005).

3.11.4.2 Whitewater Boating

Lower Kern Upstream of Project

Flow in the lower Kern upstream of the Project is regulated by Lake Isabella Dam, providing whitewater boating from below the dam to Democrat Beach for 18 miles. During a normal water year, the boating season usually runs from May to September. Normal flows range from 800 to 3000 cfs. After Labor Day, flows may drop below 800 cfs (Forest Service 2019). Recommended flow levels are between 1,000-3,000 cfs (Cassady J. and Calhoun F. 1995).

The level of difficulty for this reach ranges from II – VI (Cassady J. and Calhoun F. 1995). As shown on Table 3.11-1, the International Scale of River Difficulty (AWW 2023b) defines difficulty of rapids as follows.

Upstream of the Project, the lower Kern has four designated launch sites: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) South near Lake Isabella Main Dam; BLM North at Keyesville Bridge; Sandy Flat; and Miracle Hot Springs. Democrat Raft Take-Out is the only designated take-out site in the vicinity of the Project (Forest Service 2019).

Lower Kern Within the Bypass Reach

The bypass reach, below Democrat Dam to the Kern No. 1 Powerhouse, is an 8.9-mile Class IV-V+ section. This section of the Kern River is characterized by swift flowing water and difficult rapids. The bypass reach is divided into three distinct runs: Cadillacs (Class V); Richbar (Class III-IV); and Cataracts (Class V+)(AWW 2009). This stretch of the lower Kern has been described as:

Just upstream, between the mouth of the canyon and Democrat Hot Springs, the Kern is violent and unrunnable, dropping at more than 100 feet per mile over one deadly waterfall after another (Cassady J. and Calhoun F. 1995).

There are no designated launch sites below Democrat Dam (Forest Service 2019). The highway runs close to the river along this section so there are potential locations for put-in and take-out, but it is difficult to get from the river back up to the road. The lowest take-out is at the mouth of the canyon (AWW 2009).

Based on existing information (FERC 1998a), optimal flows for boating in the bypass reach are between 950 cfs and 1,750 cfs, with the minimum flow requirement of at least 500 cfs. As shown on Table 3.3-C-1 (monthly average flows by year from 1999–2021), flows within the bypass reach between May and September each year from 2000–2005 were, except for 2022, were generally in a range that would make running the reach possible.

Private boaters who boat the Kern River below Democrat Dam (the bypass reach) are not currently required to obtain a permit. There is no commercial whitewater boating in the bypass reach. Private boaters who use the lower Kern River above Democrat Dam are required to obtain annual permits from the Forest Service.

Lower Kern Downstream of Project—Mouth of Canyon to Lake Ming

As the river flows out of the valley, its gradient slackens and its difficulty eases first to Class IV, then to III, then to II. Downstream from the take-out for the Rio Bravo run (which is not a Project recreation facility) are ten more miles of easier Class I and Class II water. From September through May, flows are usually 600–1,200 cfs, but can rise to 1,200–3,000 cfs June through August due to irrigation releases. Recommended flow levels are between 1,000–3,000 cfs. (Cassady J. and Calhoun F. 1995).

3.11.5 Recreation Use of Project Lands—Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study

As required by Article 409 in the 1998 FERC License for the Project, SCE conducted a five-year monitoring study on recreation use in vicinity of the Project and published the compiled results in the Report on Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study for the Project (TCW 2005). The monitoring period covered the years 2001 through 2005. The study found that on average the study area (the approximate area of the bypass reach)

averaged about 17,200 visitor days³ annually, including 13,500 visitor days in the 5-month high-use season (spring and summer), and about 3,700 visitor days during the 7-month low-use season. Daily, this equates to about 90 visits per day during the high-use season and about 18 visits per day during the low-use season. Of the visitors surveyed, 98% indicated that they were satisfied with their overall experience in the study area.

Sequoia National Forest National Visitor Use Monitoring data and reports are available for 2006, 2011, and 2016. Those numbers indicate that the total number of forest visits increased over the decade (2006–2016) by approximately 21% (Forest Service 2022b). The Report on Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Report also described expectations in increased visitation to the bypass reach based on expected increases to the population of Kern County, and to Bakersfield in particular. Approximately half of all visitors to the bypass reach during the study period identified as having originated from Bakersfield (TCW 2005).

3.11.5.1 Day Use Areas

Forest Service capacity estimates for the day use areas indicate that in general each site is used to capacity on weekends, each is over-capacity on holiday weekends, and each receives low-use on weekdays (Forest Service 1998 and Forest Service 2022c). Each of these sites is described above in Section 3.11.3.1 and shown on Map 3.11-1a and Map 3.11-1b.

3.11.5.2 Fishing and Swimming

The Report on the Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study for the Project (TCW 2005) found that fishing is by far the primary recreation activity for visitors. Of visitors surveyed about the activity they were participating in during their visit, on average, more than 50% of respondents identified their recreation activity as fishing. This finding is consistent with information from the 1994 license application, which found that fishing is popular and occurs year-round. Angling access is scattered throughout the bypass reach where highway turnouts are available (SCE 1994).

For fishing and swimming, a wide range of flows (200 to 1,200 cfs) appear to be acceptable for most people participating in these activities, although flows between 600 and 800 cfs appear optimum for swimming. During the peak summer season (Memorial Day through Labor Day), flow conditions occur in the acceptable range for fishing and swimming (200 to 1,200 cfs) more than 95 percent of the time, with the only notable exception being in late August in some years (TCW 2005).

3.11.5.3 Whitewater Boating

The Report on Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study for the Project (TCW 2005) referenced data collected by Forest Service manifest forms to determine the number of boaters that run the bypass reach. The manifest forms are voluntary forms obtained at

³ The Report on Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study (TCW 2005) defined a 'visitor day' as a visit lasting an average of 5 hours.

Forest Service offices or at designated popular put-ins and take-outs that boaters are encouraged to fill out prior to running the river. The manifest forms ask boaters to identify what part of the Kern River they will boat, the date of their run, and the number of people in their party. The current manifest form separates the lower Kern River into four distinct runs, the Jungle Run, the Miracle Run, the Big 5 Run, and the Cataracts Run.

Based on the data collected by the manifest forms and documented in the Report on Five-Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study, between three and seven boaters ran the Cataract Run each year between 2001 and 2005. Boating use in the other runs during the same span of years ranged from several hundred boaters per year to more than 2,000 boaters per year. The recreation use study suggested that the low boating use in the bypass reach compared to the other runs along the lower Kern River is due to the extreme difficulty of the rapids in the reach.

3.11.6 Forest Service Management Objectives

3.11.6.1 Forest Service Management Emphasis and Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Except for some scattered private inholdings, most of the land in the vicinity of the Project is within the SQF administered by Forest Service. Forest Service manages land within the SQF in accordance with the goals, objectives, and prescriptions outlined in the Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the SQF. The 1988 Forest Plan identifies “Management Emphasis” for lands within the SQF. The Management Emphasis in the vicinity of the Project includes “Water Oriented Recreation” and “Grazing.” “Water Oriented Recreation” lands occur adjacent to the Kern River for the entire length of the bypass reach (excluding private inholdings). Water Oriented Recreation emphasizes management that provides recreation opportunities compatible with surrounding resources and consistent with the character of the area as identified in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS).

Forest Service uses the ROS to classify lands on the SQF. ROS is a system by which existing and desired recreation settings are defined, classified, inventoried, and monitored. The ROS is a combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that give value to a place. The 1988 Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement describes the ROS as a tool to ensure that a diversity of opportunities and experiences are provided across the forest (Forest Service 2022b). The ROS includes six distinct recreation settings/ROS classes along a continuum primitive, semi-primitive nonmotorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban, as defined below.

Both the 1988 Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1988 Forest Plan) and the 2022 Sequoia National Forest Land Management Plan – pre-objection version (revised Forest Plan⁴) classify the land in the vicinity of the Project using the same ROS classes. Forest Service classifies most of the land immediately adjacent

⁴ The revised Forest Plan is expected to be finalized by the end of February 2023.

to the Kern River between Democrat Dam and the powerhouse tailrace as “rural,” indicating a physically altered landscape with naturally appearing backdrops.

Land further away from the immediate river corridor is classified as either “roaded natural” or “semi-primitive motorized.” “Roaded natural” is defined in the revised Forest Plan (Forest Service 2022a) as a naturally appearing landscape with nodes and corridors of development such as campground, trailheads, boat launches and rustic, small-scale resorts. “Semi-primitive motorized” is a predominantly natural-appearing landscape where motorized use is visible and audible. Map 3.11-2 displays the ROS classifications Forest Service assigns to lands in the vicinity of the Project.

3.11.7 Other Pertinent Federal and State Designations

3.11.7.1 National Wild and Scenic River System

A Wild and Scenic River is a river designated by Congress as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that was established in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 with the following characteristics:

- **Wild**—Those rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic**—Those rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational**—Those rivers or sections of rivers readily accessible by road or railroad that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

The criteria for a Wild and Scenic Recreation River classification includes existing impoundments and diversions if the waterway remains generally natural and riverine in appearance. The Forest Service manages eligible, suitable, or recommended Wild and Scenic Rivers to protect free-flow and outstandingly remarkable values and maintain preliminary classifications (Forest Service 2022a).

The Forest Service has identified the lower Kern River from Lake Isabella 31 miles downstream to the canyon mouth above Bakersfield (inclusive of the bypass reach) as a river that meets Wild and Scenic eligibility requirements. The lower Kern River meets these requirements under the classification of “recreational” river with identified outstanding remarkable values for scenery, recreation, wildlife, population and habitat, prehistory, and history (Forest Service 2022b; AWW 2009).

3.11.7.2 California Wild and Scenic Rivers

It is the policy of the State of California that certain rivers which possess extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values be preserved in their free-flowing state, together with their immediate environments, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the state (California Public Resource Code [PRC], Chapter 1.4. California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Section 5093.50). The Legislature declares that such use of these rivers is the highest and most beneficial use and is a reasonable and beneficial use of water. The lower Kern River is not a state-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers (CNRA 2020).

3.11.7.3 National Trail System

The National Trails System is the network of scenic, historic, and recreation trails created by the National Trails System Act of 1968. There are no national trails within the vicinity of the Project.

3.11.7.4 Wilderness Areas

There are no Congressionally designated Wilderness Areas in the vicinity of the Project.

3.11.7.5 Shoreline Buffer Zones and Management Plans

There are no permitted public piers, boat docks, landings, bulkheads, or other shoreline facilities associated with the Democrat Dam Impoundment. Therefore, SCE does not maintain a shoreline management plan.

3.11.8 Current and Future Recreation Needs Identified in Management Plans

The FERC regulations require a discussion of current and future recreation needs identified in State comprehensive plans and regional conservation and recreation plans. The following adopted plans pertain to recreation and may include management direction and/or recreation use and demographic information (e.g., trends in use intensity and recreation preferences) with applicability to the Project:

- California Department of Parks and Recreation. Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Sacramento, California. 2021-2025; and
- California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1998. Public opinions and attitudes on outdoor recreation in California. Sacramento, California.

In addition, the FERC's List of Comprehensive Plans includes the following plans that pertain to recreational fisheries:

- California Department of Fish and Game. 2003. Strategic Plan for Trout Management: A Plan for 2004 and beyond. Sacramento, California;

- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2021. Strategic Plan for Trout Management, Draft 2021 Update; and
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. n.d. Fisheries USA: the recreational fisheries policy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Washington, D.C.

3.11.8.1 California's 2021–2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

California State Parks' Planning Division developed the SCORP, the statewide master plan for parks, outdoor recreation, and open space for California, with an emphasis on increasing access to parks and recreation services for community health and wellness and creating park access in underserved communities. The SCORP provides policy guidance to all outdoor recreation providers, including federal, state, local, and special district agencies that provide outdoor recreational lands, facilities, and services throughout California. The SCORP is also the primary tool for prioritizing Land and Water Conservation Fund grant allocations to local governments.

California's SCORP is updated every five years. By creating the five-year SCORP action plan for grant-making priorities, California maintains eligibility for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants. The LWCF provides matching grants for both recreation and natural resource conservation. The LWCF program is divided into the "State Side" which provides grants to State and local governments, and the "Federal Side" which is used to acquire lands, waters, and interests therein necessary to achieve the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreation management objectives of federal land management agencies.

The SCORP sets a plan for California's state agencies that are eligible to receive LWCF funding per California's Public Resource Code § 5099.12. These plans address actions for California State Parks, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Conservation Board, Department of Water Resources, and State Coastal Conservancy. The 2021-2025 SCORP includes an Action Plan for Wetlands, which aims to increase the inventory of California wetlands as a priority for the National Park Service (NPS) (Parks 2021).

3.11.8.2 Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation in California

The Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes on Outdoor Recreation (SPOA) in California examines residents' attitudes, opinions, values, and participation trends relating to outdoor recreation. The SPOA is an element of the SCORP.

The most current 2012 SPOA identified the top 15 recreational activities in California with the highest latent demand (Table 3.11-2) (Parks 2012). These are activities that Californians would participate in, from a statewide perspective, if more facilities and opportunities were provided. Many of these top 15 recreation activities are available along the lower Kern River, including along the bypass reach and along the reaches upstream

of the Project. These include picnicking in picnic areas, walking for fitness or pleasure, camping, day hiking, wildlife viewing, and swimming in rivers.

Other relevant findings from the 2012 SPOA survey include:

- More than two-thirds (68 percent) of Californians reported spending the same or more time in outdoor recreation activities compared to 5 years ago.
- Most Californians participated in walking for fitness or pleasure (74 percent). Other activities with high percentages of participants included picnicking in picnic areas; driving for pleasure; sightseeing; driving through natural scenery; beach activities; and visiting outdoor nature museums, zoos, gardens, or arboretums.
- The park facilities and services that Californians ranked most important were play areas for young children; wilderness type areas where no vehicles or development are allowed; environmental and outdoor education programs; multi-use turf areas for field sports; picnic sites for large groups; trails for multiple, nonmotorized activities; and hard-surface trails.
- Most Californians visited highly developed parks and recreation areas; developed nature-oriented parks and recreation areas; historical or cultural buildings, sites, or areas; and natural and undeveloped areas during the past 12 months.

3.11.8.3 Trout Management

The 2003 Strategic Plan for Trout Management is currently being updated, as discussed below. The goals and strategies presented in the 2003 plan were developed around two themes that reflect the general mission of 1) habitat and native species protection and management, and 2) public use, in this case, recreational angling (CDFG 2003).

CDFW is currently in the process of drafting guidelines for trout management. Three associated projects make up this effort:

- Strategic Plan for Trout Management;
- Strategic Plan for Trout Hatcheries (unpublished); and
- Inland Trout Angling Regulations Simplification (unpublished).

Strategic Plan for Trout Management

Among California anglers, trout are the most popular target, pursued by about 60 percent of those who fish in freshwater (CDFW 2021). California supports a rich heritage of native trout, excellent wild trout fisheries, and a hatchery system that produces and stocks abundant trout. The Strategic Plan for Trout Management is intended to guide CDFW programs and staff in effectively managing the trout resources of California. This document acts as an update to the original plan which was finalized in 2003.

The 2021 Draft update has six goals for trout management for the next 5 years:

- Goal 1: Investigate and Improve Wild Trout Populations. Wild trout fisheries are the most common trout fisheries in California and are best supported by high-quality ecosystems.
- Goal 2: Investigate and Improve Stocked Trout Management. California's robust trout hatchery system provides biologists with tools to improve trout fisheries and, increasingly, opportunities to support native trout recovery.
- Goal 3: Integrate Stakeholders. We can achieve more through a better understanding of public interest in trout management and collaboration with our partners.
- Goal 4: Evaluate Water and Land Use Practices. Existing land use planning and regulatory tools can help mitigate ecosystem impacts and allow biologists and resource users to find common solutions.
- Goal 5: Continue Applied Research Activities. Department biologists can conduct research that has direct impacts on trout management decisions.
- Goal 6: Increase the Resiliency of Trout Populations. Trout populations are more resilient to long-term ecosystem impacts when other stressors are removed, or habitats are improved.

3.11.9 References

AWW (American Whitewater). 2009a. Kern 6) Below Democrat to Kern #1 Powerhouse. Reach info last updated January 12, 2009. Accessed: February 2023. Available online at: American Whitewater.

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TABLES

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Table 3.11-1. International Scale of River Difficulty

Class	Rapids Description
I	Fast moving water with riffles and small waves. Few obstructions and easily missed with little training. Risk to swimmers is slight; self-rescue is easy.
II	Novice: Straightforward rapids with wide, clear channels which are evident without scouting. Occasional maneuvering may be required, but rocks and medium-sized waves are easily missed by trained paddlers. Swimmers are seldom injured and group assistance, while helpful, is seldom needed. Rapids that are at the upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class II+".
III	Intermediate: Rapids with moderate, irregular waves which may be difficult to avoid and which can swamp an open canoe. Complex maneuvers in fast current and good boat control in tight passages or around ledges are often required; large waves or strainers may be present but are easily avoided. Strong eddies and powerful current effects can be found, particularly on large-volume rivers. Scouting is advisable for inexperienced parties. Injuries while swimming are rare; self-rescue is usually easy, but group assistance may be required to avoid long swims. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class III-" or "Class III+" respectively.
IV	Advanced: Intense, powerful but predictable rapids requiring precise boat handling in turbulent water. Depending on the character of the river, it may feature large, unavoidable waves and holes or constricted passages demanding fast maneuvers under pressure. A fast, reliable eddy turn may be needed to initiate maneuvers, scout rapids, or rest. Rapids may require "must" moves above dangerous hazards. Scouting may be necessary the first time down. Risk of injury to swimmers is moderate to high, and water conditions may make self-rescue difficult. Group assistance for rescue is often essential but requires practiced skills. A strong Eskimo roll is highly recommended. Rapids that are at the lower or upper end of this difficulty range are designated "Class IV-" or "Class IV+" respectively.
V	Expert: Extremely long, obstructed, or very violent rapids which expose a paddler to added risk. Drops may contain** large, unavoidable waves and holes or steep, congested chutes with complex, demanding routes. Rapids may continue for long distances between pools, demanding a high level of fitness. What eddies exist may be small, turbulent, or difficult to reach. At the high end of the scale, several of these factors may be combined. Scouting is recommended but may be difficult. Swims are dangerous, and rescue is often difficult even for experts. A very reliable Eskimo roll, proper equipment, extensive experience, and practiced rescue skills are essential. Because of the large range of difficulty that exists beyond Class IV, Class 5 is an open-ended, multiple-level scale designated by Class 5.0, 5.1, 5.2, etc.... each of these levels is an order of magnitude more difficult than the last. Example: increasing difficulty from Class 5.0 to Class 5.1 is a similar order of magnitude as increasing from Class IV to Class 5.0.

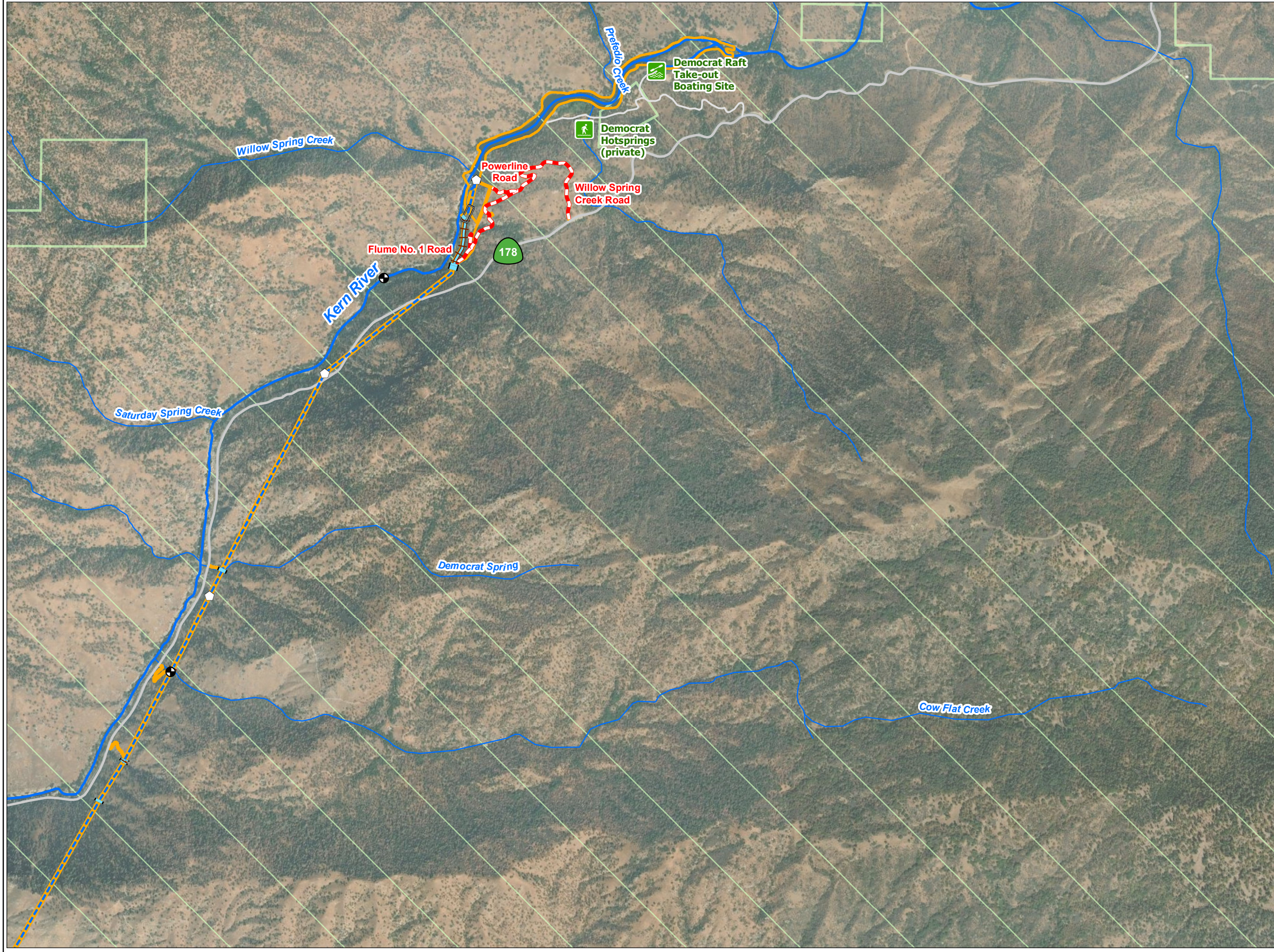
Source: AWW 2023

Table 3.11-2. Top 15 Recreation Activities with High Latent Demand in California

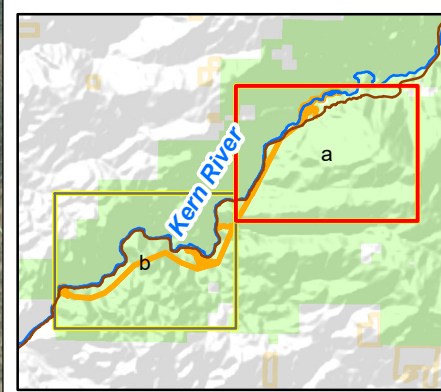
Rank	Activity
1	Picnicking in picnic areas (with tables, fire pits, or grills)
2	Walking for fitness or pleasure on paved surfaces
3	Camping in developed sites with facilities such as toilets and tables (not including backpacking)
4	Beach activities (swimming, sunbathing, surf play, wading, playing on beach)
5	Swimming in a pool
6	Day hiking on un-paved trails
7	Attending outdoor cultural events
8	Visiting outdoor nature museums, zoos, gardens, or arboretums
9	Shopping at a farmer's market
10	Visiting historic or cultural sites
11	Wildlife viewing, bird watching, viewing natural scenery
12	Driving on paved surfaces for pleasures, sightseeing, driving through natural scenery
13	Swimming in freshwater lakes, rivers and/or streams
14	Jogging and running for exercise (on trails, streets, sidewalks, paths)
15	Bicycling on paved surfaces

MAPS

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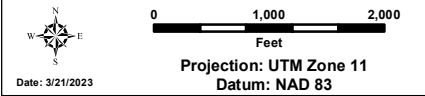


- Facilities**
- Dam
 - Powerhouse
 - Water Conveyence Feature
 - Tunnel
 - Flume
 - Conduit
 - Sandbox
 - Penstock
 - Spillway
 - Tailrace
 - Gage
 - FERC Boundary
- Transportation**
- Project Road
 - Other Road
- Other Features**
- Watercourse
- Land Jurisdiction***
- U.S. Forest Service
- *SOURCE: BLM 2021
- Forest Service Recreation Sites**
- Raft Takeout
 - Day Use Area
- Private Recreation Sites**
- Democrat Hot Springs



Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project
FERC Project No. 1930

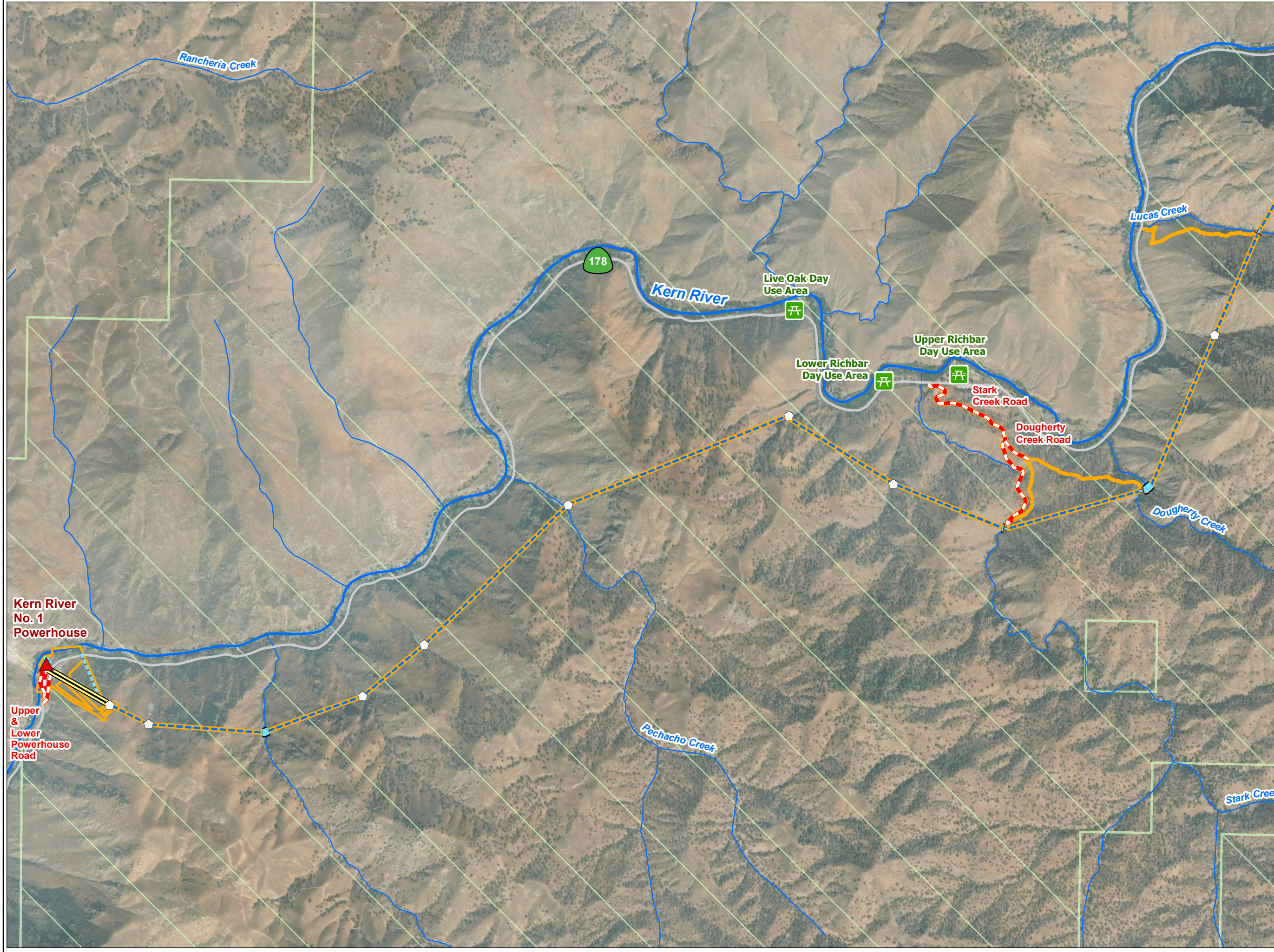
Map 3.11-1a
Recreation Facilities in the Vicinity of the Project



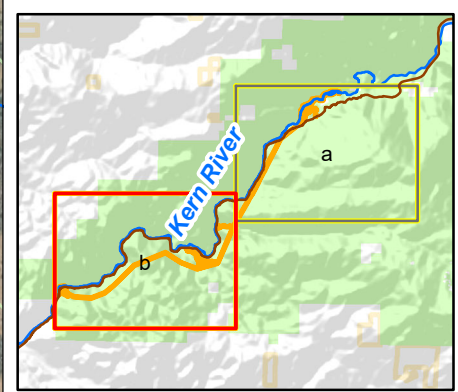
Date: 3/21/2023

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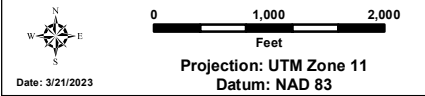


- Facilities**
- Dam
 - Powerhouse
 - Water Conveyence Feature
 - Tunnel
 - Flume
 - Conduit
 - Sandbox
 - Penstock
 - Spillway
 - Tailrace
 - Gage
 - FERC Boundary
- Transportation**
- Project Road
 - Other Road
- Other Features**
- Watercourse
- Land Jurisdiction***
- U.S. Forest Service
- *SOURCE: BLM 2021
- Forest Service Recreation Sites**
- Raft Takeout
 - Day Use Area
- Private Recreation Sites**
- Democrat Hot Springs



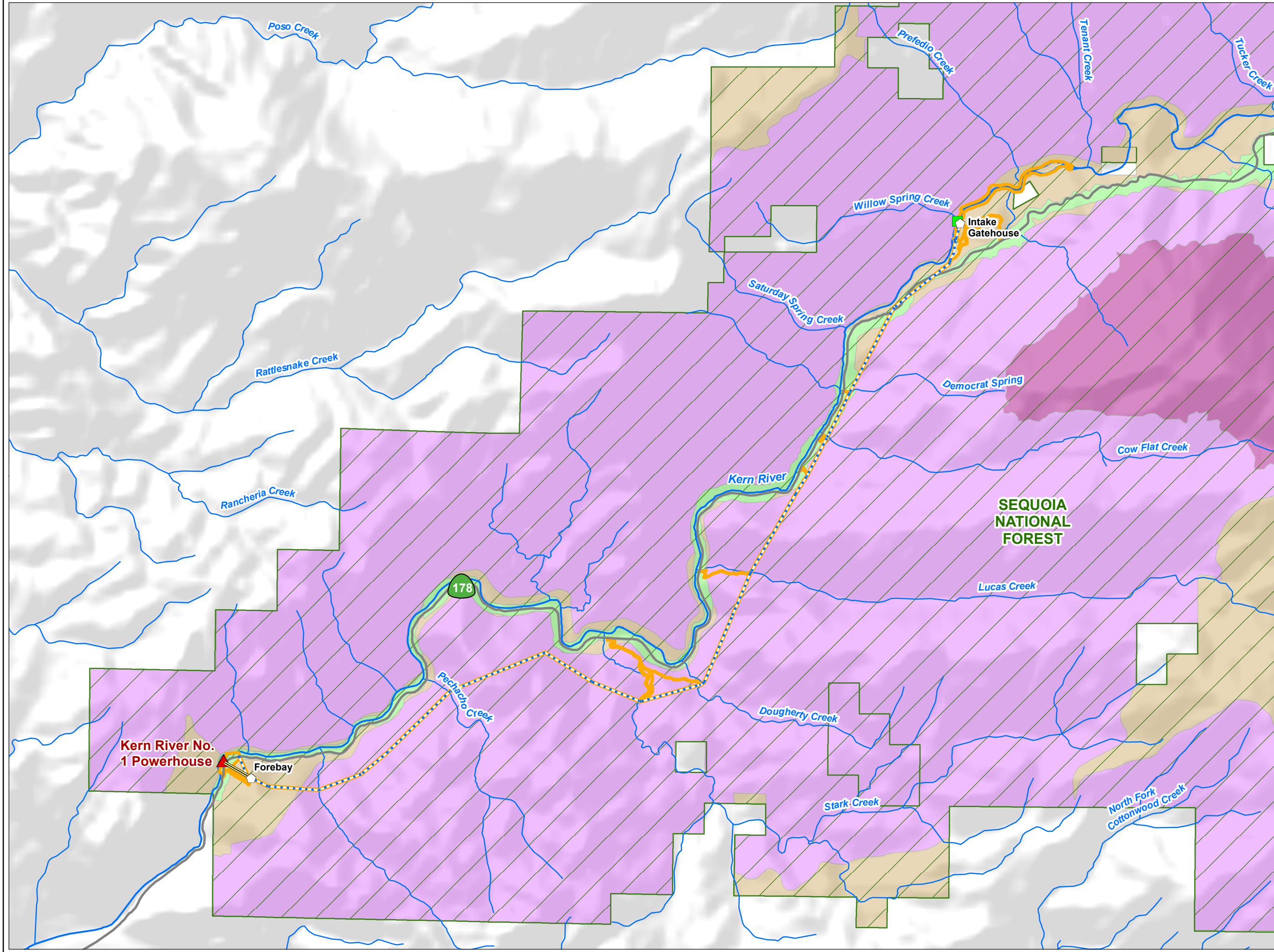
Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project
FERC Project No. 1930

Map 3.11-1b
Recreation Facilities in the Vicinity of the Project

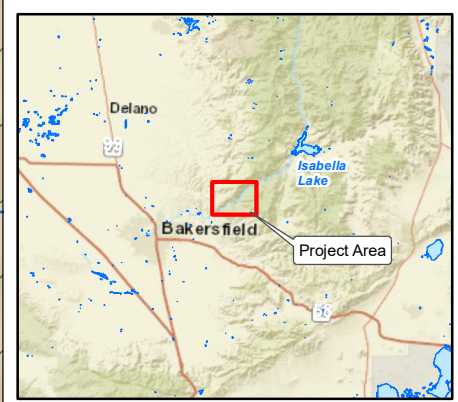


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- Facilities**
- Dam
 - ▲ Powerhouse
 - Water Conveyance Feature
 - ⋯ Flowline
 - Penstock
 - FERC Boundary
- Other Features**
- Watercourse
 - Highway
- Recreation Opportunity Spectrum***
- Non-Applicable
 - Rural
 - Roaded Natural
 - Semi-Primitive Motorized
 - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized
- Land Jurisdiction****
- U.S. Forest Service
- **SOURCE: USDA-FS, FEIS Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Alternatives B, B Modified and D, June 2022
- **SOURCE: BLM 2021



Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project
FERC Project No. 1930

Map 3.11-2
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
in the Vicinity of the Project



Date: 2/23/2023
Projection: UTM Zone 11
Datum: NAD 83

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