
DRAFT
REC 2 – RECREATION FACILITY USE ASSESSMENT
TECHNICAL STUDY PLAN

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



May 2023

TECHNICAL STUDY PLAN

REC 2 – Recreation Facility Use Assessment

POTENTIAL RESOURCE ISSUES

- Recreation use and opportunities in the vicinity of the Project.
- Public safety.

PROJECT NEXUS

- Forest Service day use areas are located adjacent to the Democrat Dam impoundment and the bypass reach.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

The following information is available regarding recreation in the vicinity of the Project. See the Pre-Application Document (PAD) Section 3.11, Recreation Resources for a summary of relevant information:

- Management prescriptions and direction relevant to recreation included in the Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Forest Plan (Forest Service 1988).
- Management prescriptions and direction relevant to recreation included in the draft Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest, Pre-Objection Version (Forest Service 2022).
- Five-Year Recreation Use Report, Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project – FERC No. 1930 (TCW 2005).
- National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) Reports for the Sequoia National Forest¹
- California’s 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (California State Parks, 2020).
- Safety-related information that may be included in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Environmental Inspection Reports for the Project.
- Safety Incident Reports that may have been filed by SCE, as required by Title 18 of the Code of Federal Regulations §12.10.
- Various state and federal agency websites.
- Various whitewater boating websites.

¹ Sequoia National Forest National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) data and reports are available for 2006, 2011, and 2016. 2021 NVUM data is currently being analyzed by the Forest Service. A report will be made available once analysis is complete and posted to the Forest Service NVUM website: <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/nvum/results>.

POTENTIAL INFORMATION GAPS

- Recreation use data associated with developed public recreation facilities in the Project vicinity.
- Recreation trends and future recreation demand.
- Identify potential safety issues and describe existing features or measures implemented to protect the public health and safety.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Characterize recreation use at the developed public recreation facilities in the Project vicinity. Estimate future recreation use in the vicinity of the Project using existing use data and published recreation trends information.
- Document potential public safety issues and existing programs and measures that are implemented by SCE to protect public health and safety.

EXTENT OF STUDY AREA

The study area will be focused on public day-use areas in the vicinity of the Project. These day use facilities are outside the Project boundary, owned and operated by the Sequoia National Forest (SQF), and not part of SCE's Project license. The recreation day-use facility locations are listed below and shown on Map 3.11-1:

- Democrat Raft Take-out Boating Site
- Upper Richbar Day Use Area
- Lower Richbar Day Use Area
- Live Oak Day Use Area

STUDY APPROACH

The following describes the approach for: (1) characterizing use of public recreation day-use facilities in the vicinity of the Project, (2) estimating future recreation use and demand, and (3) documenting public safety and associated measures.

CHARACTERIZE RECREATION USE AT DEVELOPED RECREATION FACILITIES

- Document annual recreation use at the public recreation day-use facilities over the most recent 5-year period using Forest Service capacity estimates.
- Estimate weekday, weekend, and holiday use, if possible, given the information available from the Forest Service and/or their concessionaire, Rocky Mountain Recreation.

- Document the number of times capacity at the recreation facilities was met or exceeded based on utilization of available parking spaces.
- If sufficient data is not available to characterize recreation use using existing information, SCE will conduct on-ground vehicle counts at the day-use facilities in 2024, in consultation with the SQF.
- If necessary, SCE will conduct vehicle counts at each day-use facility inclusive of associated overflow parking and collect the following information: date, time, weather conditions, and number of vehicles parked at each facility.
 - The vehicle counts will be conducted as follows:
 - A survey technician will count the number of vehicles observed at each facility four days per month (two randomly selected weekdays and two randomly selected weekend) from April – September 2024 week (total of 24 days).
 - The 4 randomly selected days per month will not include days when it is raining or substantive precipitation is forecast or days when any access restriction is in place.
 - In addition, the survey technician will count the number vehicles 1 randomly selected day on each of the following holiday weekends (3 days total):
 - Memorial Day
 - Fourth of July
 - Labor Day
 - On each day a vehicle count is conducted, the vehicle count will be completed during two of three randomly selected shifts:
 - Shift 1 (7 a.m. to 11 a.m.)
 - Shift 2 (11 a.m. to 3 p.m.)
 - Shift 3 (3 p.m. to 7 p.m.)
 - During each shift the vehicle count will be conducted twice, once while travelling west to east (upstream) on SR-178, and once travelling east to west (downstream) on SR-178. Two shifts per day and two counts per shift will result in four vehicle counts on each of the survey days.
 - Estimate the intensity of recreation use at informal river access points based on vehicle count data. Recreation user day estimates will be based on vehicle counts using an average party size of 2.4 people per vehicle, per the

Sequoia National Forest's 2016 National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) data report (Forest Service 2018).

- Utilize existing information available from SCE and the Forest Service to characterize likely recreation use activities undertaken by visitors to the identified river access points.

ESTIMATE FUTURE RECREATION USE AND DEMAND

- Utilize census data and information available in current relevant federal, state, and local comprehensive plans (including the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan [SCORP] and supporting survey information) to identify population projections and to document outdoor recreation use trends and needs.
- Utilize the recreation use data collected in this study along with trends and population projections to estimate future recreation needs over the license period (assumed to be 50 years).
- Determine whether future public recreation needs can be met in the vicinity of the Project.

DOCUMENT PUBLIC SAFETY

- Identify and describe existing programs and measures implemented by SCE to protect public health and safety (i.e., buoy lines, fencing, signage, and alarms). The inventory will include a description of the condition of the existing safety features.
- Characterize the number, type, and location of safety incidents related to recreation that have occurred in the vicinity of the Project over the past ten years. This effort will be conducted by reviewing existing records and databases maintained by the FERC and the Forest Service and by consulting with SCE staff.

REPORTING

- Study methods and results will be documented in a REC 2 – Facility Use Assessment Technical Study Report (TSR). The TSR will include summary tables and figures, as appropriate, to ensure results can be easily understood. Detailed maps and graphics will be used to convey spatial relationships when necessary. Stakeholder review and comment period for the TSR is identified below in the Schedule.
- All data collected during the study will be entered into a data base (excel or similar) by the technical staff, under the supervision of the task lead.
- Upon request, data will be provided to resource agencies and interested stakeholders in an Excel spreadsheet (electronic format).

SCHEDULE

This is a one-year study to be conducted during the first year of the study period with the study results reported in the Initial Study Report (ISR).

Date	Activity
April 2024–June 2024	Acquire and review key information sources to characterize recreation facility use (i.e., Forest Service recreation planners, concessionaire, and existing data files and reports)
April 2024–September 2024	If necessary, conduct vehicle counts at the public recreation day-use facilities in the vicinity of the Project
October 2024–January 2025	Analyze data and prepare draft technical memo
February 2025	Distribute draft technical memo to stakeholders
March 2025–May 2025	Stakeholders review and provide comments on draft technical memo (90 days)
June 2025–July 2025	Resolve comments and prepare final technical memo
December 2025	Distribute final technical memo in Draft License Application

REFERENCES

California State Parks (California Department of Parks and Recreation). 2021. California’s 2021-2025 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, A Five-Year Plan for Increasing Park Access, Community-Based Planning, and Health Partnerships Through Grants. Accessed February 2023. Available online: Parks for All Californians: SCORP 2020 Report (parksforcalifornia.org).

FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). 1998. Final Environmental Assessment for Hydropower License. Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project. FERC Project No. 1930-014. California. June 17.

Forest Service (United States Forest Service). 1988. Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Sequoia National Forest. March 1988.

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_____. 2022. Land Management Plan for the Sequoia National Forest, Pre-Objection Version. Fresno, Kern, and Tulare Counties, California. R5-MB-325-A. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region. Accessed: October 2022. Available online: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=3375>

TCW (TCW Economics). 2005. Report on Five Year Recreation Use Monitoring Study for the Kern River No. 1 Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 1930). Prepared for Southern California Edison, Hydro Generation Division, 300 North Lone Hill, San Dimas, CA 91773. Prepared by TCW Economics, 27569th Ave. Sacramento, CA.