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## 5.2.7 Aesthetic Resources

The aesthetic character and visual effects of the four Big Creek ALP Projects was evaluated using the USDA-FS Visual Management System (VMS), because the majority of the Project facilities are located on USDA-FS lands. This system considers physical features, viewer sensitivity to scenic quality, distance zones, existing visual conditions, and specified Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) to determine visual compatibility of Project elements with the landscape. The aesthetic evaluation only considered Project facilities that are visible to the public and located on USDA-FS lands. The VQOs are goals that describe how the forest should look in the future. Three VQO classifications are relevant to lands affected by the four Big Creek ALP Projects as follows:

1. Retention. Landscapes where the valued landscape character “appears” intact. Deviations may be present but must repeat the form, line, color, texture, and pattern comment to the landscape character so completely and at such scale that they are not evident.
2. Partial Retention. Landscapes where the valued landscape characters “appear slightly altered.” Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed.
3. Modification. Landscapes where the valued landscape characters “appear moderately altered.” Deviations begin to dominate the valued landscape character being viewed, but they borrow valued attributes such as size, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings, vegetative type changes, or architectural styles outside of the landscape being viewed.

### 5.2.7.1 Methods

Detailed descriptions of the study methods, results, and map of Key Observation Points, are located in the 2001 Final Technical Study Plan Package for the Big Creek ALP (SCE 2001; Volume 4, SD-B (Books 6 and 21)), the LAND 9, Visual Quality Assessment, 2002 and 2003 Final Technical Study Report Packages for the Big Creek Hydroelectric System ALP (SCE 2003; SCE 2004; Volume 4, SD-C (Books 9 and 21) and SD-D (Book 15)).

SCE conducted a visual quality assessment to evaluate the visual compatibility of Project facilities with the surrounding landscapes. The list of facilities evaluated was developed in consultation with resource agencies and stakeholders as part of the Big Creek ALP. Facilities visible to the public and located on USDA-FS lands were evaluated in the context of their compatibility with the designated VQOs of the surrounding landscape. Facilities visible to the public and located on USDA-FS lands identified as being incompatible with the VQOs were further analyzed to determine if mitigation would be warranted or practical. Only those facilities that were deemed by resource agencies and stakeholders to warrant mitigation are addressed under the Proposed Action. A detailed description of the methodology used to evaluate Project facilities and the results of the analysis are summarized in LAND 9, Visual Quality

Assessment (SCE 2003; SCE 2004; Volume 4, SD-C (Books 9 and 21) and SD-D (Book 15)).

#### 5.2.7.2 Affected Environment

##### Mammoth Pool Project (FERC Project No. 2085)

Significant landscape features in the vicinity of the Mammoth Pool Project include:

- Mammoth Pool Reservoir and Dam
- The large granite dome adjacent to Mammoth Pool Dam
- The San Joaquin River within its steep and narrow canyon
- The rugged crest of the Sierra Mountains that dominates views to the east of the Project

Project facilities visible within this landscape include the Mammoth Pool Reservoir and Dam and the Mammoth Pool Powerhouse and penstocks located approximately seven miles downstream of the reservoir. A 220 kV transmission line on lattice steel towers extends 6.7 miles between the Mammoth Pool Powerhouse to the Big Creek No.3 Powerhouse Switchyard and is located mostly along the ridge to the west of the San Joaquin River Canyon.

The area surrounding the dam and reservoir consists of steep sided granite mountains in a mixed conifer and oak woodland transition zone forest. The reservoir shoreline consists of exposed granite outcrops interspersed with areas that are vegetated with shrubs and trees. Access to the reservoir is limited to locations on its south shore near the dam, boat launch, and developed campground. The northwest or southeast shores of the reservoir are only accessible by boat or on foot. The reservoir is managed by SCE to maintain a relatively stable water service elevation (WSE) during the recreation season. During the fall and late winter the reservoir WSE is reduced in preparation of spring run-off, exposing a ring of barren shoreline around the perimeter of the reservoir. The designated VQOs in the area around Mammoth Pool Reservoir are "Retention."

The area around the Mammoth Pool Powerhouse consists of a steep, narrow river canyon characterized by a bare, rocky riverbank in a dry setting of chaparral and oak woodland. The Project facilities viewed in this landscape include the Mammoth Pool Powerhouse and penstocks. Public access to the location is by USDA-FS Road No. 8S03 from Minarets Road located on the ridge to the west of the powerhouse and canyon. The designated VQOs in the area of Mammoth Pool Powerhouse and penstocks are "Partial Retention/Modification."

### Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Project (FERC Project No. 2175)

Significant landscape features in the vicinity of the Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Project include Huntington Lake, dense Sierran mixed conifer forest, the surrounding peaks of resistant sedimentary roof pendants, granitic outcrops to the north, and remnant volcanic peaks to the southeast. Lower in elevation below Huntington Lake is the Big Creek Canyon; a steep narrow canyon characterized by mixed conifer forest transitioning to oak woodland with interspersed granitic outcrops. Kerkhoff Dome, a large granite dome, is a dominant feature in the landscape and is located in the background of the Big Creek community. Project facilities viewed by the public include: Huntington Lake, Northern Hydro administrative offices and company housing, Dam No. 4 and forebay, and the Big Creek Powerhouse No. 1 penstocks and switchyard.

Huntington Lake is located in a valley surrounded by mountains to the south, east and north. Huntington Lake is a large, man-made, high mountain reservoir that supports developed recreational use. The area is vegetated with Sierran mixed conifer forest and mixed Montane chaparral shrubs. Project features viewed in the vicinity of Huntington Lake include the reservoir and Dams 1, 2, 3, and 3A. The dam structures are located at the southwest end of the lake. Views of the dams are generally limited to motorists along Huntington Lake Road and to recreationalists in the immediate vicinity of the dams.

Public access to Huntington Lake is from the southeast on Highway 168, and from the southwest from the town of Big Creek via Huntington Lake Road, which provides public access to the lake along its northern shore. A number of individual private cabins are located along the northern shores of Huntington Lake. There are seven developed campgrounds around the lake, mostly located along the northern shore. The water surface elevation of the lake is managed by SCE. This management includes spill prevention and keeping the lake at near maximum capacity to support recreational uses from Memorial Day through Labor Day. To protect the dam structures during the winter season, and to prepare for spring run-off, the WSE of the lake is reduced in the fall, after the peak recreation season. This reduction typically exposes an observable shoreline ring.

The Project features viewed in the Big Creek Canyon area include: SCE's administrative buildings and company housing; Dam No. 4 and Forebay; Big Creek Powerhouse No. 1 penstocks and switchyard. Powerhouse No. 2 is not readily viewed by the public as it is located down Big Creek Canyon along the Canyon Road, which is not open to public vehicular access. The Northern Hydro administrative facilities and company housing; Big Creek Powerhouse No. 1 penstocks switchyard; and Dam 4 forebay are located in a mixed conifer forest setting. Views of the community, powerhouse, dam and forebay are limited by the steep narrow river canyon and forest vegetative growth bordering the road. However, from Huntington Lake Road, motorists can view the penstocks for Powerhouse No.1 adjacent to Kerkhoff Dome, and the Big Creek No. 1 Switchyard next to the powerhouse. The designated VQOs in this vicinity are "Retention."

### Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8 and Eastwood Project (FERC Project No. 67)

The Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8 and Eastwood Project vicinity covers a vast elevation range, from over 8,000 feet above mean sea level (msl) to 2,250 feet msl. The significant landscape features in the Project vicinity are described as three geographical areas:

1. The Upper Basin area (elevations greater than 7,000 feet above msl)
2. The Shaver Lake basin area (elevation ranges from 7,000 feet msl to 5,000 feet msl)
3. The lower Big Creek Canyon area (elevation ranges from 5,000 feet msl to 2,500 feet msl)

The significant landscape features in the Upper Basin consist of an upper high alpine plateau of Jeffrey pine and white fir/lodgepole pine forest. It is in a predominantly granite landscape that abuts up against the rugged peaks of the high Sierra Mountains to the east. The South Fork San Joaquin River Canyon is also a dominant feature in the Upper Basin area. The Project features in this landscape setting include: Florence Dam, Bear Creek and Mono Creek diversions and forebays; eight small diversion facilities that are located on small tributaries to the South Fork San Joaquin River; and the Mono-Bear Siphon Conduit. Only Florence Dam and Lake, the Mono Bear Siphon Flowline Conduit, and Bear Diversion and Forebay were considered as potentially affecting aesthetic resource quality, and are further discussed in this analysis.

- Florence Lake is a large, high elevation alpine lake located in a glacial valley surrounded by large granite domes and mountains. The area around the dam and lake is surrounded by Jeffrey pine and white fir/lodgepole pine forests. It is interspersed with mixed Montane chaparral along the lake shoreline. Vehicular access to the reservoir is limited to locations on its northwestern shore near the dam, and boat launch. The upstream shores of the reservoir are only accessible by boat or on foot. Florence Lake is managed by SCE to reach peak storage in the summer, and then is reduced in the fall to its lowest level during the winter to avoid water freezing on the dam face. During summer, when reservoir levels are high, there is relatively little exposed shoreline. However, in the fall and winter with reduced WSE, the shoreline becomes exposed. The designated VQO around Florence Lake is "Retention."
- The Mono-Bear Siphon Flowline Conduit is visible at its crossing over the South Fork San Joaquin River. It is adjacent to a portion of Kaiser Pass Road immediately north of the South Fork San Joaquin River. The area is dominated by granitic boulder outcrops interspersed with areas of mixed Montane chaparral. The designated VQO around Mono-Bear Siphon is "Retention."
- The Bear Creek Diversion and Forebay is a moderate-sized dam and water body located in an area of granitic outcrops amongst Jeffrey pine and white fir/lodgepole pine forests. Access to the dam and forebay is by a 4-wheel drive road (USDA-FS

Road No. 6S83). Views of the dam and forebay are limited to recreationalists that travel specifically to the site. This facility is not visible from other locations in the Big Creek Basin. The designated VQO in the area around Bear Dam and Forebay are "Retention."

The significant landscape features in the Shaver Lake basin area of the Project vicinity consist mostly of steep mountains with dense Sierran mixed conifer forest and mixed Montane chaparral shrubs. The Project features in this setting include Shaver Lake and Dam, Balsam Forebay and Dam, Pitman Creek Diversion, Balsam Creek Diversion and the 220kV Eastwood to Big Creek No. 1 Transmission Line. Only Shaver Dam and Lake, and Balsam Forebay and Dam, were considered potentially affecting aesthetic resource quality and are further discussed in this analysis.

- Shaver Lake is surrounded by a dense forest of mixed conifer forests and Montane chaparral shrubs interspersed with granite outcrops. It is surrounded by mountains along the west, north and east. Shaver Lake is the largest lake in the SCE Big Creek Hydroelectric System (BCS). It has housing developments, recreation facilities and commercial marina facilities along the western shore. Public road access to Shaver Lake is limited to the western shore. Road access is limited to USDA-FS, CDFG, and SCE on the northern shore. Shaver Lake is managed by SCE partially as a pumped-storage facility, causing Shaver Lake to have a relatively stable WSE. The designated VQO around Shaver Lake is "Retention".
- Balsam Forebay is surrounded by chaparral and conifer forests. It is located on the ridge of granite peaks northeast of Shaver Lake. A foot trail provides public access to and around the forebay. Access to Balsam Forebay is from the southeast shore. Road access to the Forebay is limited to SCE, CDFG, and USDA-FS vehicles. The designated VQO around Balsam Forebay is "Retention".

The significant landscape features in the lower Big Creek Canyon area of the Project vicinity consist mostly of a steep, narrow river canyon, characterized by a bare, rocky riverbank in a dry setting of chaparral and oak woodland. The Project facilities viewed in this vicinity include Dam 5 and Impoundment, Big Creek Powerhouse 2A and Big Creek Powerhouse No. 8. Access to these facilities is along the Canyon Road, which is restricted to public vehicles. The designated VQO in the area around Dam 5 and Forebay is "Retention." In the area of Powerhouse No. 8 it is "Retention/Partial Retention." The public has limited views of these facilities; therefore, these facilities were not evaluated as part of the visual quality assessment.

#### Big Creek No. 3 Project (FERC Project No. 120)

The significant landscape feature in the vicinity of the Big Creek No. 3 Project is the San Joaquin River Canyon. It is characterized by a steep, narrow river canyon, commonly referred to as Chawanakee Gorge. This reach of the river is interspersed with sections where the canyon is deeply incised as the river cuts through large granitic domes, exposing dramatic views of sheer granite walls along the edge of the canyon. Project

features within this landscape include Dam 6 at the upper reach of the Project, the Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3 and penstocks, and Big Creek No. 3 administrative facilities.

Dam 6 and Forebay are located at the confluence of Big Creek and the San Joaquin River. The landscape is of a steep, narrow river canyon in a dry oak woodland and chaparral setting. The forebay is confined in the narrow canyon, and is subject to limited fluctuation of WSE. Public vehicle access to the forebay is only available at the upstream northern extent of the forebay. This location is accessible by USDA-FS Road No. 8S03 from Minarets Road, located on the ridge to the west of the forebay. At the river crossing of USDA-FS Road No. 8S03, there is a public parking area and a locked gate that restricts public vehicle access along the eastern shore of the forebay. The view of Dam 6 is limited, due to the narrow canyon and restricted access to public vehicles. The designated VQO in the vicinity of Dam 6 is "Partial Retention."

Powerhouse No. 3 and its associated penstocks are located on the San Joaquin River where the Chawanakee Gorge section ends. The topography opens up into a small basin area, commonly referred to as Jose Basin. The powerhouse is located at the upstream end of Redinger Reservoir. This small basin is an area of rolling hills in dry oak woodland and grassland setting that is surrounded by steep mountains. Access into the Basin is provided by Italian Bar road from the west, and Jose Basin Road from the south. Public vehicular access upstream along the San Joaquin River is restricted and controlled by a locked gate.

Powerhouse No. 3 and penstocks are located against the steep granite mountain located at the mouth of Chawanakee Gorge. The views of these facilities from Italian Bar Road or Jose Basin Road are limited by the narrow steep topography. However, the powerhouse and penstocks are easily viewed by boaters on the upstream end of Redinger Reservoir. The designated VQO in the vicinity of Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3 and penstock is "Partial Retention."

The Big Creek No. 3 administrative facilities consist of a number of administrative support buildings in an area of rolling hills in an oak woodland and grassland setting. Views of the Project facilities are generally limited to motorists traveling along Jose Basin Road. The designated VQO in the vicinity of Big Creek No. 3 administrative facilities is "Partial Retention." Only the Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3 and penstocks were considered potentially affecting aesthetic resource quality and are further discussed in the analysis.

#### 5.2.7.3 Impacts of Proposed Action

Project features (lakes and forebays) and facilities (powerhouses, penstocks, flowlines, and transmission lines) were evaluated for each of the four Big Creek ALP Projects to determine their consistency with the VQOs. Several Project facilities visible to the public and located on USDA-FS lands were considered potential impacts to visual quality in the Big Creek Basin, due to their inconsistency with designated VQOs. Each of these facilities and their visual impacts to aesthetic resources are described below by the identified Project.

#### 5.2.7.4 Project Impacts

##### Mammoth Pool Project (FERC Project No. 2085)

Views of the Mammoth Pool Dam and Reservoir, Mammoth Pool Powerhouse and Penstock, and transmission line were determined to be inconsistent with the designated VQOs.

- Mammoth Pool Dam. It contrasts with the existing VQO of "Retention". However, the existing color of the dam is similar to the surrounding exposed granite bedrock. Due to the similarity in color to the surrounding rocks, the dam is not particularly obtrusive in the landscape setting. Therefore, it is not necessary, nor is it practical, to devise methods to make the dam blend in with the landscape. No mitigation is proposed.
- Mammoth Pool Reservoir. The shoreline has periods of low WSE, which were determined to be inconsistent with the designated VQO of "Retention". However, SCE operates the reservoir to maintain a relatively constant WSE during the recreation season (summer through early fall) when visitation is at its peak. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will continue good faith efforts to maintain relatively constant WSE in Mammoth Pool Reservoir during the recreation season. No additional mitigation measure is proposed to minimize the aesthetic effect of low reservoir WSE, which occurs outside of the peak recreation season.
- Mammoth Pool Powerhouse. It was determined to be inconsistent with the VQO designation. Mitigation is not practical, and the view of the powerhouse is limited, due to the topography of the steep and narrow San Joaquin River Canyon. Therefore, no mitigation is proposed to reduce the visual contrast of the powerhouse.
- Mammoth Pool Powerhouse Penstock. The structure of the penstock is a much more dominant feature than the powerhouse and has a visual effect on the landscape due to its size, line, and color. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will repaint the Mammoth Pool Powerhouse Penstock using a color that better blends with the surrounding landscape. The color will be selected in consultation with the USDA-FS. The penstock will be repainted during the routine repainting schedule. These mitigation measures are detailed in the Visual Resources Plan (SCE 2007; Volume 4, SD-G (Books 19 and 24)).
- Mammoth Pool to Big Creek No. 3 Transmission Line. It contrasts with the existing VQO due to the visible line in the landscape. However, there is limited opportunity for the public to view this facility from public roadways. It is not particularly obtrusive and to try to devise methods to blend it in further with the natural environment is not practical. No mitigation is proposed.

The action proposed for the identified facilities will result in minor but beneficial effects on aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the Mammoth Pool Project.



### Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Project (FERC Project No. 2175)

Views of the Huntington Lake shoreline, Big Creek Powerhouse No. 1 and penstocks, and Big Creek No. 1 Switchyard were determined to be inconsistent with designated VQOs.

- Huntington Lake Dams. These structures contrast with the existing VQO of "Retention." The existing color of the dams is similar to the exposed granite bedrock in the Project vicinity. The dams are not particularly obtrusive in the landscape setting, due to the similarity in color to the surrounding rocks and their being primarily on the far side of the reservoir from the majority of viewing locations. Therefore, it is not necessary, nor is it practical, to devise methods to make the dams blend in with the landscape. No mitigation is proposed.
- Huntington Lake Shoreline. During periods of low WSE, it was determined to be inconsistent with the "Retention" VQO. SCE operates the reservoir to maintain a relatively constant WSE during the recreation season (summer through early fall) when visitation is at its peak. Also, during most of the late fall through early spring, the reservoir and shoreline are usually covered by snow, which obscures any visual effect of lower WSE. SCE will continue good faith efforts to maintain relatively constant WSE in the Project reservoir during the recreation season. No additional mitigation measure is proposed to minimize the visual effect of low reservoir WSE, which occurs outside of the peak recreation season.
- Big Creek Powerhouse No. 1. This was determined to be inconsistent with the VQO designation. However, the view of the powerhouse is not particularly obtrusive, due to limited views in the steep and narrow Big Creek Canyon and visual screening by existing trees. The powerhouse is also a contributing element of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District (BCHSHD). Therefore, no mitigation is proposed to reduce the visual contrast of the powerhouse.
- Big Creek No. 1 Penstocks. These facilities are more dominant in the landscape than the powerhouse and contrast with existing VQOs. The penstocks are adjacent to Kerkhoff Dam and have an aesthetic effect on the landscape. Due to their size, line, and color, they are readily visible. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will repaint the Big Creek No. 1 penstocks using a color that retains the historic character of these contributing elements of the BCHSHD. The color will be selected in consultation with the USDA-FS. The penstock will be painted during the routine repainting schedule. These mitigation measures are detailed in the Visual Resources Plan (SCE 2007; Volume 4, SD-G (Books 19 and 24)).
- Big Creek No. 1 Switchyard. It was determined to be inconsistent with the designated VQO due to its size, color, and form when observed from Huntington Lake Road. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will implement silvicultural practices along a segment of Huntington Lake Road where the Big Creek No. 1 Switchyard is visible. The goal of the silvicultural practices will be to increase the

size, vigor, and canopy closure of vegetation along the Huntington Lake Road to provide long-term visual screening of the Big Creek No. 1 Switchyard. These practices will be implemented, based on a schedule developed in consultation with the USDA-FS. These methods and schedules are detailed in the Visual Resources Plan (SCE 2007; Volume 4, SD-G (Books 19 and 24)).

Proposed Actions for the identified facilities will result in minor but beneficial effects on aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the Big Creek Nos. 1 and 2 Project.

#### Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8 and Eastwood Project (FERC Project No. 67)

Views of the shorelines at Florence Lake, Shaver Lake, Balsam Forebay, and of the Mono-Bear Siphon Flowline Conduit were determined to be inconsistent with designated VQOs.

- Florence Dam. The dam structure contrasts with the existing VQO of "Retention". The existing color of the dam is similar to the surrounding exposed granite bedrock. The dam is not particularly obtrusive in the landscape setting due to its similarity in color to the surrounding rocks. Florence Dam is also a contributing element of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District (BCHSHD). Therefore, it is not necessary, nor is it practical, to devise methods to make the dam blend in with the landscape. No mitigation is proposed.
- Florence Lake Shoreline. During periods of low WSE, the Florence Lake shoreline was determined to be inconsistent with the "Retention" VQO. However, SCE operates the reservoir to maintain a relatively constant WSE during the recreation season (summer through early fall) when visitation is at its peak. Also, the reservoir and shoreline are relatively inaccessible and covered by heavy snow during most of the non-recreation season, which minimizes the visual effect of low WSE. SCE will continue good faith efforts to maintain relatively constant WSE in the reservoir during the recreation season. No additional mitigation measure is proposed to minimize the aesthetic effect of low reservoir WSE, which occurs outside of the peak recreation season.
- Shaver Dam. The dam structure contrasts with the existing VQO; however, the existing color of the dam is similar to the surrounding exposed granite bedrock. The dam is not particularly obtrusive in the landscape setting due to its similarity in color to the surrounding rocks. Shaver Dam is also a contributing element of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District (BCHSHD). Therefore, it is not necessary nor is it practical to devise methods to make the dam blend in with the landscape. No mitigation is proposed.
- Shaver Lake. During periods of low WSE, it was determined to be inconsistent with the "Retention" VQO. However, SCE operates the reservoir to maintain a relatively constant WSE during the recreation season (summer through early fall)

when visitation is at its peak. SCE will continue good faith efforts to maintain a relatively constant WSE in the Project reservoir during the recreation season. No additional mitigation measure is proposed to minimize the aesthetic effect of low reservoir WSE, which occurs outside of the peak recreation season. In addition, Shaver Lake is on SCE private lands and is not required to mitigate its inconsistencies with the VQOs.

- Balsam Forebay. It was determined to be inconsistent with the “Retention” VQO due to exposed shorelines and other visible Project facilities at the forebay. Balsam Forebay was constructed to function as a regulating reservoir for the Eastwood Powerstation, resulting in frequent fluctuation in WSE. Therefore, it is not practical to propose mitigation measures for changes in WSE. Also, Balsam Forebay is located on SCE private lands and is not subject to USDA-FS visual management designations. No mitigation is proposed.
- Mono-Bear Siphon (near Kaiser Pass Road). It was determined to contrast with the existing VQO due to its size, color, and line in the surrounding landscape. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will continue to paint the Mono-Bear Siphon Flowline Conduit using a color that retains its historic character as a contributing element of the BCHSHD. The conduit will be painted during the routine repainting schedule. These mitigation measures are detailed in the Visual Resources Plan (SCE 2007; Volume 4, SD-G (Books 19 and 24)).

Proposed action for the identified facilities will result in minor but beneficial effects on aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the Big Creek Nos. 2A, 8 and Eastwood Project.

#### Big Creek No. 3 Project (FERC Project No. 120)

The Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3 and penstock were determined to contrast with the existing designated VQO.

- Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3. It was determined to be inconsistent with the “Partial Retention” VQO. However, the view of the powerhouse is limited due to the topography of the steep and narrow San Joaquin River Canyon. Big Creek Powerhouse No. 3 is also a contributing element of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible Big Creek Hydroelectric System Historic District (BCHSHD). No mitigation is proposed to reduce the visual contrast of the powerhouse.
- Big Creek No. 3 Penstock. The penstock is a much more dominant feature than the powerhouse and has a visual effect on the landscape due to its size, line, and color. Under the Proposed Action, SCE will repaint the Big Creek No. 3 Penstock using a color that retains the historic character of these contributing elements of the BCHSHD. The penstock will be painted during the routine repainting schedule. These mitigation measures are detailed in the Visual Resources Plan (SCE 2007; Volume 4, SD-G (Books 19 and 24)).

Proposed action for the identified facilities will result in minor but beneficial effects to aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the Big Creek No. 3 Project.

#### 5.2.7.5 Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The impact analysis found that some Project facilities were not consistent with current USDA-FS VQOs under the Proposed Action. However, these inconsistencies typically occurred outside the recreation season or the inconsistencies were not considered particularly obtrusive, or could not be mitigated while retaining the historic character of contributing elements of the proposed BCHSHD. In these cases, no mitigation was proposed. Overall, the Proposed Action will result in minor, but beneficial effects to aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the four Big Creek ALP Projects.

No significant unavoidable adverse effects on the aesthetic resources are associated with continued operations of the four Big Creek ALP Projects.