

## **6.10 Public Services and Utilities**

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This section describes public services and utilities in the vicinity of the Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project (UNFFR Project) and evaluates the potential effects of the operation of the UNFFR Project under a new Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) license on public services, utilities, and energy. This section does not address energy as it relates to outputs of the UNFFR Project (see Section 6.16, Climate Change). The following topics are not discussed in this section for the reasons noted:

- **Schools, parks, and other public facilities:** Neither the Proposed UNFFR Project nor either alternative would increase demand for public services.
- **Utility facilities:** Neither the Proposed UNFFR Project nor either alternative would increase the demand on utility service providers.

### 6.10.1 Environmental Setting

#### Public Services

##### *Law Enforcement*

The Plumas County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement for the entire county. Headquartered in Quincy, the office maintains a substation in Chester that is staffed by a sergeant and four patrol deputies. In addition to regular patrol duties, deputies are cross-trained in a variety of areas, including K-9, investigations and a Special Weapons and Tactics team. Each deputy is also a deputy coroner and is responsible for death investigations. The Sheriff's Office also provides year-round off-highway patrols of the snowmobile and off-highway vehicle routes in the area as well as boating patrols on lakes and reservoirs.

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) operates area offices in Susanville and Quincy and serves as the primary law enforcement agency for state facilities and transportation corridors (e.g., State Route 89) in the vicinity of the UNFFR Project. The CHP also maintains a communications/dispatch center in Susanville and works closely with the Plumas County Sheriff's Office to provide law enforcement coverage to Plumas County.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) provides law enforcement in association with its land management activities. USFS law enforcement focuses on two main areas: the safety and protection of the public and USFS personnel and the protection of public resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands from theft and destruction (United States Forest Service 1988, 1992). Both the Lassen and the Plumas National Forests maintain agreements and operating plans with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to provide coordinated law enforcement coverage. The Mount Hough Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest manages NFS lands around Butt Valley reservoir. The Lake Almanor Ranger District of the Lassen National Forest manages NFS lands around Lake Almanor, including those in the vicinity of Prattville and Canyon dam.

The UNFFR Project is in the Northern District of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW; formerly known as the California Department of Fish and Game). CDFW wardens in Plumas County are responsible for enforcing laws pertinent to fish and wildlife, but may be called upon to enforce any of California's laws.

### ***Fire Protection/Emergency Services***

The Plumas County Office of Emergency Services (OES) provides for the planning and coordination of emergency response for all county departments and coordinates assistance from outside agencies when major disasters or emergencies occur. The goal of the OES is to coordinate preparedness planning for emergency response in the county when persons or property are at risk of harm. The program is coordinated with the State OES and, at the federal level, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Fire protection needs in the UNFFR Project vicinity are currently met by a combination of volunteer fire departments, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and the USFS. By law, CAL FIRE is responsible for wildland fire protection on all private lands in Plumas County and in certain instances on lands managed by United States Bureau of Land Management. The USFS is responsible for wildland fire protection on all NFS lands. The CAL FIRE station in Susanville and the USFS fire station in Chester are fully staffed only during the summer fire season, which is normally May to November. The community of Prattville is provided additional protection by the Prattville-Almanor Fire Protection District, a primarily volunteer department that provides structural fire protection and rescue services in the Prattville and Canyon dam areas year-round.

During the summer fire season, all fire agencies in the county respond to any reported fire, regardless of legal jurisdiction. CAL FIRE and USFS are legally and financially responsible for managing wildland fires within their jurisdiction; however, volunteer fire departments are often the first to respond to wildfires or other incidents such as traffic accidents. CAL FIRE and USFS depend on the volunteer fire departments, such as the one in Prattville, to provide initial attack support on wildfires along the west shore of Lake Almanor. CAL FIRE and USFS have agreements with local volunteer fire departments to reimburse them for their assistance.

Plumas County Search and Rescue, a nonprofit volunteer organization coordinated by the Plumas County Sheriff's Office, provides support to the local community, averaging about 50 response calls annually. Upon request, this organization responds to calls throughout Plumas County, including search and rescue operations and other critical incidents affecting public health and safety (e.g., wildfires, vehicle accidents).

### ***Medical Services***

Medical services in Plumas County include several hospitals and ambulance services. The Seneca District Hospital in Chester and the Plumas District Hospital in Quincy are the closest hospitals to UNFFR Project facilities; both hospitals provide 24-hour emergency services. Emergency transfers to hospitals in Chico, Reno, and other urban areas are provided by aircraft or ground transport. Ambulance service is provided by the Chester, Westwood, and Peninsula fire departments or by the hospital in Quincy.

### ***Utilities***

#### ***Water Supply and Distribution and Wastewater Treatment***

The community of Prattville is served by a community water system, and residents and businesses in Prattville operate individual septic systems (Plumas Corporation 2002). Public use facilities associated with the UNFFR Project are served by groundwater wells for water supply and individual septic systems or pit toilets for wastewater. UNFFR Project administrative and recreational facilities use local water sources (e.g., wells, springs).

### ***Electric***

Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E's) hydroelectric generation systems along the North Fork Feather River provide a reliable source of power to users throughout northern California. Throughout Plumas County, PG&E supplies electrical power to commercial, industrial, and residential customers via the local transmission network. While electric service is available in the Lake Almanor and Caribou areas, it is limited in the vicinity of Butt Valley reservoir. None of the UNFFR Project recreational facilities have electrical service, other than for administrative purposes (e.g., campground hosts).

### ***Gas***

Natural gas is not available in Plumas County (Plumas Corporation 2002). A number of privately owned companies use truck-mounted delivery service to provide propane and fuel oil to businesses and residents throughout the county.

### ***Telephone and High-Speed Telecommunications***

Telephone service is available in developed residential areas, but reliable cell phone service is available only in population centers, primarily because of the mountainous terrain (Plumas Corporation 2002). DSL or digital subscriber line computer service is available via the phone lines, and wireless computer service is geographically limited.

### ***Solid Waste Collection and Disposal***

Plumas County's Public Works Department operates solid waste transfer stations and recycling centers in Chester and Greenville to serve residents of the Prattville area and other rural residents in the UNFFR Project vicinity. Plumas County has three sanitary landfills; the landfill in Chester is closest to the UNFFR Project. The Chester landfill, which is projected to reach capacity within 20 years, accepts uncontrolled waste, including construction materials. A green waste recycling program is also available to county residents at collection sites in Westwood, Quincy, and other locations.

## **6.10.2 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

### **Methodology**

The information presented in this section is derived from applicable local planning documents, communication with local service providers, and field reconnaissance within the general vicinity of the UNFFR Project. The impact analysis addresses potential impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project and either alternative on the following public services and facilities: water supply and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment, law enforcement, solid waste collection and disposal, emergency services and fire protection, telephone service, and electric service.

### **Thresholds of Significance**

Impacts on public services would be significant if the Proposed UNFFR Project, Alternative 1, or Alternative 2 would:

- require the construction of new or physically altered fire or police protection facilities that could have an adverse effect on the environment.

Impacts on utilities and energy would be significant if the Proposed UNFFR Project, Alternative 1, or Alternative 2 would:

- result in a disruption to utility services for an extended period as a result of relocating infrastructure, accidental disruption, or a reduction in energy delivered to customers; or
- encourage activities that result in the use of large amounts of fuel or energy, or would use fuel or energy in a wasteful manner.

## Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses the anticipated impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative on public and utility services and identifies mitigation measures for significant impacts. Table 6.10-1 compares the final level of significance of each impact, with incorporation of mitigation measures if appropriate.

**Table 6.10-1. Summary of Public Services and Utilities (PS) Impacts**

IMPACT	PROPOSED UNFFR PROJECT	ALTERNATIVE 1	ALTERNATIVE 2
<b>Impact PS-1:</b> Construction activities associated with the UNFFR Project could result in the temporary disruption of utility services in the area.	No impact	No impact	No impact
<b>Impact PS-2:</b> The UNFFR Project could create public safety hazards and increase the demand for emergency response services, resulting in the need for new or expanded facilities that could affect the environment.	Less than significant	Less than significant	Less than significant

**Impact PS-1: Construction activities associated with the UNFFR Project could result in the temporary disruption of utility services in the area.**

### ***Proposed UNFFR Project***

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project would not adversely affect utility services in the vicinity of the activity areas. Overhead utility poles and utility lines along the local roads and highways and in the activity areas would be avoided by construction equipment; the poles and lines typically provide adequate vehicular clearance to allow access. Any trenching or excavation activities that may be required would follow applicable best management practices and take all measures necessary to avoid any underground lines. The Proposed UNFFR Project would not result in a temporary or long-term disruption of utility services in the area; therefore, **no impacts** would occur.

### ***Alternatives 1 and 2***

Construction activities associated with either alternative would not adversely affect utility services in the vicinity of the activity areas. Construction activities would occur in the water and along the shores of Lake Almanor near the Prattville intake and Butt Valley reservoir near the Caribou intakes, where no utility lines are located. Overhead utility poles and lines along the

local roads and highways and in the activity areas would be avoided by construction equipment. The poles and lines typically provide adequate vehicular clearance to allow access. Trenching or excavation activities would not be necessary; therefore, underground lines would not be affected. Neither alternative would result in a temporary or long-term disruption of utility services in the area; therefore, **no impacts** would occur.

**Impact PS-2: The UNFFR Project could create public safety hazards and increase the demand for emergency response services, resulting in the need for new or expanded facilities that could affect the environment.**

### ***Proposed UNFFR Project***

The Proposed UNFFR Project would not involve the construction of any major structures that could create any new public safety hazards. However, the instream releases would be larger than current releases. The existing alarm and warning measures in place would be adequate to inform users along the Seneca reach that increased flows are imminent. Impacts associated with additional demands placed on emergency response services in the area as a result of increased instream releases would be **less than significant**.

### ***Alternative 1***

The construction and operation of a thermal curtain at the Prattville intake would require the installation of two galvanized steel bin-type walls to anchor the curtain to the shore. These walls would extend 300 feet from the shoreline at both ends of the curtain, while the curtain itself would extend up to 900 feet offshore (measured from the ordinary high water mark). Currently, the area enclosed with buoys surrounding the Prattville intake encompasses about 1.2 acres. Essentially, the installation of the curtain and associated anchoring mechanisms would increase the area that would be restricted from use by flatwater recreation users by about 22 acres. Although the structures would be clearly marked with buoys and signs, they could pose a hazard to waterskiers, wakeboarders, and others being towed behind boats and to other water-based recreationists passing through the Prattville area. The increased potential for accidents at Lake Almanor could increase the demand for local emergency services, particularly during peak use periods, but this increase would be minimal and would not result in the need for new or expanded emergency facilities. Therefore, impacts related to emergency response would be **less than significant**.

Modification of the Canyon dam outlet<sup>1</sup> could require barges and/or platforms to support underwater construction. Short-term restrictions could be required in this activity area. Increased releases into the Seneca reach of the North Fork Feather River between mid-June and mid-September could increase the potential for hazards along this reach during the period of increased flows. The Seneca reach is particularly remote and rugged and is not commonly accessed by the public. While releases from Canyon dam would be larger than those currently provided, the existing alarm and warning measures in place would be adequate to inform users along the Seneca reach that increased flows are imminent. Impacts associated with additional demands placed on emergency response services in the area as a result of increased releases from Canyon dam would be **less than significant**.

<sup>1</sup> Canyon dam "intake" and Canyon dam "outlet" are synonymous.

A thermal curtain at the Caribou intakes would not result in any increase in hazards to flatwater recreation because boating activity is currently restricted near the face of Butt Valley reservoir in this activity area. Personal watercraft and activities such as waterskiing are not allowed on Butt Valley reservoir. Therefore impacts related to emergency response would be **less than significant**.

***Alternative 2***

Impacts on emergency response services associated with the Prattville and Caribou intakes thermal curtains would be the same as described under Alternative 1. Modification of the Canyon dam outlet would not occur under this alternative, and restrictions within this activity area would not be required. The effects on emergency response providers would be **less than significant**.