

## CHAPTER 7

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### Cumulative Impacts and Other CEQA Considerations

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This chapter addresses certain statutory considerations, including cumulative impacts, which must be evaluated pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the following topics:

- cumulative impacts;
- growth-inducing impacts;
- significant effects, including significant unavoidable effects, significant irreversible environmental changes, effects found not to be significant, and the potential impacts of anticipated projects outside the jurisdiction of the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) for which sufficient information is not available;
- mitigation measures proposed to minimize the significant effects and the related Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan; and
- the CEQA findings process.

Some of the analyses provided in this chapter are similar to those discussed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Upper North Fork Feather River Project* issued by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 2005).

## 7.2 Cumulative Impacts Analysis

This section discusses the anticipated cumulative impacts of the operation of the Upper North Fork Feather River Hydroelectric Project (UNFFR Project) under a new FERC license along with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed. Effects of past projects are incorporated into the description of the baseline, or environmental setting, in Chapter 6; these effects have contributed to the current environmental conditions in the watershed and are not specifically discussed in this section. Present and reasonably foreseeable future projects are identified in this section and form the basis for the cumulative impact analysis.

An environmental impact report (EIR) is required to include an assessment of cumulative impacts when the proposed project's incremental effects would be cumulatively considerable (Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines). The assessment involves examining project-related effects on the environment in the context of similar effects that have been caused by past or existing projects and that would be caused by reasonably foreseeable future projects. A cumulative impact is defined as "two or more individual effects which, when considered

together, are considerable or which compound or increase other environmental impacts” (Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines). A project’s incremental effects are cumulatively considerable if the effects are significant when considered in connection with other related projects.

Cumulative impacts occur when the incremental effects of a project overlap with the effects of related actions in space (geographic) or time (temporal). A cumulative impact may be significant in the context of all projects being analyzed, but an individual project’s contribution may be less than significant. Under CEQA, if a lead agency determines that a project-related contribution to a significant cumulative impact is less than considerable, the agency shall identify facts and analysis that support its conclusion. A project’s contribution is less than cumulatively considerable if the project is required to implement or fund its fair share of a mitigation measure or measures designed to alleviate the cumulative impact. Incremental effects that are not cumulatively considerable do not need to be discussed in detail. In addition, discussions of cumulative impacts need not provide as much detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone; however, the analysis should reflect the severity of the impacts and the likelihood of occurrence (Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines).

### **7.2.1 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects**

Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects can be identified by either: (a) a list of past, present, and probable future projects, including, if necessary, those outside the agency’s control; or (b) a summary of projections contained in an adopted general plan or related planning document or in a prior adopted or certified environmental document that described or evaluated regional or area-wide conditions contributing to the cumulative impact, provided that such documents are referenced and made available for public inspection at a specified location (Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines). A related project is one that occurs in the same geographic area as the proposed project, would be implemented in the same general time period as the proposed project, and would result in similar types of impacts as described for the proposed project.

For this cumulative impact analysis, a list approach was used. The following related projects were considered:

- development around Lake Almanor;
- mining and dredging activities along the North Fork Feather River;
- timber harvesting on the Lassen and Plumas National Forests;
- vegetation management on the Lassen and Plumas National Forests;
- watershed management activities, specifically implementation of the Lake Almanor Watershed Management Plan;
- Plumas County General Plan update; and
- Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s (PG&E’s) Bucks Creek Hydroelectric Project relicensing (FERC Project No. 619), Poe Hydroelectric Project relicensing (FERC Project No. 2107), and Rock Creek-Cresta Hydroelectric Project license implementation (FERC Project No. 1962) (for more information see <http://www.ferc.gov>).

## 7.2.2 Cumulative Impact Analysis Approach

This cumulative impact analysis considers the cumulative effects of the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative along with the related past, present, and foreseeable projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed listed above. The geographical scope of the analysis is the North Fork Feather River watershed. The temporal scope is 30 to 50 years into the future, which correlates to the period of time requested by PG&E for a new FERC license for the UNFFR Project.

Cumulative impacts were evaluated to determine if the Proposed UNFFR Project and either alternative, when considered with related past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future projects, would contribute to cumulative adverse impacts on any of the resource areas discussed in Chapter 6, Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts. The incremental effects of the alternatives on each resource area are described in Chapter 6, and the analysis in this chapter focuses on those incremental effects that could contribute to cumulative effects in the region. The significance thresholds identified in each resource section were used to determine the significance of each cumulative impact.

## 7.2.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

This section discusses the potential cumulative impacts on resources described in various sections of Chapter 6.

### Land Use and Minerals (Section 6.2)

Impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project, as well as both alternatives, would be localized around the activity areas associated with Lake Almanor and Butt Valley reservoir. Impacts would also be associated with flow releases to the North Fork Feather River between Canyon dam and Belden powerhouse. The ownership patterns and limited opportunity for development in these areas make it unlikely that there could be cumulatively considerable impacts on these resources. None of the other related projects are expected to affect land uses or mineral resources in these localized areas, and the Plumas County General Plan update did not modify land use designations in the areas to improve compatibility between uses and establish consistency with land use policies.

### Geology, Geomorphology, and Soils (Section 6.3)

Impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives would be localized in the activity areas and along the North Fork Feather River between Canyon dam and Belden powerhouse and would not be cumulatively considerable. Ongoing watershed restoration and erosion control efforts on United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service (USFS) and commercial timberlands continue to address soil erosion and compaction issues throughout the UNFFR Project area.

### Water Resources (Section 6.4)

The Proposed UNFFR Project as well as the two alternatives described in Chapter 4, Project Alternatives, would result in similar minimum changes to flow in the Seneca and Belden reaches of the North Fork Feather River during most of the year. Alternative 1 would also result in increased releases (up to 250 cubic feet per second) to the Seneca reach through the Canyon

dam low-level outlet<sup>1</sup> from mid-June through mid-September. Under Alternative 1, these changes would increase flows in the Seneca reach; under both Alternatives 1 and 2, they are not likely to affect the flow regime in the North Fork Feather River downstream of the Belden powerhouse.

Changes to flow as part of the relicensing of other hydroelectric projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed could cause a cumulative change in flows along the North Fork Feather River from the Belden powerhouse downstream to Lake Oroville. However, the highly regulated nature of each reach affected by the various hydroelectric project facilities (i.e., powerhouses, dams, intake structures) and the coordinated operation of all of the hydroelectric projects would sufficiently manage flows in the river to prevent flooding or substantial scouring along the river banks. Cumulative changes in flows along the North Fork Feather River would not result in adverse impacts along the river, and the effects associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and either alternative are not expected to vary much with respect to baseline conditions. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on water resources would be not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Water Quality (Section 6.5)**

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative could result in temporary increases in pollutants and sediment in Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, and the North Fork Feather River (e.g., Seneca and Belden reaches) during construction. Other land management, development, and site-specific construction projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed could also affect water quality in the reservoirs and the North Fork Feather River and its tributaries, but activities associated with the downstream hydroelectric projects (e.g., Rock Creek–Cresta Hydroelectric Project) would not affect water quality within the area influenced by the UNFFR Project. The cumulative increase in potential pollutants and sediment in Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, and the North Fork Feather River from construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative would be controlled by best management practices and other standard measures described in previous chapters of this document (Chapters 3 – PG&E's Upper North Fork Feather River Project, 4 – Project Alternatives, 6.5 – Water Quality). All Proposed UNFFR Project activity, other land management, development, and site-specific construction projects will be consistent with the requirements for federal Clean Water Act and state Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act permitting. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on water quality from construction activities would not be cumulatively considerable.

Implementation of either Alternative 1 or 2 would reduce water temperatures along the North Fork Feather River in the Seneca and Belden reaches to varying degrees in the summer. Under Alternative 1, this reduction would be greater and extend further downstream; it would be less pronounced in the downstream reaches, but beneficial uses would experience some temperature reduction benefits as far downstream as the Poe reach (Appendix D). Modifications to the operation of downstream hydroelectric projects could also further reduce water temperatures in the North Fork Feather River; any modifications to other hydroelectric projects are outside the jurisdiction of the UNFFR Project. The cumulative change in water temperatures would result in benefits to the coldwater fishery and would not create adverse effects on other beneficial uses of the North Fork Feather River (Appendix E). Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on the water temperature of the North Fork Feather River would not be cumulatively considerable.

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

### **Fisheries (Section 6.6)**

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative could result in temporary disturbance to fish and aquatic habitat in Lake Almanor and Butt Valley reservoir; these impacts would be localized around the activity areas. Other land management, development, watershed restoration, and site-specific construction projects in the North Fork Feather River watershed could indirectly affect water quality and thus aquatic habitat, but they would not be expected to affect fish in the vicinity of the activity areas. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on fish and aquatic habitat from construction activities would not be cumulatively considerable.

Implementation of either Alternative 1 or 2 would affect warm and coldwater habitat in the reservoirs and North Fork Feather River to varying degrees in the summer. Reduction in water temperatures in the North Fork Feather River downstream of Belden dam would improve coldwater fish habitat to varying degrees, compensating for the warming effects of hydropower diversions in the bypass reaches between dams and powerhouses. Coldwater refugia in Lake Almanor during critically dry water years would become more restricted compared to the historic and current operations of the UNFFR Project and require increased fish stocking (see Section 6.6 for UNFFR Project-specific mitigation measures). Modifications to operations of downstream hydroelectric projects could also affect aquatic habitat in the North Fork Feather River, but they would benefit the coldwater fishery. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on fish and aquatic habitat would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Vegetation, Wildlife, and Sensitive Biological Resources (Section 6.7)**

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative could result in adverse impacts on special-status species such as bats, western pond turtle, and ringtail cat and other sensitive biological resources such as wetlands and riparian habitat in the immediate vicinity of the activity areas and along the North Fork Feather River downstream of Canyon dam. Other land management, development, watershed restoration, and site-specific construction projects around Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, and along the North Fork Feather River could also result in adverse impacts on special-status species known to occur in the region or other sensitive biological resources (e.g., riparian habitat, wetlands), which, when considered with the impacts associated with the alternatives, could be cumulatively significant. Each project would be responsible for mitigating adverse impacts and complying with applicable laws and regulations, including obtaining relevant permits, to ensure protection of sensitive biological resources. With implementation of UNFFR Project-specific mitigation measures to reduce adverse impacts, the incremental effects from impacts on biological resources would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Recreation (Section 6.8)**

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative could temporarily disrupt recreational uses and activities in the vicinity of the activity areas. Alternatives 1 and 2 both require the installation of thermal curtains at the Prattville and Caribou intakes, which would extend the area around the intake that is off-limits to boaters and other water recreationists and require the relocation of the Marvin Alexander day use area on Lake Almanor. Flow modifications (ramping flows) in the Seneca and Belden reaches associated with either alternative could affect the quality of the recreational fishery for short periods of time as flow releases change over the course of a water year. However, these impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

Other land management, development, watershed restoration, and site-specific construction projects in the vicinity could disrupt recreational activities, but based on the nature of the other projects, such disruptions would likely be temporary and would not substantially affect recreational uses in the area. Recreational activities would continue to be available at the numerous developed and undeveloped recreational sites at Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, and along the North Fork Feather River. Changes to flows as part of the relicensing of other hydroelectric projects along the North Fork Feather River below Belden powerhouse would not affect the recreational fishery in the UNNFR Project area. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on recreation would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Aesthetics (Section 6.9)**

Neither the Proposed UNFFR Project nor either alternative would substantially change the existing visual character in the vicinity of the UNFFR Project. The thermal curtains and associated structures required by either Alternative 1 or 2 would result in changes in the visual character around the Prattville and Caribou intakes on Lake Almanor and Butt Valley reservoir, respectively. Although the visual impacts have the potential to be significant, changes in visual character would not be substantial based on the extent of existing structures in the water at the intakes. Under Alternative 1, minor temporary construction activities associated with modifications to the Canyon dam outlet structure would result in short-term changes to some visual assessment units. Land management, development, watershed restoration, or site-specific construction projects unrelated to the UNFFR Project around Lake Almanor or Butt Valley reservoir and along the North Fork Feather River could also result in changes to the visual character of these water bodies and surrounding viewsheds, but new structures would be required to comply with either USFS or Plumas County development standards and be visually similar to existing structures. The combined effects would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the scenic environment. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on visual quality would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Public Services and Utilities (Section 6.10)**

When combined with one or more land management, development, or construction projects in the Lake Almanor vicinity, the Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives could increase the demand on emergency service providers. However, the expected increase in demand from the Proposed UNFFR Project and alternatives would be minimal and would not be cumulatively considerable. Aside from development projects on lands subject to county jurisdiction, none of the other related projects would affect public services or utilities, and the development projects would be expected to be designed with consideration for the available capacities of service providers and facilities.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials (Section 6.11)**

Although the Proposed UNFFR Project, both alternatives, and other projects in the Lake Almanor vicinity could increase the exposure of the public or environment to hazards or hazardous materials, the increased risk from the Proposed UNFFR Project and alternatives would be minimal and would not be cumulatively considerable. The other related projects may also increase the potential for hazards, but the effects would be localized and spread out over time and space.

### **Cultural Resources (Section 6.12)**

Impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives would be localized in the activity areas and along the North Fork Feather River between Canyon dam and Belden powerhouse and would not be cumulatively considerable. None of the other related projects are expected to affect cultural resources in these areas.

### **Transportation and Traffic (Section 6.13)**

Construction traffic associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative would temporarily increase traffic on the local highways and roads in the vicinity of the UNFFR Project. Although the construction traffic would be minor and temporary, it would intermittently cause an incremental increase in traffic above baseline conditions. Construction traffic associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project or either alternative, in conjunction with other land use or development projects around Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir or the North Fork Feather River, if they occur at the same time, would increase traffic volumes on local highways (e.g., State Route [SR] 89, SR 70, SR 36) and roads (e.g., Caribou Road). Based on the average annual daily traffic estimates for the highways, the temporary increase in construction traffic would not likely result in unacceptable levels of service, although localized congestion or delays may be experienced periodically. However, the incremental effects from impacts to traffic would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Air Quality (Section 6.14)**

Construction emissions associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project and each alternative would contribute to the existing non-attainment status for particulate matter in Lassen and Plumas County and could be cumulatively considerable. Other land management, development, watershed restoration, or site-specific construction projects in the vicinity of the UNFFR Project that involve particulate or vehicle emissions and that are implemented at the same time as construction activities for the alternatives would contribute to cumulative air quality impacts. Implementation of fugitive dust control measures and an emissions control plan and compliance with Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District air quality rules and applicable permits would reduce each project's air quality impacts. Therefore, the incremental effects from impacts on air quality would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Noise (Section 6.15)**

Noise impacts of the Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives would be localized around the activity areas and limited to the construction phase. Other projects near the activity areas that occur at the same time could increase noise levels, but they would be conducted in a manner that complies with relevant USFS plans and/or county noise ordinances and would implement applicable noise-reduction measures. Therefore, the noise impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **Climate Change (Section 6.16)**

The Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives may indirectly increase greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions because of emissions from the potential replacement power sources. However, the replacement sources would be required to comply with California Air Resources Board (CARB) programs and mandatory reporting requirements to achieve statewide goals for GHG emissions. Net GHG emissions from the integrated electric system are expected to

decline as new gas-fired power plants are developed (California Energy Commission 2009a). In addition, as contracts for coal-fired facilities expire (pursuant to Public Utilities Code sections 8340-8341), use of new and existing facilities will replace the lost energy and capacity. Some energy will come from renewable sources, and some will come from new and existing natural gas-fired facilities. New generation resources are expected to emit significantly less GHGs than the coal and petroleum coke-fired generation facilities. The analysis by the California Energy Commission of potential future outcomes is the basis of the methodology used to assess reasonably expected bounding cases for changes in GHG emissions. GHG emissions would not be cumulatively considerable.

### **7.3 Growth-Inducing Impacts**

This section evaluates the potential for growth that could be induced by implementation of the Proposed UNFFR Project or either alternative. Under CEQA, growth itself is not assumed to be particularly beneficial, detrimental, or insignificant to the environment. If a project is determined to be growth inducing, an evaluation is made to determine whether significant impacts on the physical environment would result from that growth.

Section 15126.2, subdivision (d) of the CEQA Guidelines provides guidance in determining the growth-inducing impacts of a proposed project. Specifically, a project may be growth inducing if it would:

- accelerate the rate of planned growth;
- remove obstacles to population growth;
- require the construction of new community service facilities; or
- otherwise foster economic or population growth.

Implementation of the Proposed UNFFR Project or either alternative would not remove any constraints to development, create new or improved infrastructure that could support development, or otherwise create conditions that would induce growth. PG&E is not proposing to increase capacity of the UNFFR Project or expand its facilities. Instead, the relicensing would result in a slight decrease in hydropower generation as a result of modifications to flow through the Prattville intake, Canyon dam, and Butt Valley dam. The UNFFR Project would not generate additional capacity to encourage growth and would not make a new source of power or water available for new development.

Construction activities associated with the Proposed UNFFR Project or either alternative are not expected to encourage growth in Plumas County, although they would create temporary jobs intermittently during several construction seasons. The increase in employment would be minor and temporary, with most new jobs being filled by existing residents or specialized contractors from other communities, who may move to the area for the construction period only.

All parcels within the activity areas illustrated on Figure 4-1 as described in Chapter 4, Project Alternatives, are owned by PG&E and are used for purposes of the UNFFR Project; they are not available to be developed for other uses under current zoning designations. Future rural residential development within the activity areas is unlikely. In addition, most of the lands within the UNFFR Project boundary are owned by PG&E or managed by federal agencies. For non-PG&E-owned private lands, development applications for those parcels would in most cases require discretionary approvals from Plumas County, such as changes in zone classification and amendments to the General Plan. The parcels are located in rural, difficult-to-access areas or

around Lake Almanor or Butt Valley reservoir, making approval for future development difficult. On federal lands within the UNFFR Project boundary, the Lassen and Plumas National Forests manage land uses and activities in accordance with their respective planning processes.

Moreover, any future development within the UNFFR Project boundary would not be attributable to the Proposed UNFFR Project or alternatives. The Proposed UNFFR Project and both alternatives would improve water quality for a variety of beneficial uses in Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, and the North Fork Feather River and would not include other structures or infrastructure that could support population growth, either directly or indirectly. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed UNFFR Project or either alternative would not induce growth in the vicinity of the UNFFR Project.

## **7.4 Significant Effects**

CEQA establishes a duty for public agencies to avoid or minimize environmental damage where feasible (CEQA Guidelines Section 15021), and determinations of significance play a critical role in the CEQA process (CEQA Guidelines 15064). As noted at the beginning of this chapter, certain statutory considerations must be evaluated pursuant to CEQA; several of these considerations are related to significance. This section addresses several types of potentially significant effects.

### **7.4.1 Significant Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project**

Potentially significant effects have been identified for: land use and mineral resources; geology, geomorphology, and soils; water quality; fisheries; vegetation, wildlife, and sensitive biological resources; recreation; aesthetics; hazards and hazardous materials; cultural resources; transportation and traffic; air quality; and noise. These potential effects are discussed in each resource section in Chapter 6, Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts. As part of the environmental impact assessment for each resource area, mitigation measures have been identified that reduce most of these impacts to less than significant levels, with the exception of Aesthetics (Section 6.9).

### **7.4.2 Significant Unavoidable Effects**

CEQA requires that an EIR include a statement that summarizes any significant effects on the environment that cannot be avoided if a proposed project is implemented. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21100, subd. (b)(2)(A).) CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(b) states that such impacts include those that can be mitigated but not reduced to a less than significant level.

Impacts on aesthetics associated with installation of a thermal curtain around the Prattville intake under Alternatives 1 and 2 were identified as an unavoidable significant impact, as further described in Section 6.9. In the localized areas around the Prattville intake, the Prattville thermal curtain has the potential to detract from the existing scenic views of the surrounding forests and mountains or the overall visual quality of Lake Almanor in that area. No feasible mitigation measures were identified to adequately reduce aesthetic impacts to a less than significant level.

### **7.4.3 Significant Irreversible Environmental Changes**

CEQA requires that an EIR include a statement that summarizes any significant effects on the environment that would be irreversible if a proposed project is implemented. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21100, subd. (b)(2)(B).) Similarly, CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(c) requires that an EIR must address the significant irreversible changes that would be involved in the proposed project should it be implemented.

The environmental analysis conducted for the Proposed UNFFR Project and alternatives did not identify any significant irreversible effects. The issuance of water quality certification for relicensing of the UNFFR Project represents the continued operation and maintenance of an existing hydroelectric project with no substantive commitment of nonrenewable resources. The UNFFR Project produces clean energy from a renewable resource (water), thereby avoiding the wasteful consumptive use of other energy sources. The relicensing of the UNFFR Project would result in the continued commitment of Lake Almanor, Butt Valley reservoir, the North Fork Feather River, and associated facilities for electric power generation and for other beneficial uses (e.g., recreation and fish and wildlife habitat), thereby precluding other major uses of the water bodies for the term of the license.

Other energy resources would be committed during implementation of the 2004 Settlement Agreement measures and water quality measures and during operation and maintenance of the UNFFR Project facilities. Electricity, natural gas, and fossil fuels would be permanently and continually consumed by UNFFR Project implementation; however, the amount and rate of consumption of these resources would not result in the unnecessary, inefficient, or wasteful use of resources. Compliance with applicable resource protection laws and ordinances, as well as mitigation measures, planning policies, and standard conservation features, would conserve natural resources to the maximum extent possible. New technologies or systems may also emerge or become more cost-effective to further reduce the reliance on nonrenewable natural resources. Nonetheless, construction activities would result in the irretrievable commitment of nonrenewable energy resources, primarily in the form of fossil fuels (including fuel oil), natural gas, and gasoline for automobiles and construction equipment. The benefits of the recreational improvements, water quality measures, and the UNFFR Project's ability to generate clean, reliable energy far outweigh the effects of consumption.

The proposed water quality measures under each of the alternatives would involve installation of structures (thermal curtains) in a lacustrine environment and modifications to an outlet structure below the water. These changes to Lake Almanor and Butt Valley reservoir are not irreversible changes because the structures could be removed in the future.

The proposed water quality measures under the Proposed UNFFR Project and the alternatives would require increased instream flow releases from Canyon dam. These releases, along with an equivalent decrease in the Prattville intake diversion, have the potential to reduce the amount of coldwater habitat in Lake Almanor during the summer. However, these changes to Lake Almanor are not irreversible as the increased instream flow releases from Canyon Dam may be modified.

### **7.4.4 Effects Found Not to Be Significant**

Implementation of the Proposed UNFFR Project or alternatives would result in potential effects that were determined not to be significant. Effects that are not significant would occur in the following resource areas: water resources; public services and utilities; and climate change.

These potential effects are discussed in each resource section. Because the effects were determined to be less than significant, mitigation measures are not required.

## **7.5 Mitigation Measures Proposed to Minimize the Significant Effects**

Under CEQA, lead agencies are required to adopt a program for monitoring or reporting changes to the proposed project to mitigate or avoid significant environmental effects. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21081.6(a); CEQA Guidelines, § 15097.) The purpose of the program is to ensure that those project revisions and measures are implemented.

Mitigation measures have been identified for various resource areas in Chapter 6, Environmental Setting and Environmental Impacts, of the EIR. These measures are presented in language that will facilitate establishment of a monitoring and reporting program. Any mitigation measures adopted by the State Water Board as a condition of UNFFR Project approval will be included in a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) to verify compliance. The approval of such a program will be part of any action taken by the State Water Board with respect to the UNFFR Project.

The MMRP will be used by the State Water Board along with PG&E, UNFFR Project contractors, cooperating and participating agencies, and monitoring personnel during UNFFR Project implementation. The MMRP will provide for monitoring of construction activities as necessary, on-site identification and correction of potential environmental problems, and proper reporting to State Water Board staff.

## **7.6 CEQA Findings and Statements of Overriding Considerations**

Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines states that “[n]o public agency shall approve or carry out a project for which an EIR has been certified which identifies one or more significant environmental effects of the project unless the public agency makes one or more written findings for each of those significant effects, accompanied by a brief explanation of the rationale for each finding.” The State Water Board, as lead agency under CEQA, will need to make written findings for each significant impact identified in this document before approving the Proposed UNFFR Project or an alternative.

Section 15093(a) of the CEQA Guidelines allows the lead agency to determine whether the benefits of a proposed project outweigh any unavoidable adverse environmental impacts of implementing the project. The lead agency can approve a project with significant unavoidable impacts if it prepares a “Statement of Overriding Considerations” that sets forth the specific reasons for making such a judgment. Because significant impacts were identified for Aesthetics that cannot be mitigated to a less than significant level, the State Water Board will need to prepare a Statement of Overriding Considerations to document its rationale if it requires installation of thermal curtains as proposed under Alternative 1 or Alternative 2.