

# 3.13: RECREATION

## Introduction

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This section describes recreational resources within the project area and the applicable regulations that govern the recreational resources. This section also addresses the potential impacts to recreational resources that may occur as a result of the proposed project.

## Environmental Setting

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### REGIONAL SETTING

The nearest developed recreation site in Butte County is the Lake Oroville State Recreation Area approximately 20.5 miles to the northeast where boating, camping, and other outdoor recreation opportunities are provided. The nearest recreational facility in Colusa County is the Colusa-Sacramento River State Recreation area at Colusa (approximately 10 miles to the south) where river boating access is provided. Within the project study area, recreational activities are predominately waterfowl and upland game bird hunting that occur on private lands and at the state and federal wildlife and resource management areas.

The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) manages the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area just south of the Remote Facility Site and the Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Management Area north of the project in the Butte Sink (see Figure 1.1-1). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) manage two national wildlife refuges: The Delevan National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 1 mile south of the proposed project study area, and the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge is approximately 0.5 mile north of the study area. These managed areas provide wildlife viewing opportunities and hunting as part of their primary function of waterfowl and habitat management. Private-governmental cooperative programs provide recreational hunting for waterfowl and upland game birds (pheasant) on some of the private lands in the project vicinity, and many property owners in Butte County and a few in Colusa County lease their rice fields to hunters during the fallow fall and winter months. Duck hunting season typically starts

in early- to mid-October and concludes by the end of January. Pheasant season is usually one month long, beginning in early- to mid-November.

#### LOCAL SETTING

Several parcels in the proposed project study area are wetland habitats managed for recreational hunting by private hunting clubs. The management of these lands includes grading and vegetation manipulation to create, maintain, or enhance waterfowl habitat. In addition, controlled flooding of these areas on a seasonal basis contributes to the resource and habitat values. A large managed wetland complex exists north of the proposed Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline route in the Colusa Trough about midway between the Sacramento River and Interstate 5.

Private rice-producing farmland has been returned to managed wetlands through grading and vegetation management techniques at several locations in Butte County. One such parcel, the Piper's Patch Club adjacent to the Cherokee Canal, has granted the USFWS a conservation easement, which ensures the property will be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of migratory waterfowl. Other potential conservation easement properties are located in the Butte Sink.

#### Regulatory Setting

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The following policies and regulations are designed to protect recreational opportunities in the area of the proposed project.

##### BUTTE COUNTY

The Recreation Element of the Butte County General Plan was originally adopted in 1971. Although it is an optional Element, it still has the same force and effect as mandated Elements. The Recreation Element contains goals, objectives, policies and standards for parks and tourism. The Recreation Element sets a standard for district or regional parks of 10-15 acres per 1,000 population. The standard for the size of a district or regional park is a minimum of 100 acres.

##### COLUSA COUNTY

The Open Space (OS) Element of the Colusa County General Plan identifies park and recreational areas and establishes policies for outdoor recreation (Colusa County General Plan 1989). OS policies include, but are not limited to, the following:

**OS-3.** Publicly owned lands currently used for recreational purposes or as undeveloped open space should be retained in their present use, unless designated for an alternate use by the Land Use Element;

**OS-18.** Colusa County should, through its land development regulations, ensure that adequate park space is provided to serve new development;

**OS-21.** Transportation improvements, such as road widening and bridge construction, should be designed to facilitate eventual provision of pedestrian and bicycling paths. Safe crossings should be provided through busy intersections;

**OS-31.** The county should adopt development standards, which require dedication of parkland or in-lieu fees for development. Thresholds for dedication and the amount of the

fee should be determined after the adoption of this plan. The county should generally strive to maintain a standard of providing 5 acres of community or neighborhood parkland per 1,000 population. The incorporated cities should be encouraged to adopt similar guidelines; and

**OS-32.** Where non-residential development will generate significant demand for new park facilities (due to induced population growth), modified in-lieu fees or park dedication requirements should also be considered.

## Environmental Analysis

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### AREAS OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

The following are areas of potential environmental concern that may be associated with implementation of the proposed project:

- The potential for increasing the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated
- The potential involvement, construction, or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment

### THRESHOLD OF SIGNIFICANCE

- **Increased Use of Existing Recreational Facilities.** The proposed project's impacts to existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities would depend on how many people associated with the proposed project use the existing parks or facilities. If the additional demand placed on the parks or facilities is too great, then they may deteriorate faster than planned. If the parks or facilities deteriorate faster than planned, then the proposed project's impacts would be considered significant.
- **Involvement, Construction, or Expansion of Recreational Facilities.** If the project contains plans to construct new facilities or results in enough new residents to the area to warrant constructing or expanding facilities, then the project's impacts may be considered significant.

### IMPACT DISCUSSION

#### Impact 3.13-1: Potential for Increased Use of Existing Recreational Facilities

Construction of the proposed project will include up to 40 non-local workers, which could represent a temporary increase in demand for recreational facilities. All other workers are expected to be from the project area and are already accounted for in the demand for and use of local recreational facilities. WGSi has indicated that typical construction weeks would be a minimum of 60 hours length, which would not provide significant opportunities for recreation by non-local workers.

Operation of the proposed project after construction would result in a net increase of four additional permanent employees, representing a minimal potential increase in recreational demand.

**Well Pad Site.** Construction and operation of the Well Pad Site is not expected to directly or adversely increase the use of nearby wildlife areas, including the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area. However, expansion of the Well Pad Site would remove 1.4 acres of

recreational hunting land from use (WGSII 2001). The well pad lease expansion area is located in the northeast corner of the Wild Goose Club Property and is not in an area that is currently actively hunted. Noise during construction and operations may affect hunting activities in the areas surrounding the Well Pad Site.

**Storage Loop Pipeline.** Construction and operation of the Storage Loop Pipeline is not expected to directly or adversely increase the use of nearby wildlife areas.

The Storage Loop Pipeline route crosses the Piper's Patch property. The Piper's Patch club, adjacent to the Cherokee Canal, has granted the USFWS a conservation easement, which ensures the property will be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of migratory waterfowl. According to the terms of the conservation easement, the USFWS must approve the granting of any rights (e.g. pipeline easement) on properties covered by its easement. Since the pipeline easements do not restrict continued use of the easement area for habitat management following pipeline installation, it is not anticipated that the USFWS would object to the granting of easements to WGSII for the proposed pipelines. WGSII would assist in obtaining the necessary USFWS approvals for any conservation easement lands affected by the proposed project components.

**Remote Facility.** Construction and operation of the Storage Loop Pipeline is not expected to directly or adversely increase the use of nearby wildlife areas, including the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area. Expansion of the Remote Facility would remove approximately 5.8 acres of recreational hunting land (WGSII 2001). The rice fields along the north side of the Remote Facility Site are leased out for the fall / winter hunting season. The property owner will determine, based on the scope of the expansion, whether any existing blinds will be adversely affected and would be compensated for the lost revenue.

Noise produced during construction and expanded operations at the site would potentially affect recreational activities at the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area. Noise impacts are discussed in further detail in 3.11 Noise.

The following measure is proposed by WGSII for implementation during project operations to minimize the above potential impacts:

**WGSII Measure 3.13-1.** In conjunction with the Gray Lodge manager, WGSII will monitor the effects of project operations on the north edge of the Gray Lodge area opposite the Remote Facility and work with the manager to compensate for user-identified reduced opportunities along that edge. Such measures may include plantings along that edge to screen the Remote Facility Site, improving habitat along that edge, or improving habitat or access to habitat elsewhere on the Gray Lodge.

**Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline.** Construction and operation of the Connection Pipeline and the Delevan Interconnect Facility is not expected to directly or adversely increase the use of nearby wildlife areas; however, the Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline route crosses the Piper's Patch property. As previously stated, the USFWS must approve the granting of any rights (e.g. pipeline easement) on this property. Since the pipeline easements do not restrict continued use of the easement area for habitat management following pipeline installation, it is not anticipated that the USFWS would object to the granting of easements to WGSII for the proposed pipelines. WGSII would assist in obtaining the necessary USFWS approvals for any conservation easement lands affected by the proposed project components.

**Level of Significance Without Mitigation.** The short-term nature of the proposed project's construction would at most introduce a minimal increase in demand for the area's recreational facilities. Post construction demand would be minimal due to the limited increase in the project-operating personnel.

There would be less than significant impacts to wildlife viewing or hunting, because the proposed project would coordinate its activity with the USFWS, Gray Lodge, and property owners to limit its impacts to conservation easements and provide compensation during the 20-month construction period. Through implementation of WGS Measure 3.13-1, impacts to existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities as a result of the construction or operation of the proposed project would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures.** No mitigation measures are required to supplement those proposed by WGS.

#### **Impact 3.13-2: Potential Involvement, Construction, or Expansion of Recreational Facilities.**

The proposed project would not include construction or expansion of new or existing recreational facilities. The proposed project would not warrant the expansion of existing facilities or the construction of new facilities because the project would add only four additional permanent employees. Employees used during the construction of the proposed project are not expected to remain in the area once construction has finished.

**Well Pad Site.** The Well Pad Site expansion would not involve recreational facilities, nor would it warrant expansion or construction of such facilities. No impacts to recreational facilities would occur at this site.

**Storage Loop Pipeline.** The additional Storage Loop Pipeline would not warrant expansion or construction of recreational facilities. Although the Storage Loop Pipeline route crosses the Piper's Patch property, USFS approval would mitigate impacts to the property as stated under Impact 3.13-1. Less than significant impacts would occur at this site.

**Remote Facility.** The Remote Facility Site expansion would not involve recreational facilities, nor would it warrant expansion or construction of such facilities. As such, no impacts shall occur at this site.

**Line 400/401 Connection Pipeline.** The proposed Connection Pipeline and associated Delevan Interconnect Facility would not warrant expansion or construction of recreational facilities. Although the Connection Pipeline route crosses the Piper's Patch property, USFS approval would mitigate impacts to the property as stated under Impact 3.13-1. Less than significant impacts shall occur at this site.

**Level of Significance Without Mitigation.** There would be less than significant impact to existing recreational facilities as a result of the construction or operation of the proposed project.

**Mitigation Measures.** No mitigation measures are required.

