

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Cache Creek Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) Final describes the management direction selected for public lands located primarily within the Cache Creek and Bear Creek drainages in portions of Lake, Colusa, and Yolo Counties. Management decisions in this plan will apply to public lands managed by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This block of land is known as the Cache Creek Natural Area (CCNA).

State lands owned by the California Department of Fish & Game (CDFG) are also included as part of this plan. These CDFG lands have been designated as the Cache Creek Wildlife Area. Additionally, CDFG manages under long term lease other state lands owned by the State Lands Commission (SLC).

A total of 1,678 acres originally acquired by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) as part of the Payne Ranch acquisition were recently bought back by the BLM. The RMEF had originally assisted the BLM with this purchase because of a temporary shortfall of BLM funding during the acquisition stage.



RMEF Property on Payne Ranch Acquisition

Yolo County park lands along Cache Creek are also included in this CRMP.

Although there are private lands included within and adjacent to the CCNA, the decisions reached in this planning process will not apply to these lands unless they are subsequently acquired from willing sellers and added to the CCNA, Cache Creek Wildlife Area, or Yolo County Parks. However, at their option, any private landowner may voluntarily include specific management actions on their lands also.

The BLM and CDFG have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cooperative management of resource values (Appendix 5). This MOU addresses protection, enhancement, or restoration of the special resource values found here and is compatible with this CRMP.

The BLM has also signed an MOU with Yolo County to provide mutual assistance in management of those BLM and county lands within and adjacent to the 1300-acre Cache Creek Canyon Regional Park in western Yolo County. Items of mutual interest in this MOU include recreational access, trail development, visitor information, and overseeing the area via law enforcement patrols, campground hosts, etc.

The BLM and RMEF had previously agreed to cooperate in the management of the portion of the Payne Ranch acquisition that the RMEF formerly owned. This cooperation focused on habitat improvement and restoration, as well as compatible public use. BLM now owns these lands and will manage them in the same manner.

The Cache Creek area is exceptional in supporting diverse biological, cultural, recreational, and scenic values. Hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, primitive camping, commercial and private river rafting, hunting and fishing are just a few of the recreational opportunities available. The natural beauty of the Cache Creek area is exemplified by the variety of fauna and flora, year-round flowing water, riparian habitats, open meadows, oak woodlands, and diverse topography.



Poppy Field in Payne Ranch Meadow

With a large expanse of remote country and an ample supply of forage fish, Cache Creek provides excellent habitat for a nesting territory of the threatened bald eagle, as well as seasonal habitat for a significant number of wintering bald eagles. Diverse habitats also provide suitable areas for the Cache Creek tule elk herd to utilize year-round.

CRMP Area and Boundary

The plan area is bounded generally by Blue Ridge and Cortina Ridge on the east; portions of Bear Valley Road, Sulphur Creek, Walker Ridge Road and

Indian Valley Dam Road on the north; North Fork Cache Creek, Highway 20, and Highway 53 on the west; and the Morgan Valley/Reiff Road and Napa-Yolo County line on the south (see Vicinity Map).

In 2001 CDFG acquired the 8,104-acre Knoxville Ranch in northeastern Napa County. This property is contiguous with the CCNA, however it has been designated as the Knoxville Wildlife Area, and CDFG is currently preparing a separate management plan for this and an adjacent property, since they are primarily within the Lake Berryessa watershed.

The CCNA includes the large block of public land centered on Cache Creek. The majority of these lands are within the Cache Creek watershed, while the remainder are within the adjacent smaller watersheds of Hunting and Soda Creeks, which flow into Putah Creek, thence Lake Berryessa.

The overall plan boundary uses natural features, such as creeks, ridges, and canyons, to the extent possible. Additionally, some portions of the boundaries include highways and roads.

The portion of the Cache Creek watershed within the overall boundaries of this plan includes Cache Creek from the Highway 53 bridge in Lake County downstream to the Rumsey Canyon tributary just upstream of Rumsey in the Capay Valley of Yolo County; the North Fork from Indian Valley Dam to the confluence with Cache Creek, all within Lake County; and Bear Creek from Sulphur Creek to its confluence with Cache Creek. The remainder of the CRMP area includes portions of Soda Creek and Hunting Creek watersheds, which flow into Lake Berryessa.

Any choice made by private landowners to participate in public land management actions found in this plan which could also include adjacent private land, is strictly optional.

Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is necessary to properly manage the diverse biological, cultural, and natural values of the CCNA, while providing a compatible level of primitive recreation. With recent acquisitions, lands that are rich in natural, cultural and recreational values previously unavailable for public use are now legally accessible. It is the challenge of this CRMP to provide the necessary protection for these values.

Without an approved management plan in place, portions of the CCNA could be left open to uses that would degrade resource values, impacting both the natural values of the area and recreational opportunities. Based on comments received throughout this planning process, this would be counter to the desires of the public (Appendix 4).

Conformance with Land-Use Plans

This plan is in conformance with federal and state laws and regulations that apply to the management of public land, and it is written to meet the documentation requirements of both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Proposed Action is consistent with the Management Framework Plan (MFP) Update (BLM, 1984). This plan is considered the current "general plan" for BLM lands under the jurisdiction of the Ukiah Field Office.

Many planning issues have changed and new issues have emerged since the 1984 MFP Update. Because of this the Ukiah Field Office recently began the preparation of a Resource Management Plan (RMP). A Pre-Plan Analysis has been completed and the RMP is currently being prepared.

Relationship to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

The plan is consistent with existing federal legislation including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); other internal BLM laws, policies, and regulations, as well as documents such as the Rocky Creek/Cache Creek Wilderness Study Area EIS (BLM, 1986); state legislation including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); Title 14 of California Code of Regulations, and the Fish and Game Code.

Coordination with local governments has been integral in the development of this plan. Representatives of Lake, Colusa, and Yolo Counties have assisted in the development and provided comments for this plan.

Other site-specific activity plans which have been previously approved and implemented include the Cache Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Management Plan (BLM, 1987), the Cache Creek Tule Elk Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (BLM, 1983), and the Northern California Chaparral Research Natural Area (NCCRNA) Management Plan (BLM, 1985).

BLM has been a cooperator in the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership since its inception. This group is comprised of private landowners, public land managers, universities, nonprofit organizations, area residents, and recreationists and is dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and management of over 600,000 acres of natural, wild, agricultural, and recreational landscapes stretching from the Vaca Mountains to Bear Valley and the North Fork Cache Creek watershed in the Mendocino National Forest. The CCNA is a subset of this larger area for which a future designation may include a National Conservation Area (NCA).

Additionally the BLM is a partner or cooperator in several ongoing habitat restoration plans within the Cache Creek watershed, including the Cache Creek Conservancy, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Yolo Resource Conservation District, and Bear Creek Watershed Weed Management Area. These partnerships involve coordinating restoration activities on BLM lands with the overall goals of the various watershed-wide efforts.

CRMP Process

The public, including neighboring landowners, are equal partners with BLM and CDFG in developing this plan. At their option landowners may also choose to include specific management actions on their property. The intent of this process has been to have full public participation in formulating the alternative selected as the Proposed Action.

Roles and Authority

The BLM, through the Ukiah Field Office Manager, has the authority to make land-use decisions on public lands under this jurisdiction. The lands previously owned by the RMEF and recently purchased by BLM will be managed according to this CRMP. The Regional Managers of CDFG Region 2 (Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region) and Region 3 (Central Coast Region) have the authority to make land-use decisions on Department-administered lands (CDFG and State Lands Commission lands) within the plan area.

The role of BLM and CDFG in this process has been to inform the public of the need for appropriate management of resource values in this area, and to solicit input in developing issues, concerns, and alternative actions leading to the proposed action. Any decisions made by private landowners to participate in this plan or to adopt for their own land any of the BLM and CDFG decisions are strictly voluntary.

Effect of Wild and Scenic River Designation on Private Land

The BLM is mandated to identify and evaluate all river and stream segments on Bureau-administered public lands to determine if they are appropriate additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (NWSRS).

There are three distinct steps for evaluating identified river segments: (1) determination of eligibility, (2) tentative classification of each eligible segment, and (3) completion of a Suitability Study at the EIS level.

At this time steps 1 and 2 have been completed. The final step is the Suitability Study, which will result in a recommendation to Congress to either designate or not designate the creek into the NWSRS. The Suitability Study would be undertaken if Congress were to designate Cache Creek as a Study River. The study involves the preparation of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with public comment being a key factor in a WSR designation.

The other means by which a Suitability Study would be completed is through the preparation of a Resource Management Plan (RMP). As previously mentioned the Ukiah Field Office recently began preparing an RMP. The RMP is tentatively scheduled to be completed in September, 2006.



Cache Creek near Davis Creek

If Cache Creek or any of its tributaries receive formal designation, land use controls on private lands remain a matter of state and local zoning. The basic objective of Wild and Scenic River designation is to maintain the existing condition of the river. If a land use or development clearly threatens the outstandingly remarkable values which resulted in designation of the river, efforts would be made to remove the threat through local zoning, land exchanges, purchases from willing sellers, and other actions except condemnation of private land. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act prohibits Federal use of condemnation for fee title purchase of lands if 50 percent or more of the land within the boundary is already in public ownership.

Appendix 2 addresses both the determination of eligibility and the tentative classification of each eligible segment.