

State of California
Resources Agency
Department of Water Resources
NOTICE OF PREPARATION
FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
Hocker Flat Rehabilitation Site: Trinity River Mile 78 to 79.1

TO: Responsible and Trustee Agencies, and Interested Parties

FROM: State of California, Resources Agency, Department of Water Resources

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation for a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Hocker Flat Rehabilitation Site: Trinity River Mile 78 to 79.1.

LEAD AGENCY: Department of Water Resources (DWR), State of California

PROJECT TITLE: Hocker Flat Rehabilitation Site: Trinity River Mile 78 to 79.1

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING: A public scoping meeting has been scheduled for June 2, 2004 at 6:30 pm at the Junction City Community Hall, 71 Dutch Creek RD. (Just south of HWY 299), Junction City, CA. Information on the project will be presented and comments on the scope of the EIR accepted.

NOTICE OF PREPARATION COMMENT PERIOD: A public review period for the Notice of Preparation has been established from May 19, 2004 through June 19, 2004. The purpose of this comment period is to provide involved agencies and the public an opportunity to learn about the project and to solicit comments to assist the Lead Agencies in identifying the range of actions, alternatives, mitigation measures, and significant effects to be analyzed in the EIR/EA.

Public and agency comments must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 19, 2004. Please address comments, questions, and responses to:


Department of Water Resources c/o
Trinity River Restoration Program
Attn: Brandt Gutermuth
P. O. Box 1300
1313 Main Street
Weaverville, CA 96093
Voice (530) 623-1806 or Fax (530) 623-5944

APPLICANT:

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Northern California Area Office
Trinity River Restoration Program
P. O. Box 1300
1313 Main Street
Weaverville, CA 96093

Date 5/14/2004

Signature 


Dwight Russell, Chief
Northern District
Department of Water Resources

BACKGROUND: The Central Valley Project Improvement Act (1992) and the Trinity River Basin Fish and Wildlife Management Act (1984) provide the legal authority for projects that restore the fishery resources of the Trinity River. Specifically, these acts include language intended to protect, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, and associated habitats within the Trinity River Basin.

In December 2000, the Secretary of Interior signed a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Trinity River Fishery Restoration Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). This decision recognized that restoration and perpetual maintenance of the Trinity River's fishery resources requires rehabilitating the river itself, and restoring the attributes that produce a healthy, functioning alluvial river system. Consequently the ROD included five components to ensure long-term restoration and maintenance of the Trinity River: a) Variable annual instream flows ranging from 369,000 acre-feet (af) in critically dry years to 815,000 af in extremely wet years; b) Physical channel rehabilitation, including the removal of riparian berms and the establishment of side channel habitat; c) Sediment management, including the supplementation of spawning gravels below Lewiston dam and reduction in fine sediments which degrade fish habitats; d) Watershed restoration efforts, addressing negative impacts which have resulted from land use practices in the Basin; and e) Infrastructure improvements or modifications, including rebuilding or fortifying bridges and addressing other structures affected by the peak instream flows provided by the ROD.

The ROD's channel rehabilitation component focused attention on the need to physically manipulate the bank and floodplain features of the Trinity River between River Mile 112.0 (Lewiston Dam) and River Mile 72.4 (North Fork Trinity River). The channel reconstruction is intended to restore the Trinity River's historic alternate point bar morphology and habitat complexity to improve fishery resources. The Hocker Flat Rehabilitation Site: Trinity River Mile 78 to 79.1 (Project) is a pilot project to implement the ROD's mechanical rehabilitation component and rework the Trinity River floodplain based on pre-dam channel morphology characteristics.

The DWR, which has completed engineering designs for the project and has participated in the Trinity River Restoration Program for many years, will serve as the state California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project as described below. DWR requests your views concerning the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your interests or agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use this EIR/EA prepared by DWR when considering your permit or other approvals for the project. The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) will be the federal National Environmental Quality Act (NEPA) lead agency, with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acting as a cooperating agency under NEPA.

A project description, location maps, and a summary of the potential environmental effects are included in this Notice of Preparation.

PROJECT LOCATION: The Project is located on the Trinity River, immediately downstream from Junction City, a small community in Trinity County, California (Figure 1). The upstream end of the Hocker Flat Rehabilitation Site is situated at River Mile 79.1, immediately downstream from Canyon Creek, a tributary to the Trinity River. The project extends downstream approximately 1.1 miles and encompasses both sides of the Trinity River. River Mile 78.0 marks the downstream boundary of the project. The project area is generally associated with Hocker Flat as shown on the *Junction City, California* 7.5-minute United States Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle map, Township 33 North, Range 11 West, Sections 1 and 12, Mount Diablo Base Meridian (MDBM), 040° 44' 26" North latitude by 123° 03' 47" West longitude.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: In joint action with Reclamation and BLM, DWR is evaluating a pilot river rehabilitation project for the reach of the Trinity River locally known as Hocker Flat. As a pilot, this project represents the initial efforts to implement the mechanical channel rehabilitation component described in the 2000 ROD.

Within the environmental study limits (ESL) of the project, 16 discrete activity areas have been identified (Figure 2). For identification purposes, these areas are labeled as R (River) or U (upslope riparian), based on the type of restoration proposed. Within these activity areas, a variety of discrete actions may be conducted that are intended to enhance or reestablish the Trinity River's alternate point bar morphology and channel complexity, and to subsequently provide an increase in useable fish habitat. In addition, these actions are intended to enhance the riparian and terrestrial habitat adjacent to the Trinity River. The following actions may be conducted in one or more activity areas as part of this project.

- Removal of Vegetation
- Earthwork in the Trinity River Floodplain
- Material Transportation
- Material Disposal
- Revegetation

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:

The EIR/EA is being prepared to evaluate potentially significant impacts to the environment. The following section provides a brief discussion of the environmental factors that will be addressed in the EIR/EA.

Air Quality. The EIR/EA will address regional air quality conditions in Trinity County and the air quality impacts resulting from the actions incorporated into this project. Air quality will be examined to determine if the proposed project would result in a conflict with the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District regional air quality plan. The nearby Weaverville Basin is in moderate "non-attainment" of state PM10 standards. Vehicle exhaust and fugitive dust from construction activities on and adjacent to the site will be considered.

Noise. Potential noise impacts associated with construction will be assessed in the EIR/EA. Noise levels will be evaluated for consistency with the Junction City Community Plan, the Trinity County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, and State and federal standards and guidelines regulating noise on public and private lands.

Geology and Soils. Geological and seismic safety, and soils stability will be addressed in the EIR/EA.

Hydrology, Water Quality, and Floodplains. The EIR/EA will address any hydrology, water quality, and floodplain impacts that may occur as a result of the proposed project.

The construction phase of the project may have the potential to increase erosion, turbidity and sedimentation levels downstream of the project sites. Activities within the active channel of the Trinity River would be subject to water quality limitations imposed by the California North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board in conjunction with the issuance of a 401 Certification pursuant to the federal Clean Water Act.

The Trinity River has been listed under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act as a waterbody impaired by sediment. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Trinity River was completed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in December, 2001. It is anticipated that the project will improve the beneficial uses of the Trinity River (cold water fisheries) that are impaired by sediment.

Per federal Executive Order 11988 (pertaining to floodplain involvement), public notice is hereby given that the project may encroach upon the 100-year floodplain. If it is determined that project activities would result in a change to the 100-year floodplain, a floodplain risk assessment will be performed to determine what impacts, if any, would occur to adjacent structures and the public. However, it is anticipated that completion of the proposed project will reduce flooding risks and will not adversely affect the 100-year floodplain and Base Flood Elevations in the project areas. If the Trinity River 100-year

floodplain is affected by the project, a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) will be submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The DWR will be responsible for preparing the CLOMR and defining updated Base Flood Elevations using the best hydrology information that is available. In addition, project activities in designated floodplains on private lands will require issuance of a Floodplain Development Permit from Trinity County.

Biological Resources. Existing biological conditions within the Trinity River and the area surrounding the project sites will be described, and potential impacts of the proposed project on vegetation and wildlife will be assessed. The EIR/EA will evaluate the likelihood for any significant biological impacts, including effects on endangered, threatened, rare, or other special status plant and animal species, and wetland/special aquatic resources.

The area defined by the ESL for the proposed project has the potential to support a variety of special-status species (listed and non-listed). Spring and fall chinook salmon, coho salmon, Pacific Lamprey and summer and winter steelhead are known to spawn within the Trinity River, and suitable spawning habitat is available for the species within the study limits of the project. In addition, the Trinity River is designated as critical habitat for coho salmon by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: Fisheries Section (NOAA Fisheries). Other special-status and listed species within the project area could potentially include the willow flycatcher, green sturgeon, silky cryptantha, northwestern pond turtle, yellow warbler, yellow-breasted chat, bald eagle, and osprey. A comprehensive plant and wildlife survey will be conducted to determine species presence/absence and potential project-related effects to species that are determined to be present.

A Biological Assessment may be required pursuant to Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act (federal Endangered Species Act [ESA]) to address impacts to listed riparian and terrestrial species under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A Biological Opinion (BO) was issued by NOAA Fisheries (formerly National Marine Fisheries Service) on October 12, 2000 for the Trinity River Fisheries Restoration Program. This BO is considered adequate to address listed fish species that may be affected by this project. If required by the California Fish and Game Code, a “2081 Incidental Take Permit” (California Endangered Species Act) and a “1601 Streambed Alteration Agreement” may be issued, based on the certified final EIR, by the California Dept of Fish and Game, acting as a responsible agency.

The project will be assessed for consistency with the state and federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts. Completion of the project is expected to enhance anadromous salmon and steelhead fisheries; both identified as outstandingly remarkable values of the Trinity River.

The project includes a variety of riparian and wetland habitat elements. These elements are considered sensitive, and ecologically important to a variety of human and natural resources. Activities associated with the project could result in the loss of an undetermined acreage of riparian habitat.

Per federal Executive Orders 11990 (pertaining to wetlands), public notice is hereby given that the project may encroach upon wetlands. Construction activities associated with the proposed project could result in temporary and permanent impacts to wetland features within the ESL that are subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineer’s (ACOE) jurisdiction, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Within the ESL, a delineation of jurisdictional waters of the United States will be conducted and a delineation report will subsequently be submitted to the ACOE for review and verification, as necessary.

Cultural Resources. A cultural resources survey and evaluation will be conducted, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. This evaluation will assess the area within the environmental study limits of the project to determine the presence and significance of cultural and archaeological resources identified. The project site does not contain any known cultural resources; however, there may be cultural resources that are currently hidden within the project study limits that could be unearthed and discovered during the construction phase of the project. If cultural resources are encountered during the

survey, a determination will be made as to their eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The study will be transmitted to the State Office of Historic Preservation for concurrence with any eligibility determinations, in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Hazards. The actions associated with the project are not expected to involve the use of hazardous materials and, therefore, will not expose the public to significant hazard. Historic Mercury deposits from past mining efforts likely exist on site. Hazards related to movement of earth and its effects on Mercury availability will be addressed.

Land Use. The proposed project is consistent with Trinity County's General Plan and related policies. No buildings or permanent structures are located within the ESL. Mineral extraction activities occur within the ESL, and will be incorporated into the project design. Growth-inducing impacts are not expected to occur as a result of the project, but will be examined.

Socioeconomic/Displacements/Environmental Justice. Right-of-way acquisition, residential/business displacements, relocation assistance, business impacts, and neighborhood cohesion will be analyzed pursuant to both CEQA and NEPA. In addition, environmental justice concerns will be addressed pursuant to NEPA.

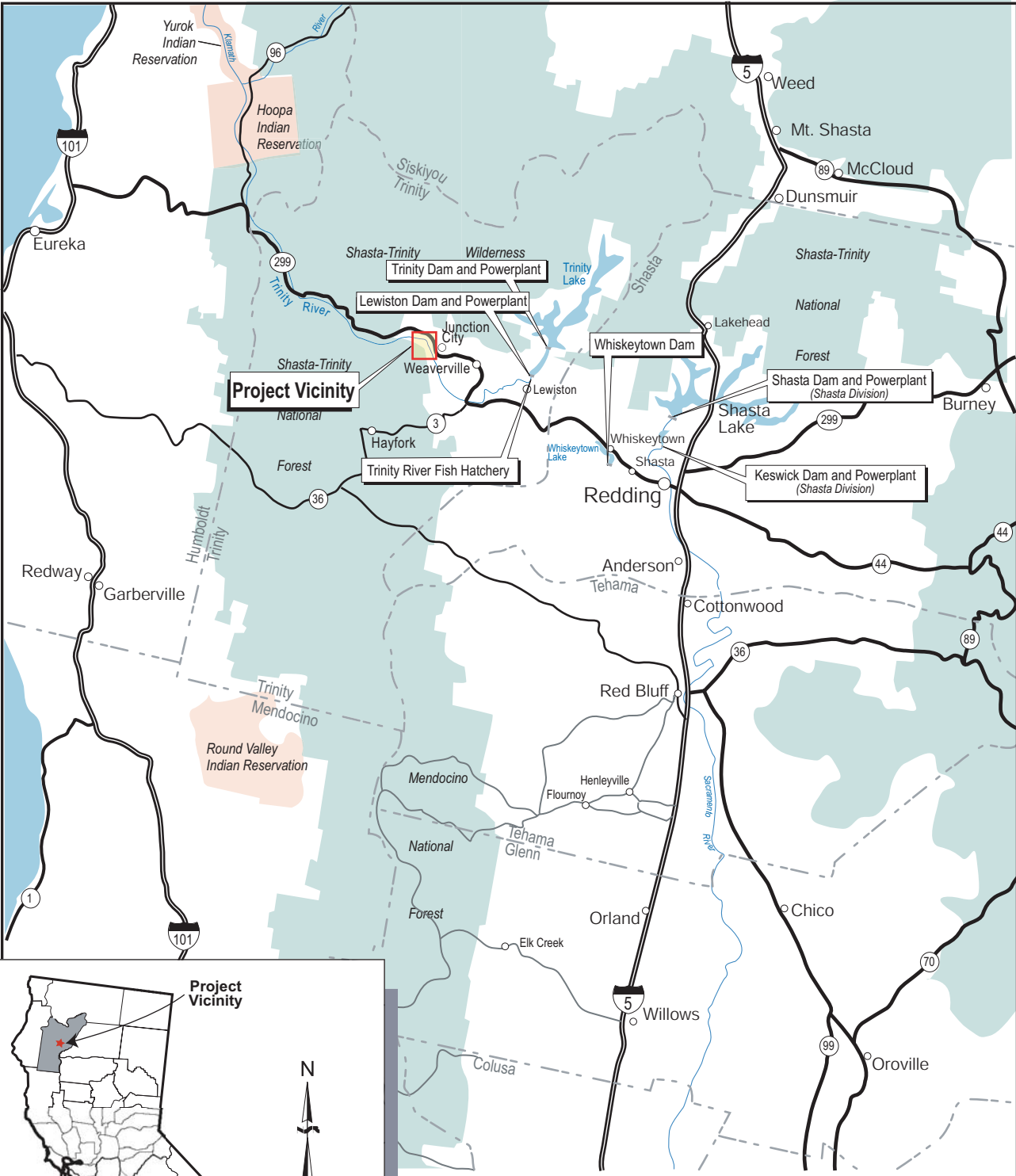
Public Services/Utilities. An analysis of public services and utilities associated with the project will be included in the EIR/EA.

Visual Resources. A Visual Impact Analysis will be included in the EIR/EA describing the existing visual characteristics of the project area and analyzing any potential visual impacts.

Transportation and Circulation. Transportation and circulation impacts will be analyzed for each of the alternatives, including access during construction, and any impacts to public roads, including State Highway 299 West. A main objective of the project is to ensure implementation in a manner that provides safe transit in and adjacent to the project area. Project work within existing Right-of-Ways for public roads may require issuance of an encroachment permit from the responsible agency.

Construction Impacts. The document will identify and analyze any further short-term construction impacts associated with air quality, noise, water quality, traffic congestion and detours, safety, visual, business access, community facilities, etc.

10010 - Mechanical Channel Rehab Sites on Mainstem Trinity River/Graphics/Fig_1_Project_Vicinity.ai 05-13-04 TA



 Trinity River Rehabilitation Site - River Mile 78 - 79.1
North State Resources, Inc.

Figure 1
Project Vicinity

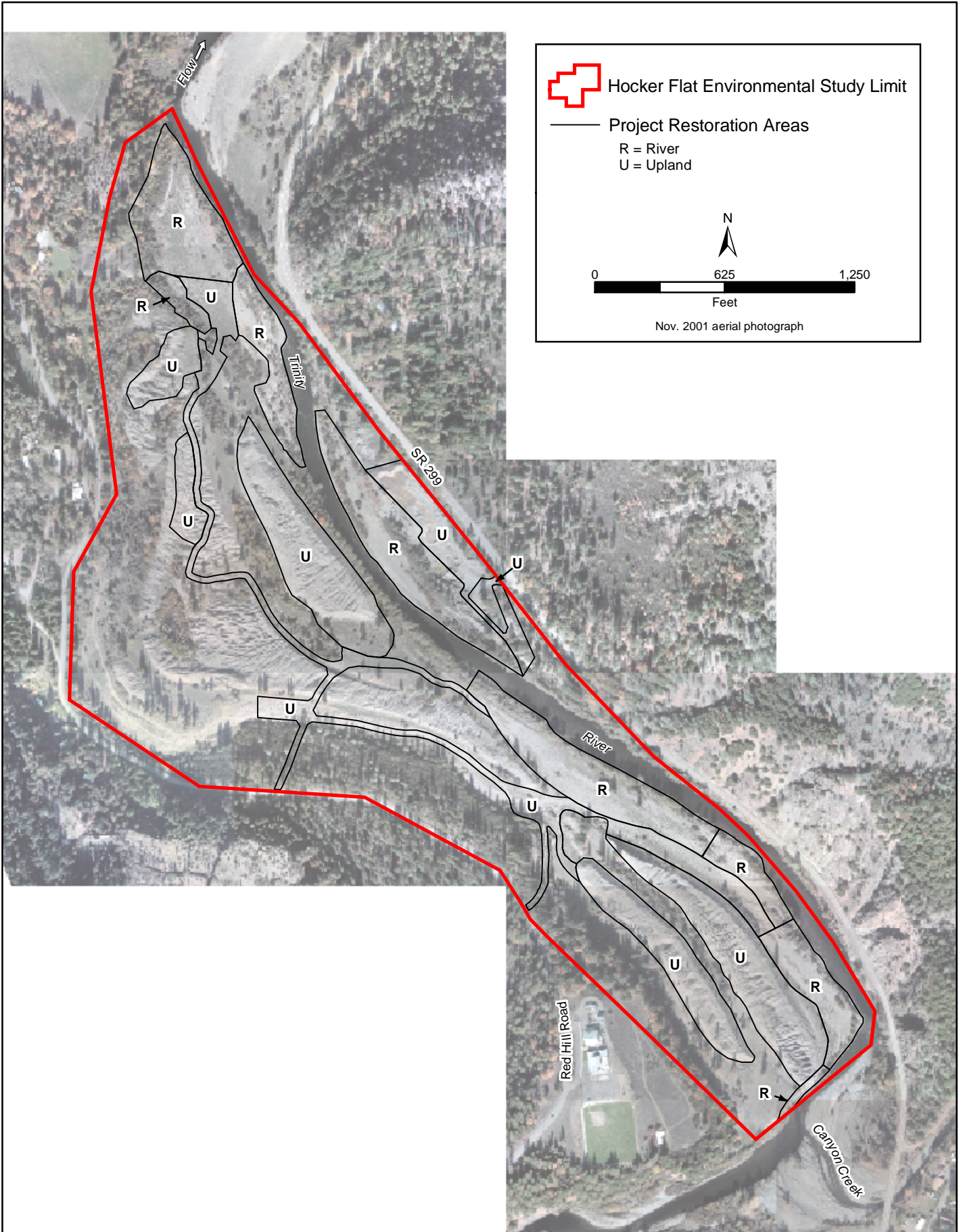


Figure 2
Project Restoration Areas