



United States Department of Agriculture

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# Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project Environmental Assessment



Forest Service

Plumas  
National Forest

Mt. Hough  
Ranger District

April,  
2016

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Cover photo credit: Jackass Creek Bridge on National Forest System route 6M40, Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest; USDA Forest Service

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## Where is this project in the NEPA process?

NEPA (short for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969) guides the Forest Service decision-making process and provides opportunities for interested parties to give their ideas about resource management. Input during the scoping period (step 3 in the checklist below) is important in helping the Forest Service identify resource needs which will shape the alternatives that are evaluated and lead to the formation of a decision.

The Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project falls under the provisions of the Plumas National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1988) as amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Final Supplemental EIS and Record of Decision (USDA Forest Service 2004a, 2004b). Public notice, comment, and administrative review for this project are governed by 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B regulations that provide for a pre-decisional objection process for projects documented in a Record of Decision or Decision Notice. The checklist below shows the steps of the NEPA process for this proposed project. The checked line indicates where the attached proposed action is in that process. Checklist items with bold outline are public involvement opportunities offered during the planning process.

**Step One - Need for a Project**

**Step Two - Develop Project Proposal**

**Step Three - Scoping (Public Input)**

**Step Four - Develop Issues and Alternatives**

**Step Five – Environmental Effects Analysis**

**Step Six –Environmental Assessment for  
Comment (public input, 30 days)**

**Step Seven – Response to Comments**

**Step Eight - Draft Decision Notice  
(objection filing period, 45 days)**

**Step Nine - Objection Resolution (45 days)**

**Step Ten – Decision Notice**

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1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial. .... 20

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety. .... 21

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. .... 21

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. .... 21

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. .... 21

6. The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. .... 21

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8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. .... 22

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. .... 22

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## Introduction

We, the USDA Forest Service, are proposing to replace the Jackass Creek Bridge located on a route designated as both National Forest System Route 6M40 and National Forest System Road 24N82X within the Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas County, California. The current bridge does not meet Forest Service engineering standards for public use and is causing erosion problems in the stream bank. Therefore, we are proposing to replace it with a 70 to 90 foot-long steel or concrete structure with concrete abutments. For more details of the proposed action, see the Proposed Action and Alternatives section of this document.

We prepared this environmental assessment (EA) to determine whether replacing the Jackass Creek Bridge may significantly affect the quality of the human environment and thereby require the preparation of an environmental impact statement. By preparing this EA, we are fulfilling agency policy and direction to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

## Proposed Project Location

The Jackass Creek Bridge is located approximately 36 miles west of Quincy, California by way of State Highway 70 within the Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas County, California (see figure 1). It is near the communities of Tobin Ridge and Rock Crest. The bridge is on a route designated as both National Forest System Route 6M40 and NFS Road 24N82X. Specifically, the bridge is located at: Township 24N, Range 6E, Section 16, Mount Diablo Meridian, California. The elevation of the bridge is 2104 feet above sea level.

## Need for the Proposal

National Forest System Route 6M40, also known as National Forest System Road 24N82X, has a minimum surface width of 12 feet comprised of native aggregate and some asphalt treated surfaces. Jackass Creek Bridge is what is referred to as a railroad flatcar bridge. It was previously a common practice in California to re-use old railroad cars as bridges for smaller crossings such as the Jackass Creek location. These bridges were referred to as 'railroad flatcar' bridges and were purchased without a structural history of the railroad car, including over loads and load cycles. The railroad flatcar is placed upside down when it is used as a bridge, so load calculations from railroad use are not valid. As a result, these bridges do not meet current design and construction standards.

## Management Direction

Forest Service Manual (FSM) 7722.03 states policy for road bridges and direction that all road bridge designs must be consistent with standards and guides established by law, regulation, and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials Load and Resistance Factor Design Bridge Design Specifications (23 CFR Part 625). This manual reference also prohibits the use of railroad flatcars as National Forest System road bridges and requires removing existing bridges that include flat car units. Because the Jackass Creek Bridge is a railroad flatcar bridge current policy in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 7722.03 does not allow for public use of the bridge.

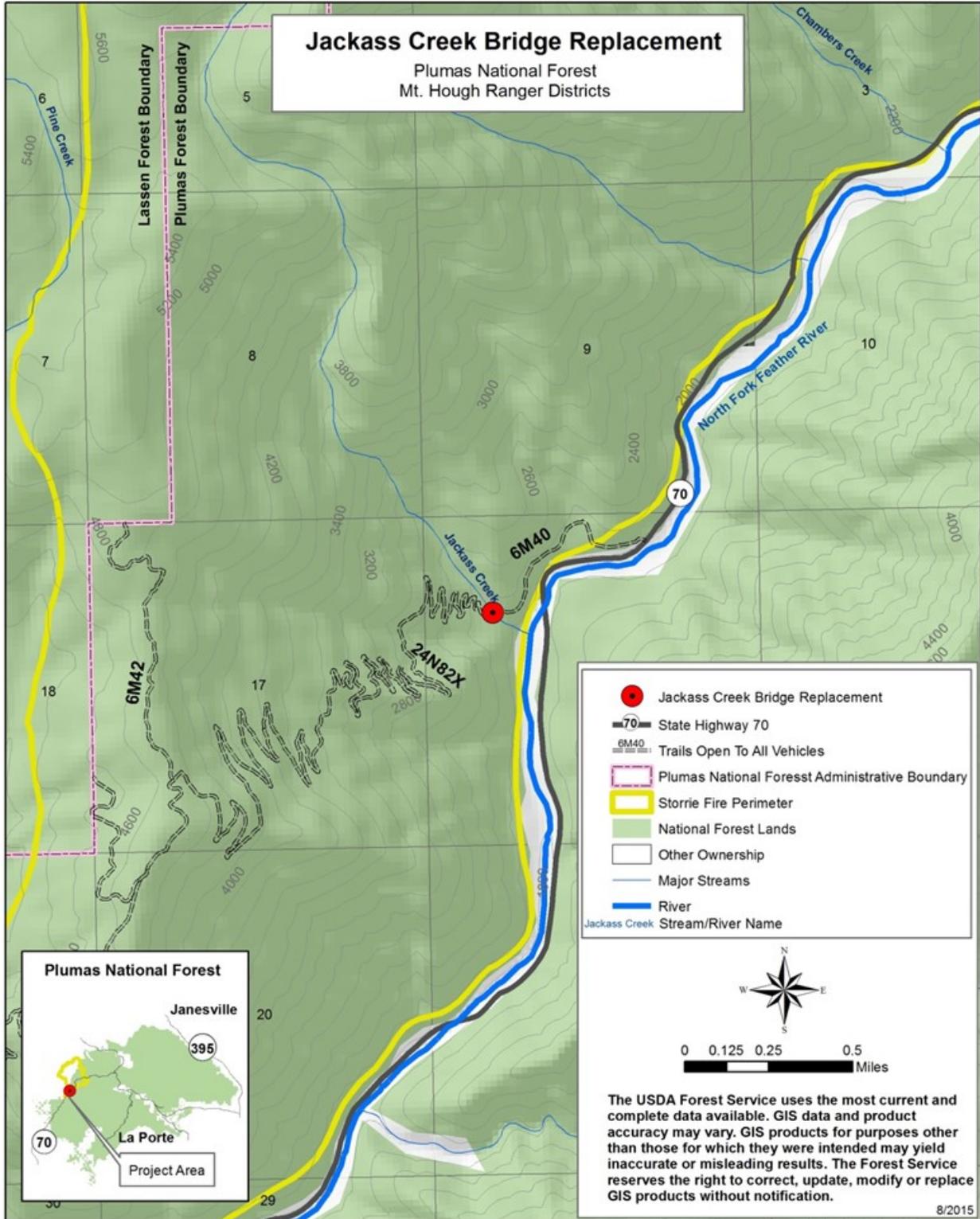


Figure 1. Jackass Creek Bridge vicinity map

## Current Condition and Use

The route is used by Pacific Gas and Electric to perform operations and maintenance inspections to overhead electrical transmission lines and for their hydraulic operations under a road use agreement<sup>1</sup>. Prior to 2010, the route was closed to the public and used exclusively by Pacific Gas and Electric and the Forest Service for administrative purposes.

The Plumas National Forest added National Forest System route 6M40 to the National Forest System transportation network in 2010 through the decision made in the Plumas National Forest Public Motorized Travel Management Project (USDA Forest Service 2010). The current 2013 Plumas National Forest motor vehicle use map lists the route as open to highway-legal and off-highway motorized vehicles. When open, National Forest System Route 6M40 and the Jackass Creek Bridge provide access to the High Lakes off-highway vehicle camping area on the Lassen National Forest and other dispersed camping areas on the Mt. Hough Ranger District, Plumas National Forest. However, pursuant Forest Order 11-16-04, the road has been temporarily closed<sup>2</sup> due to safety concerns because the bridge does not meet Forest Service design standards for public use.

## Purpose and Need

The existing bridge does not meet public use standards (described in detail in the Management Direction section above). In order to provide safe access for administrative and public use, there is a need to replace the bridge with an appropriately designed structure.

In addition, the Jackass Creek Bridge was heavily used by fire-fighting equipment during the Storrie Fire, causing additional wear and damage to the structure. Flooding after the Storrie Fire scoured the creek banks around the bridge footings, resulting in loss of footing support. There is a need to replace the bridge to reduce the problems scour and sedimentation are creating with the existing railroad flatcar bridge.

Another need for the project is to maintain safe administrative access employees of the Forest Service to conduct recreation site maintenance, management activities, or respond to emergencies. In addition, Pacific Gas and Electric has permitted use of the bridge and areas beyond.

In summary, there is a need to replace the bridge to provide recreational and administrative motor vehicle access across Jackass Creek in a manner that is in compliance with Forest Service policy and direction and reduces stream sedimentation and erosion problems.

## Public Involvement and Tribal Consultation

The Forest Service consulted with individuals, federal, State, tribal, and local agencies during the development of this environmental assessment.

On September 23, 2015 a legal notice for a public comment period was published in the *Feather River Bulletin*. A scoping letter and attachment of additional information was mailed to approximately 25 individuals, 68 industry and governmental organizations, 11 special use permit holders, and local Native

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<sup>1</sup> F.E.R.C. License # 1962 and Special use Permit 4-25-61

<sup>2</sup> Forest Service Travel Management Regulations at 36 CFR 212.52(b)(2)) and Forest Service Manual 7716.51 state that “if the responsible official determines that motor vehicle use on an NFS road, an NFS trail, or in an area on NFS lands is directly causing or will directly cause considerable adverse effects on public safety, soil, vegetation, wildlife habitat, or cultural resources associated with that road, trail, or area, the responsible official shall immediately close that road, trail or area to motor vehicle use”. Temporary closure remain in effect until the response official determines that that adverse effects have been mitigated or eliminated.

American tribes. The project proposal was listed in the Plumas National Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions and information was posted to the Plumas National Forest website.

The Forest received one comment from Pacific Gas and Electric Company supporting the project and providing load rating requirements for their maintenance vehicles. In addition, we received correspondence from a recreational group supporting continued public use of the road to provide access for recreational opportunities.

No issues with the proposed action were identified as a result of public comments and no alternatives were proposed. The complete list of individuals and organizations contacted can be found in the project record.

## Proposed Action and Alternatives

As directed by Council on Environmental Quality regulations, an environmental assessment must include a brief introduction of alternatives (40 CFR 1508.9(b)). The National Environmental Policy Act requires that we study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommend courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

There were no issues or unresolved conflicts as a result of public scoping, therefore, we developed and analyzed two alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative – The bridge would not be replaced and National Forest System Route 6M40 would remain temporarily closed to public and administrative use until a more permanent decision is made.
2. Proposed Action – The bridge would be replaced with an approximately 60-foot long concrete structure with concrete abutments within fifty feet of the current location. After construction, National Forest System Route 6M40 would remain open to public motorized use and the temporary closure order would be removed.

These alternatives are described in more detail below.

### Alternative 1 - No Action

In the no-action alternative the existing Jackass Creek railroad car-type bridge would not be replaced. Because regulations do not allow the use of railroad car-type bridges on roads and travelways open to public or administrative use, the Mt. Hough District Ranger has signed a Forest Order to temporarily close the Jackass Creek Bridge and most of National Forest System Route 6M40 (National Forest System Road 24N82X) to public use. The temporary closure would remain in place until a future decision is made about the road. In addition, the road would not be open for administrative use.

Eventually, as the bridge continues to decay and as the footings in the creek erode, the bridge would become completely impassable by all traffic, including pedestrians.

The no-action alternative serves as a baseline to compare the effects of other alternatives and we analyze it to meet the requirements of the Forest Service Handbook, Section 190915, Chapter 10, 14.2.

### Alternative 2 - Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to replace the Jackass Creek Bridge in a location within fifty feet downstream of the current location. The new bridge would be an approximately 60-foot long concrete structure with

concrete abutments. The bridge rail system would be composed of galvanized tube steel rails, supported by steel posts. The approach rail has preservative treated timber posts with galvanized steel flex beam guardrail. The bridge would be designed to pass the 100-year flood level with several feet of clearance. National Forest System Route 6M40, also known as National Forest System Road 24N82X, would be re-routed slightly to the new bridge location. Construction is anticipated to take place during the 2016 or 2017 construction season.

No vehicles or equipment would enter the stream during construction. It is expected that the existing bridge would be used to transport construction equipment to both sides of Jackass Creek during construction of the new bridge. The bridge stringers and decking would be brought on site via truck and set in place with a crane located on the stream bank. The construction and demolition footprints would be limited to the area surrounding the bridge locations.

When the new bridge is complete, the existing bridge would be demolished and removed from National Forest System Land. Any areas of disturbed streambed would be revegetated using native plants, such as willow, to restore the stream bank, prevent erosion, and deter illegal off-road motorized traffic.

The existing bridge and National Forest System Route 6M40 would remain closed to public use until the new bridge is complete. Once the new bridge is in place, the bridge would be opened to public motorized use.

The proposed action includes design features intended to limit the environmental effects to project area resources, including:

- **Visual quality:** Revegetate the bridge site by planting trees and other larger plants on the north side of National Forest System Route 6M40, to meet the Forest Plan guideline, “When future resource use activity or wildfire degrades visual quality below the adopted visual quality objectives, restore visual quality by planting trees and/or other vegetation where regeneration is feasible.”
- **Wildlife:** Survey the bridge structure for special status bat species prior to removing the bridge.
- **Non-native invasive species:** Prevent new infestations and/or spreading existing infestations by:
  - Using agreement clauses to require contractors to meet Forest Service-approved vehicle and equipment cleaning requirements/standards prior to using the vehicle or equipment in the National Forest System to prevent and control the introduction, establishment, and spread of aquatic and terrestrial invasive species. This includes requiring all off-road equipment and vehicles (Forest Service and contracted) used for project implementation to be free of weeds. Clean all equipment and vehicles of all mud, dirt, and plant parts. This will be done at a vehicle washing station or steam-cleaning facility before the equipment and vehicles enter the project area. Cleaning is not required for vehicles that will stay on the roadway. Also, all off-road equipment must be cleaned prior to leaving areas infested with noxious weeds. All off-road equipment must be cleaned prior to leaving designated weed units if weeds are present at the time of implementation and are unable to be avoided.
  - Using weed-free equipment, materials, mulches, and seed sources. Avoid seeding in areas where revegetation will occur naturally, unless noxious weeds are a concern. Save topsoil from disturbance and put it back to use in onsite revegetation, unless contaminated with noxious weeds. All activities that require seeding or planting will need to use only locally collected native seed sources. Use seed zones for grasses when possible otherwise plant and seed material should be collected from as close to the project area as possible, from within the same watershed and at a similar elevation whenever possible. As necessary, Plumas National Forest botanists will develop

project and site-specific revegetation and seeding guidelines that will be customized from existing general guidelines.

- Monitor during and after project implementation to assess the effectiveness of the control measures at preventing the introduction and spread of noxious weed species within the project area. Conduct post-treatment monitoring to identify the need for follow-up treatment, assess the effectiveness of the different treatment methods, and/or identify the need for alternative methods of control. Monitoring conducted by district personnel both during and following project implementation is expected to greatly reduce the likelihood of uncontrollable spread of invasive plant species in the project area.
- If possible, avoid staging equipment, materials, or crews in noxious weed infested areas.
- As practical to do so, flag and avoid known weed sites in and near proposed activity areas.
- Flag and avoid, or treat and monitor noxious weed locations discovered during project implementation.
- Implement treatment to contain, control, or eradicate infestations consistent with current NEPA decisions. Control treatments will follow Best Management Practices developed for the Storrie and Rich Fire Areas Invasive Plant Treatment Project Environmental Assessment (USDA Forest Service 2015). This may include chemical application, manual control methods, and/or a variety of prevention measures that could be developed onsite. Consider the use of barriers (plastic sheeting) or other methods to contain weeds during project implementation.
- **Water quality:** Forest Service National Best Management Practices (USDA Forest Service 2012) and Forest Plan standards and guidelines would be incorporated into the proposed action to ensure compliance with Section 208 of the Clean Water Act, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and its Basin Plan. See table 1 below.

**Table 1. Jackass Bridge best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality (USDA Forest Service 2012; R5 Forest Service Handbook 2509.22 Chapter 10)**

National Core BMP	R5 BMP Name, Objective and Direction	Application to the Jackass Bridge Project
<p><b>Road-2 Road location and design:</b> Locate and design roads to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources</p>	<p><b>BMP 2.2 General Guidelines for the Location and Design of Roads:</b> Locate roads to minimize problems and risks to water, aquatic, and riparian resources. Incorporate measures that prevent or reduce impacts through design for construction, reconstruction, and other route system improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation considers location, relocation, and design only. Construction, reconstruction, maintenance, decommissioning, and erosion control are covered in other BMPs.</li> <li>▪ For realignments: Choose a low maintenance design. Properly space cross drains and provide maximum filter distance between outlets and streams.</li> <li>▪ For reconstructed roads: Incorporate design features to reduce or eliminate identified water quality impacts. Surface stabilization would be considered where grades exceed 12 percent or where the road is in a streamside management zone. Design diversion potential dips where a risk of flow diversion onto the road exists. Consult with hydrologist.</li> </ul>

National Core BMP	R5 BMP Name, Objective and Direction	Application to the Jackass Bridge Project
<p><b>Road-3 Road construction and reconstruction:</b> avoid or minimize adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources from erosion, sediment, and other pollutant delivery during road construction or reconstruction.</p>	<p><b>BMP 2.3 Road Construction and Reconstruction:</b> To minimize erosion and sediment delivery from roads during road construction or reconstruction and their related activities.</p>	<p>For reconstructed roads: No sidecasting in the streamside management zone. Schedule operations when precipitation is less likely and soil moisture is optimal for construction and rutting does not occur.</p>
<p><b>Road-7 Stream crossings:</b> Avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources when constructing, reconstruction, or maintaining temporary and permanent waterbody crossings.</p>	<p><b>BMP 2.8 Stream Crossings:</b> To minimize water, aquatic and riparian resource disturbances and related sediment production when constructing, reconstructing, or maintaining temporary and permanent water crossings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinate with the hydrologist for construction or reconstruction of any temporary or permanent stream crossing.</li> <li>▪ Establish and preserve vertical control through the crossing structure.</li> <li>▪ Place bridge and arch footings below the scour depth for the 100-year flood flow plus the appropriate factor of safety.</li> <li>▪ Fuel and service equipment according to BMP 2.11.</li> <li>▪ Keep excavated materials outside of the channel and floodplain. Install erosion control if needed to prevent material from entering these areas.</li> <li>▪ Construct diversion prevention dips if site has potential for flow diversion onto the road.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Road-10 Equipment Refueling and Servicing:</b> Avoid or minimize adverse effects to soil, water quality, and riparian resources from fuels, lubricants, cleaners, and other harmful materials discharging into nearby surface waters or infiltrating through soils to contaminate groundwater resources during equipment refueling and servicing activities.</p>	<p><b>BMP 2.11 Equipment Refueling and Servicing:</b> To prevent fuels, lubricants, cleaners, and other harmful materials from discharging into nearby surface waters or infiltrating through soils to contaminate groundwater resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project personnel would be aware of the Forest Spill Plan, including who to contact and other steps to take in case of a spill. A spill kit would be kept on-site. All waste oil, containers, and other materials would be removed from National Forest System lands and properly disposed of.</li> <li>▪ For heavy equipment: Storage of hazardous materials (including fuels) and servicing and refueling of equipment would be conducted at pre-designated locations outside of riparian conservation areas. If fueling and/or storage of hazardous materials are needed within riparian conservation areas, those sites must be reviewed and approved by the district hydrologist or aquatic biologist. Additional protection measures, such as containment devices, may be necessary.</li> </ul>

# Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

This section summarizes the potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives for each impacted resource. Resources that were not impacted and therefore not further analyzed are: silviculture and fire and fuels.

## Past, Present and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

According to the Council on Environmental Quality National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations, “cumulative impact” is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such actions (40 CFR §1508.7).

In order to understand the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, this analysis relies on current environmental conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior human actions and natural events that have affected the environment and might contribute to cumulative effects.

To result in cumulative effects, the effects of an activity must overlap in space and time with the effects of the alternative analyzed. Though most of the project impacts would be limited to within the project area, some effects may influence or be influenced by resources outside of the project area (for example, hydrology). Therefore, the cumulative effects analysis may consider activities occurring outside of the project area for some resources.

Ongoing activities within and surrounding the project area include: public recreational use of the roads, administrative use by the Forest Service and Pacific Gas and Electric, powerline maintenance, and livestock grazing. These actions may contribute minor effects to some or all affected resources analyzed. No other reasonably foreseeable actions are planned to occur in the project area at this time.

## Recreation Resources

### ***Affected Environment***

The Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement project site occurs at the crossing of Jackass Creek and National Forest System Route 6M40, also known as National Forest System Road 24N82X. Jackass Creek joins the North Fork Feather River, and intersects California State Highway 70 approximately one-eighth of a mile downstream (south) of the existing bridge location. National Forest System Route 6M40 parallels a Pacific Gas and Electric transmission power line which also parallels the North Fork Feather River and State Highway 70. National Forest System Routes 6M41 and 6M42 intersect with 6M40 approximately one-quarter mile west of the bridge replacement project site; these trails lead into the Lassen National Forest and provide access to the High Lakes off-highway vehicle camping area on the Lassen National Forest. The routes also provide access to other dispersed camping areas on the Mt. Hough Ranger District.

The Forest Plan management area 19 standard and guideline provides instruction to “improve and expand the trail system (1a). Coordinate trail management with the Lassen National Forest for shared routes” (4-228). The project site has a roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum class defined in the Plumas Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 1988). The forestwide standards and guidelines for roaded natural designated areas are to “design and maintain facilities for conventional motorized use” (4-23).

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Recreation Resources**

In the no-action alternative, the existing Jackass Creek railroad car-type bridge would not be replaced. Because regulations do not allow the use of railroad car-type bridges on roads and travel ways open to public use, the temporary closure would remain in place and public use of the bridge would be prohibited. Most of National Forest System Route 6M40, also known as National Forest System road 24N82X, would therefore also be closed to public use to people going from the Plumas Forest travelling to the Lassen Forest. Eventually, as the bridge continues to decay and as the footings in the creek erode, the bridge would become impassable to all vehicles and even pedestrian traffic.

The existing bridge does not meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines for recreation resources because it does not meet FSM 7722.03 requirements for a bridge designed and managed for motorized use. Therefore, this alternative does not meet Forest Plan roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum class guidelines to design and maintain facilities for motorized use.

### **Cumulative Effects**

No past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified which could contribute to cumulative effects.

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Recreation Resources**

Replacing the existing bridge with one which meets FSM 7722.03 policy for road bridges open to public use would also meet Forest Plan standards and guidelines for roaded natural recreation resources requirements to design and manage facilities for motorized use. Therefore implementing the proposed action would be consistent with federal regulatory requirements and Plumas Forest Plan standards and guidelines.

Motorized recreation use on National Forest System Route 6M40 may be impacted due to the bridge being temporarily closed until construction is complete. The bridge replacement project is expected to take one, or possibly two, field seasons so any negative impacts to motorized recreation would occur for a limited duration. Long term, replacing the bridge would support motorized recreation access on National Forest System Route 6M40 and connected routes for the 50-70 year lifespan of the new structure.

### **Cumulative Effects**

No past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified which could contribute to cumulative effects.

## **Visual Resources**

### ***Affected Environment***

The project area lies within a retention visual quality objective corridor along the North Fork Feather River and California State Highway 70. Plumas Forest plan standards and guidelines for visual resources in the North Fork management area (4-229) provide direction to ‘maintain pleasing visual corridors (2a)’. In addition, the forest plan retention visual quality objective to provide a natural-appearing landscape where management activities are not visually evident.

The Jackass Creek Bridge site sits ‘above’ California State Highway 70, in terms of elevation, and with the trees and other vegetation lining the Highway and Jackass Creek, the project site is not visible from the highway or the North Fork Feather River. Before crossing Jackass Creek, National Forest System Route 6M40 travels around the Tobin Quarry. The quarry is, and has been, used by the State of California, Pacific Gas and Electric, the Railroad Company, and the Forest Service to develop and store aggregate. The landscape immediately leading to the bridge site is visually characterized by the large mounds of aggregate stored at the quarry and the blackened trees and other evidence of past wildfires on the north side of the road. The North Fork Feather River and several bridges crossing the river are visible in the middle ground distance on the south side of National Forest System Route 6M40 leading to the bridge site, and provide a pleasing scenic view. Only the wood planks (or decking) of the old railroad car are visible from National Forest System Route 6M40 (figure 2). Mounds of non-native blackberries line the creek on either side of the bridge, blocking views into Jackass Creek and other parts of the bridge structure. Visual evidence of the Storrie Wildfire appears in the background of National Forest System Route 6M40.



Figure 2. The view of Jackass Creek Bridge looking west

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Visual Resources**

In the no-action alternative, the existing visual appearance of the bridge site and surrounding area would not change unless acted on by other events. Over time, if the bridge were left to deteriorate, the wood decking would likely rot away and the under-structure of the bridge and abutments would become more

visible. Without motorized access to National Forest System Route 6M40, fewer people would likely travel through the area.

The no-action alternative would be consistent with the retention visual quality objective regarding visual evidence of management activities and would provide a natural-appearing landscape where management activities are not visually evident.

### **Cumulative Effects**

No past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified which could contribute to cumulative effects.

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Visual Resources**

Over the short term while construction of the new bridge and demolition of the existing bridge took place, there would be direct effects due to an increase in visual evidence of management activities around the site from use of heavy equipment disturbing the soil, clearing away the non-native blackberry and other plants, stockpiling of construction materials, etc. The increase in visual evidence of management activities at the site is expected to last for one construction season (approximately 4-6 months). During this time visitors to the area would likely be minimal due to the temporary road closure.

Once completed, there would be long-term effects to the visual appearance of the site due to the proposed concrete stringers, decking, and abutments which may be slightly more noticeable in the landscape than the existing wood decking. The Proposed Action does not include colors for the proposed concrete bridge that would be inconsistent with the surrounding natural landscape. The proposed plantings for the site, and naturally growing vegetation within the Jackass Creek streambed, would likely grow up and block views to most of the bridge structure similar to the existing condition within a few years.

The direct and indirect effects of implementing the proposed action would be consistent with the visual resource indicator regarding visual evidence of management activities per the retention visual quality objective. While there are some short-term effects, implementing the Proposed Action would provide a natural-appearing landscape, over the long term, where management activities are not visually evident.

### **Cumulative Effects**

No past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified which could contribute to cumulative effects.

## **Hydrologic Resources**

### ***Affected Environment***

The project area is entirely located within the North Fork Feather River-Chambers Creek 7th-level subdrainage and the Milk Ranch Creek-North Fork Feather River 6th-level subwatershed. The watershed boundary was identified from the Forest watershed GIS layer. Boundaries are based on Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) sixth and seventh level watersheds.

### **Channel Stability and Riparian Function**

Jackass Creek is a perennial stream with a moderately steep and confined channel. Channel gradient is approximately three percent by the existing bridge, but rapidly changes to a cascading profile of over 30 percent approximately 90 feet downstream from the existing bridge. The stream side-slopes range from

20 to 30 percent. From the project area, the creek flows approximately 650 feet before its confluence with the North Fork Feather River. The existing bridge abutments were not placed widely enough to accommodate the river's flow regime. This flow constriction has altered channel forming processes from what would be expected under natural conditions, leading to bank scour and increased sedimentation mostly during high flows. The riparian and floodplain areas along the creek are limited by the stream valley confinement. The riparian area is well-vegetated with a variety of shrubs which have helped stabilize the stream banks.

### **Water Quality**

The Clean Water Act directs that where water quality is limited, state agencies develop total maximum daily load (TMDL) plans to improve water quality to support the beneficial uses of water. According to the 2012 Clean Water Act, Section 303(d) list of water quality limited segments for California, the North Fork Feather River approximately 650 feet downstream from the project areas is listed for mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), temperature, and total toxics. No municipal watersheds occur within the Jackass Creek project area.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

#### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Hydrologic Resources**

The existing abutments would continue to restrict channel cross sectional area leading to a higher rate of bank scour and bank erosion along with its subsequent sediment delivery. This would also continue to affect channel stability and riparian function. The current trends would continue under the no-action alternative and there would be no change in streamside cover or sediment delivery. As there would be no change from the existing conditions, there are also no cumulative effects. No past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified which could contribute to cumulative effects.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Hydrologic Resources**

##### ***Channel Stability and Riparian Function***

The new bridge would be constructed with a wider span and therefore have a greater capacity to transport flows through the area. There would be no ground-based equipment on the channel or banks. Best management practice 2.8 requires that the bridge and footings be placed below the scour depth for the 100-year flood flow plus the appropriate factor of safety (table 1). The new bridge abutments would be set back approximately 10 feet from the banks, to prevent future scouring. Riprap protection would be placed if necessary to further protect the banks and prevent sedimentation into the creek. The new structure would have an improved hydraulic capacity promoting a more natural flow regime through the area. Additionally, best management practices would protect against direct disturbances to stream channels and riparian areas. Favorable riparian vegetation would be planted once the existing bridge is removed. As vegetation establishes itself, root systems would provide streambank stability and in the long term coarse woody debris recruitment. These long-term direct effects would benefit channel shape and function.

##### ***Water Quality***

Despite the existing scouring caused by the abutments, the moderately steep channel gradient has maintained sediment transport processes and no aggradation has occurred. Therefore, no additional sediment transport across the proposed bridge site is expected due to greater hydraulic capacity of the new construction. Sedimentation associated with the removal of old abutments and construction of new should be minimal given the small footprint and the implementation of best management practices. For these

reasons, alterations to hydrologic processes related to sediment dynamics would be unlikely. The temperature 303(d) listing would positively benefit as the proposed action promotes growth of riparian vegetation which can help maintain stream temperature.

### Cumulative effects

The proposed activities should not significantly affect channel or riparian function. In the long term, as riparian vegetation establishes along the existing scouring, streambanks would stabilize. These long-term direct effects would benefit channel shape and function. The proposed activities should not increase sediment loading to levels affecting beneficial uses. The effects of ongoing activities in and around the project area are part of the current condition. No additional reasonably foreseeable activities are expected to affect hydrological conditions. Cumulative impacts are therefore also negligible.

## Aquatic Resources

### ***Affected Environment***

Jackass Creek at the bridge replacement project site is steep, greater than 10 percent grade over most of its length, with multiple falls present. The stream is best categorized as a “transport” type, as the steep gradient prevents substantial accumulation of fine sediment. It appears that most of the Jackass Creek sub-watershed burned during the fire, though substantial riparian vegetation recovery has occurred since that time, including at the bridge replacement site. Field observations of the Jackass Creek bridge replacement project site in October 2015 indicated that low to moderate quantities of fine sediment were present in the few low-gradient habitat units, with moderate levels of substrate embeddedness.

The current bridge structure appears relatively stable, though some scouring near the bridge footing has been reported. Most of the scouring probably occurred during past precipitation events within a year or two post-fire. Streambanks upstream and downstream of the bridge are now well-vegetated within the riparian area, and appear stable. No active or recent sediment input was observed during the October 2015 site visit.

Special status aquatic organisms are not known to occur in Jackass Creek, since the steep gradient reduces habitat suitability for these species.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

#### Direct and Indirect Effects to Aquatic Resources

There may be short- and long-term additions of sediment due to deteriorating bridge footings. Storm-induced sediment input to the stream over a period of years is also possible. As the structure deteriorates, larger failure is possible in the long term. There is a chance for a larger sediment event during an intense precipitation event.

#### Cumulative effects

No other actions known within or upstream of bridge site in the Jackass Creek drainage; therefore, there are no cumulative effects.

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Aquatic Resources**

Removing the old bridge and installing the new bridge would require heavy equipment use, resulting in near-stream ground disturbance. The majority of the bridge structure is located well above the active channel (average high-water). However, small quantities of substrate may be disturbed within the active channel. In addition, the steep banks may allow for small quantities of substrate sourced from above the channel to fall into the active channel. Due to project design criteria, the quantity of sediment is expected to be minimal (project hydrology report), and is unlikely to have more than a negligible effect on aquatic habitat, and any input would be restricted to the immediate vicinity of the bridge itself.

The new bridge is expected to result in more stable streambanks as compared to the current structure, with a corresponding decrease in sediment input within a year or two post-project. There should be very little riparian vegetation disturbance, and any areas where removal is necessary would be replanted to ensure bank stability.

No special status aquatic species are known to occur within the analysis area (bridge site downstream to the North Fork Feather River), including Forest Service Region 5 sensitive species and federally-listed threatened and endangered species. Even though the project is within the elevational range of some analysis species (e.g., California red-legged frog and foothill yellow-legged frog) habitat is not suitable due to the steep gradient (great than 10 percent with waterfalls). In addition, habitat would not function as a migration corridor since no suitable habitat exists upstream of the site within the Jackass Creek drainage. Due to the small scale of the project and implementation of resource protection measures (e.g., best management practices), measurable off-site effects (e.g., sediment or turbidity) should not occur downstream of the analysis area, or beyond the immediate vicinity of the Jackass Creek and North Fork Feather River confluence. Therefore, this project should not measurably impact special status aquatic species.

### **Cumulative effects**

No other actions known within or upstream of bridge site in the Jackass Creek drainage; therefore, effects are limited to the proposed action only. There are no cumulative effects.

## **Wildlife Resources**

### ***Affected Environment***

There is no designated or proposed critical habitat for threatened or endangered wildlife species in the analysis area. the following threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate and sensitive species have potential habitat or documented occurrences in or adjacent to the Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement project analysis area: black-backed woodpecker, pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, western red bat, fringed myotis, mountain quail and fox sparrow.

The following management indicator species habitat is adjacent to the project area: yellow warbler, black-backed woodpecker, mountain quail and fox sparrow.

Habitat is present in the project area for olive-sided flycatcher, Williamson's sapsucker, and Lewis' woodpecker.

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Wildlife Resources**

Because no actions would be taken, the no-action alternative would have no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects on wildlife species.

## ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Wildlife Resources**

Based on the lack of impacts to suitable habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate and sensitive species, the proposed Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project would not directly or indirectly affect any of the species or their habitat.

#### ***Black-backed woodpecker***

Black-backed woodpecker has not been detected in the adjacent areas. Snags are present in the adjacent area and can provide suitable habitat for this species. Since no snags are proposed to be removed as part of the project there would be no affect to this species.

#### ***Pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, western red bat, and fringed myotis***

Forest bat surveys have not been conducted in this area for any of these species. These three species of bats primarily use trees, snags and caves for roosting; they have also been recorded using old buildings and bridges. The site does not have caves and the trees or snags in the adjacent area are not proposed for removal, and the old bridge would be surveyed before removal.

- Pallid bat - The pallid bat is most abundant in dry ecosystems, but it can be found in a variety of habitat types, including oak and pine forest, rocky canyons, farmlands and scrub grassland. Day and night roost types include crevices in cliffs, mines and rocky outcrops. This species also will roost in hollow trees, bridges, barns, porches and bat houses. The old bridge would be surveyed before removal to make ensure this species would not be injured; with installment of the new bridge any bats that were displaced could use the new bridge for roosting.
- Townsend's big-eared bat – Townsend's big-eared bats are found regularly in forested regions and buildings, and in areas with a mosaic of woodland, grassland, and/or shrubland. In California and Washington, they are known from limestone caves, lava tubes, and human-made structures in coastal lowlands, cultivated valleys, and nearby hills covered with mixed vegetation (NatureServe). These bats prefer to hang from open ceilings at roost sites and do not use cracks or crevices. Winter roosts generally contain fewer individuals (usually singles or small groups) than summer roosts. For hibernation, they prefer roost sites where the temperature is 12° C (54° F) or less. These may be near entrances and in well-ventilated areas of the roost. The bats may arouse and move to other spots in the roost during the winter, to be in areas of more stable cold temperatures. No mines or caves are within the project area and no structures would be damaged or destroyed during implementation of this project; therefore no suitable habitat would be affected for this species.
- Western red bat - Day roosts are among dense foliage, the hanging bat resembling a dead leaf. Roost sites are from a few feet to more than 40 feet high; and heavily shaded from above but open below to allow the bat to drop into flight. Preferred habitat includes riparian and wooded areas, this species primarily roosts in cottonwood trees. Summer roosts usually in tree foliage, sometimes in leafy shrubs or herbs. This species generally avoids caves and buildings during both summer and winter. Solitary females roost with young in tree foliage. No trees would be cut during implementation of this project; therefore no suitable habitat would be affected for this species.

- Fringed myotis – Fringed myotis roost in rock crevices, caves, mines, large snags, under exfoliating bark, and in buildings. Roost trees used were large diameter snags in early to medium stages of decay and were more likely to be near water sources than random trees. No trees or snags would be cut during implementation of this project; therefore no suitable habitat would be affected for this species.

#### *Mountain quail and Fox sparrow*

Mountain quail and fox sparrow are shrubland habitat species. Minimal shrub removal is proposed for the project and would have a negligible effect on the shrub habitat. This potential effect is so small as to be considered discountable and therefore this project is considered to not affect mountain quail and fox sparrows.

#### *Management Indicator Species*

Based on the lack of impacts to suitable habitat for management indicator species, the proposed Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project would not directly or indirectly affect any management indicator species or their habitat. Yellow warbler has not been surveyed for in the project area. Habitat includes open scrub, second-growth woodland, thickets, farmlands, and gardens, especially near water; riparian woodlands, especially of willows, are typical habitat in the west. In migration and winter, yellow warblers often occur in open woodland, plantations, brushy areas, and forest edge. Nests are placed in upright forks or crotches of bushes (e.g., willow), saplings, or large trees, from less than a meter above ground to high in tall trees. European blackberry is the species of species that would be disturbed within the project area. Minimal brush are proposed to be removed as part of the project so there would be no affect to this management indicator species. Effects to other management indicator species are described above.

#### *Migratory Birds*

Based on the negligible impact of the Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement project to potential habitat for migratory bird habitat, this project would not directly or indirectly affect these species: olive-sided flycatcher, Williamson's sapsucker and Lewis' woodpecker. While olive-sided flycatcher, Williamson's sapsucker and Lewis' woodpecker have not been detected in adjacent areas, snags are present that are suitable habitat for these species (See figure 2). Any areas of disturbed streambed would be revegetated using native plant materials, such as willows. Since no snag removal is proposed as part of the project there would be no effect to these bird species.

## Botanical Resources

### ***Affected Environment***

#### **Threatened, Endangered, Candidate and Sensitive Species**

The following two botanical habitat groupings for threatened endangered candidate and sensitive species occur within the Jackass Creek project area:

- **Open Habitats** - includes taxa inhabiting open forest types, edge-habitats, or light gaps, often with some level of natural or human-caused disturbance; and
- **Riparian Areas** - includes taxa found along the margins of perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral streams, natural lakes, reservoirs, or ponds.

Open and riparian area habitats may include the following 18 threatened endangered candidate and sensitive botanical species (three *Botrychium* species in the first bullet):

- *Botrychium ascendens*, *B. crenulatum*, *B. lunaria*, *B. minganense*, *B. montanum*, and *B. pinnatum*

- *Bruchia bolanderi*
- *Calystegia atriplicifolia ssp. buttensis*
- *Clarkia biloba ssp. brandegeae*
- *Clarkia gracilis ssp. albicaulis*
- *Clarkia mildrediae ssp. mildrediae*
- *Cypripedium montanum*
- *Eremogone cliftonii*
- *Eriogonum umbellatum var. ahartii*
- *Fissidens aphelotaxifolius*
- *Fissidens pauperculus*
- *Lupinus dalesiae*
- *Peltigera hydrothyria*

A quarter-acre Jackass Creek bridge project area was surveyed for threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive plants in 2015 none were found. Occurrences of *Clarkia mildrediae ssp. mildrediae* were found 200 feet from the quarter acre project area.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

#### **Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Botanical Resources**

No impacts would occur to the open and riparian area habitats surrounding the project site. No direct or indirect effects to threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive plants would occur in the no-action alternative and therefore no cumulative effects would occur.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

#### **Direct and Indirect Effects to Botanical Resources**

Project activities would alter the available riparian habitat in the immediate vicinity of Jackass Creek Bridge. Open roadside habitats may experience additional disturbance from the project activities, but the area would remain suitable for colonization by those species that prefer open, disturbed habitats.

The proposed actions would not affect any known threatened endangered candidate and sensitive plant occurrences. Approximately one-quarter acre of plant open and riparian habitat would be affected. The proposed action would cause only minimal changes to threatened, endangered, candidate or sensitive plant species habitats, but would not result in a loss of viability or cause a trend toward federal listing.

#### **Cumulative Effects to Botanical Resources**

A variety of other activities may also occur in the project area. Ongoing activities include vehicle use of the roadway and bridge, recreational uses, road maintenance, and livestock grazing. Due to the lack of known threatened, endangered, candidate and sensitive species plants in the project area, these ongoing activities are not currently affecting any known threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive species plants in the project area. With no occurrences; the combined effects from past, present and reasonably foreseeable activities with those expected from the proposed action, there would be no cumulative effects to threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive species plants. The riparian and open habitats; disturbed

roadside; and threatened, endangered, candidate, or sensitive species plant habitats present would experience combined effects, including those from the proposed action plus additional disturbances from road maintenance, recreational uses, and livestock grazing. Together, these disturbances to threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species plant habitats in the area would be minimal and would not prevent future colonization of the habitats. Species viability would be maintained and no species would trend toward federal listing.

## Archeological Resources

### ***Affected Environment***

The Jackass Creek Bridge is an example of very common construction techniques, utilizing salvaged materials and dimensional lumber. It is presumed to have been installed sometime between 1930 and 1950. Research indicates some segments of National Forest System Route 6M40, also known as National Forest System Road 24N82X, follow the historic Utah Construction Road route completed in 1905. The Utah Construction company created a dirt road through the Feather River Canyon to assist with construction of the Western Pacific Railroad (completed in 1909). The dirt road ran the length of the canyon from Oroville to American Valley. Abandoned segments of the road have been located and recorded as historic properties. Some segments, like the section on either side of the Jackass Creek Bridge, have been in consistent use for over a hundred years and modified according to modern transportation or recreation needs.

The road on either side of the Jackass Creek Bridge has been widened and surfaced repeatedly and does not reflect the appearance of the narrow dirt wagon road that was present circa 1905-1909. The Jackass Creek Bridge is not the original structure (crossing) for Jackass Creek for the historic Utah Construction Road and an archeological survey of the area for potential effect did not reveal any sign of the original bridge for Jackass Creek or any signs that the road leading up to the bridge contained elements of the historic Utah Construction Road.

The project archeologist determined and the State Historic Preservation Office concurred that the Jackass Creek Bridge is not a contributor to the Utah Construction Road for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition the segment of the Utah Construction Road within the project area does not contribute to the significance of the Utah Construction Road.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 No Action***

#### Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Archeological Resources

No action would take place, therefore, there would be no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to cultural or heritage resources.

### ***Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 Proposed Action***

#### Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects to Archeological Resources

The proposed action would remove the Jackass Creek Bridge and modify the current road system access. However, because these features of the project area have been determined to be not eligible for inclusion in the National Register and they are not contributors to the significance of the Utah Construction Road, the project would not result in direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to historic properties.

## Agencies and Persons Consulted

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies during the development of this environmental assessment:

### Federal, State, and Local Agencies

- Bureau of Land Management
- USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs
- USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- State Historic Preservation Office
- Central Valley regional Water Quality Control Board
- Plumas County
- Feather River Resource Conservation District

### Tribes

- Concow Maidu Tribe of Mooretown Rancheria
- Estom Yumeka Tribe of Enterprise Rancheria
- Greenville Indian Rancheria
- Maidu Summit Consortium
- Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria
- Susanville Indian Rancheria
- Tyme Maidu Tribe of Berry Creek Rancheria
- Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada

### Others

A scoping letter and attachment of additional information was also mailed to approximately 25 individuals, 68 industry and governmental organizations, and 11 special use permit holders. The project information was also posted to the Plumas National Forest website and in the Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions.

## Finding of No Significant Impact

As the responsible official, I am responsible for evaluating the effects of the project relative to the definition of significance established by the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR 1508.13). I have reviewed and considered the EA and documentation included in the project record, and I have determined that the proposed action and alternatives for the Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. As a result, no

environmental impact statement will be prepared. My rationale for this finding is as follows, organized by sub-section of the Council on Environmental Quality definition of significance cited above.

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR §1508.27)

## Context

For the proposed action and alternatives the context of the environmental effects is based on the environmental analysis in this EA. The project area is limited in size (one quarter acre) and project activities are limited in duration. The Jackass Creek Bridge Replacement Project occurs in a limited spatial context; the intersection of National Forest System Route 6M40 (National Forest System Road 24N82X) and the Jackass Creek. The resource analysis indicates any possible environmental consequences of the proposed action and alternatives would be limited to the immediate area and project site where the creek intersects with the National Forest System Route 6M40. The alternatives would not affect regional or national resources.

## Intensity

Intensity is a measure of the severity, extent, or quantity of effects, and is based on information from the effects analysis of this EA and the references in the project record. The effects of this project have been appropriately and thoroughly considered with an analysis that is responsive to concerns and issues raised by the public. The agency has taken a hard look at the environmental effects using relevant scientific information and knowledge of site-specific conditions gained from field visits. My finding of no significant impact is based on the context of the project and intensity of effects using the ten factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

- 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.*

Beneficial effects of implementing the Proposed Action, and replacing the Jackass Creek Bridge, relate primarily to the public's ability to continue to use National Forest System Route 6M40 (National Forest System Road 24N82X) for motorized recreation.

Adverse effects of the alternatives include temporary impacts to hydrologic resources. In the short term, there would be minimal small-magnitude effects (e.g., sediment input) to aquatic habitat. In the long term, there would be increased structural stability with a corresponding reduction in sediment input. Effects would occur outside of occupied/suitable habitat for all special status species, but would not reach occupied/suitable habitat downstream. The amount of actual sediment delivery would be negligible. Therefore, there would be minimal, short-term and insignificant effects to stream, riparian and floodplain areas.

Consideration of the intensity of the environmental effects of this project has not been biased by the beneficial effects of the action. All analyses prepared in support of this document considered both the beneficial and adverse effects of the proposed action; however, the beneficial effects were not used to offset or compensate for the potential adverse effects of the proposed treatments. The impacts associated with the proposed action have been considered separately from the beneficial effects (EA,

Environmental Impacts section, beginning on page 8). The beneficial and adverse effects are limited in context and intensity and are not significant.

*2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.*

Implementing the Proposed Action, and replacing the existing railroad car bridge has a beneficial effect on public safety. The design and materials meet current standards for safety and load rating, and include documentation for accurate understanding of long-term maintenance to support the designed load rating.

*3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.*

The environmental assessment has analyzed the potential for impacts to unique characteristics of the geographic area. There are no parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, or designated wild and scenic rivers within the project area. The project will have no significant effects to historic or cultural resources.

*4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.*

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. None of the resources analyzed identified potential environmental consequences which could be considered highly controversial or unknown; replacing bridges is a very common management activity on Federal, State, and private lands and the environmental consequences are well-understood.

*5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.*

The USDA Forest Service has considerable experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not highly uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. Proposed activities are routine in nature, employ standard practices and protection measures, and their effects are well known as described in Environmental Impacts section of the EA, beginning on page 8.

*6. The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.*

The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects. No reasonably foreseeable or future actions were identified which would contribute to or be connected with replacement of the Jackass Creek Bridge replacement.

*7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance*

*cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.*

The cumulative impacts are not significant. A cumulative effects analysis was completed for each resource area and no resource analysis found that implementation of the selected alternative would result in significant adverse cumulative effects.

*8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.*

There are no National Register-eligible or unevaluated cultural resources within the area of potential effect for this project. See the archeological resources section above. This analysis is in conformance with regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (P.L. 89-665, 80 Stat. 915); Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-601), and American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-341).

*9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*

The project will not affect suitable habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate or sensitive species and would not directly or indirectly affect any of the species or their habitat.

*10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.*

The proposed action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. See items 8 and 9 above. In addition, the project is consistent with the following laws or requirements:

#### National Forest Management Act

The Plumas National Forest National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) provides standards and guidelines to protect and maintain forest watersheds, water quality, and water supply, including best management practices for establishing streamside management zones per guidelines in appendix M of the Forest Plan. These guidelines were amended by the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (2004), which includes establishing riparian conservation areas and associated widths determined by the type of aquatic feature.

#### Clean Water Act

Clean Water Act of 1977, which was created to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the Nation's waters. (Section 101(a)). It also regulates discharge of dredged or fill material into navigable waters (waters of the U.S.) (Section 404). Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify waters that are not meeting water quality objectives and are at risk of not fully supporting their designated beneficial uses. These water bodies are called water quality limited segments.

## Executive Orders

**Executive Order 11990, 1977; (Wetlands Management)** requires federal agencies to follow avoidance, mitigation, and preservation procedures with public input before proposing new construction in wetlands. To comply with Executive Order 11990, the federal agency would coordinate with the Army Corps of Engineers, under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and mitigate for impacts to wetland habitats. .

**Executive Order 11998, 1977; (Floodplain Management)** requires all federal agencies to take actions to reduce the risk of flood loss, restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values in floodplains, and minimize the impacts of floods on human safety, health, and welfare.

## State and Local Law: Regional Water Quality Control Board Requirements

**Central Valley Water Quality Control Board Basin Plan and Water Quality Objectives** - each basin plan provides a definitive program of actions designed to preserve and enhance water quality and to protect beneficial uses of water in the Central Valley Region. A memorandum of understanding between the State Water Quality Control Board and the USDA Forest Service designated the Forest Service as the water quality management agency on National Forest System Lands, and establishes a system for implementing best management practices as the mechanism for meeting water quality requirements.

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