

Bear River Trail Parkway

The Bear River Trail Parkway will be a 30.4.miles riverside trail starting at the headwaters of the Bear River in Bear Valley and ending at NID's Combie Reservoir. Many pieces of the trail exist informally now with good public access and enjoy considerable public use. The Bear River Trail Parkway will link the existing Bear River trails by building new trail sections on PG&E, NID, BLM, Placer County, and State Parks lands, with a few private parcel easements or acquisitions. Together, PG&E and NID's YBDS project lands provide an almost continuous corridor of riverfront lands from the Bear between Bear Valley and Combie Reservoir. Appended are Bear River Trail Parkway Concept Maps which show the current land ownership, existing trails, and conceptual new trail sections.

The PG&E and NID FLAs should include measures to support and invest in the Bear River Trail Parkway. Planners envision the Bear River Trail Parkway to be developed in stand-alone phases. Each section of trail that is built can provide a significant new recreation opportunity for the public for swimming, water play, inner-tubing, whitewater boating, angling, recreational gold panning, hiking, horseback riding and biking. Trail section phases will improve the existing informal public use with parking, sanitation facilities, recreational infrastructure and trail development and signage.

In addition to the Foothill Water Network, supporters of the trail concept include Nevada County Land Trust, Placer County Land Trust, Sierra Fund, equestrian and hiking groups, and other community groups.

It is our understanding that some of the lands in the FERC Project area are those of which PG&E would like to divest. PG&E has created the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council to manage the divestiture of those lands. However, at the current time, PG&E still retains the fee-title to these lands and is the operating manager of the land use as demonstrated by PG&E's continued timber harvesting. Consequently, PG&E is responsible for making enhancements to the lands within the FERC boundary in the YBDS FERC relicensing. PG&E should not be able to use the divestiture process in order to avoid responsibility for the enhancements of those lands under the FERC re-licensing; this is especially important given the uncertainty of whether PG&E will be able to successfully divest these properties through the Stewardship Council process. It is our understanding that properties that are not divested remain in the ownership of PG&E.

Under current conditions, the Bear River offers little public access and recreation facilities despite its proximity to the I-80 corridor and high population and recreation centers such as Auburn, Grass Valley, Nevada City, Colfax, and Lake of the Pines. The Bear River Watershed is the most densely populated of major Sierra rivers, but has surprisingly little developed recreation. The only developed recreation is Placer County's popular Bear River Campground, which has a network of trails, full campground facilities, and two group camps. A measure of the pent-up demand for recreation is the fact that when reservations for the two group camps open on the first day of each

calendar year, the two group camps are fully reserved for the season within six hours of non-stop phone calls to County Parks.

Yet the Bear River corridor itself provides numerous and substantial open space and recreation opportunities. This is due to the land ownership pattern in the river corridor, which is dominated by PG&E, NID, Stewardship Council, BLM, and the State of California. The existing access points already receive a lot of informal public use; however, the lack of recreation infrastructure, unsafe parking on public roads, inadequate sanitation facilities and unsafe and unmarked trails greatly curtails the public's ability to experience the resource.

The following access and facilities recommendations for access points to the Bear River are integral to the larger vision of the development of the Bear River Trail Parkway but also provide value to each access point on their own:

Reach	Trail Segment	Values
Reach 1: Above Rt 20	Develop trail from interpretive center to trailhead at Route 20, where parking is already in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed recreation & information trail • Developed parking for trailhead
Reach 2: Route 20 (Gauge 139) to Drum Afterbay	Locate and develop trail through meadow and provide trail linking to Powerhouse Road at Drum Afterbay. A possible option would use the old Boardman canal which was abandoned many years ago; sections of this abandoned canal are already used by hikers. Good access (refer to PG&E and NID projects 2310 and 2266 Proposed Study Plan Amphibians/Aquatic Reptile surveys)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptionally rich in Native American and early homestead sites • On Immigrant Trail • Exceptionally good fishing • Exemplary ecosystem of High Sierra meadow • Good potential for kayak boating.
Reach 3 Drum Afterbay dam to Dutch Flat	Good access (refer to PG&E and NID projects 2310 and 2266 Proposed Study Plan Amphibians/Aquatic Reptile surveys) Pristine river reach. Powerhouse road (7 mi.) is already a much used bicycle and hiking. A hiking connector might be developed between Powerhouse Road and Dutch Flat afterbay. Public roads already connect Powerhouse road to Dutch Flat afterbay and Chicago Park forebay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good fishing potential • Great bicycle road • Good hiking
Reach 4: Dutch Flat afterbay to	Mixed public ownership on both sides of the river provide ample opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dutch Flat to Chicago Park is much used by mountain

Chicago Park powerhouse	for connecting trails.	bikers on the Nevada County side on existing network of dirt roads
Reach 5: Chicago Park powerhouse to Rollins	Good access via paved public road. With riverine restoration, this stretch has great potential as a recreation fishery. Restoration could include trails on both sides of river. Public user services should be provided. This area is close to large residential areas, such as Chicago Park and Colfax.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secret Town road is paved access from Interstate 80 and old State Hwy 40 to river at Chicago powerhouse • Often used by bicyclists, motor cyclists, hikers • Popular fishing
Reach 6: Bear River Canal diversion to Combie Reservoir	Reach 6 is described in five sub-reaches, below.	
Subreach 2 (upper 1.6 miles below Rollins).	This section has good access with a popular informal trail on the north side from Highway 174 to a swimming hole and fishing areas. Parking is available at the Highway 174 bridge; there are no sanitation facilities, or developed trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This subreach is considered to provide the best fishing opportunities in the watershed. • The area is used by anglers, swimmers, hikers and naturalists. • There are historic sites and tribal cultural uses on this subreach.
Subreach 1 (8.8 miles). Includes Ben Taylor Road to Milk Ranch.	This subreach also has good access. There is a large informal parking area at Ben Taylor Road, . A connector trail could be developed on NID land to Ben Taylor area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Taylor to Milk Ranch is popular with boaters, tubers, recreational gold panning and anglers. • The fishing is considered to be good in this area. • The city of Colfax is nearby and the area is heavily used for recreation.
Bear River Campground/Milk Ranch Road to Dog Bar.	Excellent access from Milk Ranch Road and Plumtree Road. There are campground trails along the river and above the river on public lands. This area would provide ready access for handicap services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bear River Campground section, providing camping sites next to the river, • Two group camps • Provides Class II floats and is often used by kayakers as a winter learning stretch. • Popular for swimming, wading, fishing and gold

		<p>panning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing is popular throughout the reach, and particularly good upstream from the campgrounds.
Bear River at Dog Bar Road/Bridge	<p>Good access from both the Nevada and Placer county sides; however, Dog Bar Road has tight curves and is, in places, one lane. The bridge over the river is one lane as well. Parking used to be available but is no longer provided and as a consequence users of the very popular recreation spot park along the road, further jeopardizing public safety. Trails go both upstream and downstream from the bridge. There are no sanitation facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very popular for swimming, sun bathing, gold panning and fishing Dog Bar is a take out for Class II rafting and floating from Ben Taylor and Milk Ranch.
Dog Bar to Combie.	<p>This stretch has limited public access and although it parallels a large residential area, receives little public use due to the lack of access. NID lands are nearly continuous between Dog Bar and Combie.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If access and trails were available, the Combie section would provide fishing, swimming, hiking and equestrian opportunities for the nearby communities. Good Class II boating reach, but not publicly accessible at Combie.

With the exception of the immediate area of the Bear River Campgrounds, there are no provisions for public recreation – no maintained trails, no sanitary stations, and no reserved parking. Although most of the present and potential public recreation uses of the Bear River corridor between Reach 2 and Reach 6 occur within the boundaries of the current FERC Yuba Bear/Drum Spaulding licenses, the licensees do not provide riverine recreation opportunities for the very large demand for public recreation along the Bear River.

The Bear River corridor offers an exceptional opportunity to meet the public demand for hiking and river recreation opportunities and these opportunities must be addressed in the relicensing.