

## **APPENDIX N**

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Lower Feather River Corridor Management Plan  
Conceptual Recreation Plan



# LOWER FEATHER RIVER CORRIDOR CONCEPTUAL RECREATION PLAN

## N.1 INTRODUCTION

This *Lower Feather River Corridor Conceptual Recreation Plan* provides an overview of potential recreational opportunities in the plan area for the *Lower Feather River Corridor Management Plan* (LFRCMP). This recreation plan discusses how the opportunities relate to identified recreation needs, existing recreational uses and facilities, and the extensive network of natural and restored areas (e.g., the Feather River Wildlife Area [FRWA]) along the Lower Feather River (LFR) corridor. This document also recommends recreation improvements to address key objectives identified by the LFRCMP Work Group and meet the common interests and goals of land managers and stakeholders.

The LFRCMP plan area offers diverse motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities to Yuba and Sutter County residents and visitors. It is a significant recreation resource and an important source of support for the local economy. However, the plan area lacks adequate trails and public access to the river and open space, and the area between the levee and the river has been largely underused (City of Yuba City 2004; Yuba County 2011). In addition, concern is growing about illegal access to many areas by off-road vehicles (ORVs), which are damaging private property and levee slopes, tearing up patrol roads, and destroying seepage berms (Fordice, pers. comm., 2012).

The desire and vision for recreation in the LFRCMP plan area is to create a safe, attractive, and active public parkway by using the Feather and Bear rivers and the land between the rivers and adjacent levees, and by emphasizing connectivity to existing public amenities, adjoining urban areas, and the more than 3,000 acres of existing natural areas. The LFR Work Group identified the following specific objectives for a public parkway along the Feather River corridor:

1. Increase and improve river recreation access with boat ramps in underserved reaches of the river and increase locations for canoe, raft, and kayak access.
2. Increase and improve public access and develop pedestrian trails and bank fishing sites in areas that would not disturb sensitive resources.
3. Promote connectivity between trails, facilities, and open space to increase opportunities for passive recreation and reduce trespass and gate vandalism.
4. Increase public awareness of the benefits of natural ecosystem processes.
5. Provide interpretive resources to build public understanding and support for corridor management activities.
6. Maintain opportunities for hunting and fishing in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW's) FRWA.
7. Where appropriate and compatible with habitat and species management goals, explore hunting and fishing opportunities in the TRLIA Feather River Setback area.

A successful river parkway provides many benefits:

- ▶ Opportunities for healthier lifestyle choices
- ▶ Greater public appreciation for flood management and environmental protection efforts in the corridor
- ▶ An increase in the local economy's diversity
- ▶ Improved river and floodway access for scenic vistas and multiuse recreation (fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, and environmental interpretation)

The primary challenges to planning and implementing a successful river parkway are establishing a lead agency to develop recreational improvements, achieving a cooperative approach between numerous and varied stakeholders, garnering the support of adjacent private landowners, and securing funding (Stoll Engineering 2009).

For this *Lower Feather River Corridor Conceptual Recreation Plan* to be consistent with LFRCMP goals and objectives, the need to improve public-access and recreation opportunities must be balanced with other needs: long-term flood protection, maintenance of appropriate agricultural uses, compatibility with future land uses and adjacent private interests, economic sustainability, and preservation/restoration of environmentally sensitive lands and water. Detailed implementation of the conceptual plans provided here will need to be evaluated in close coordination with agencies and stakeholders. In particular, any proposed changes to CDFW lands will require close coordination with CDFW wildlife management staff.

## **N.2 APPROACH**

Existing recreation facilities and uses and opportunities to improve public access and recreational facilities in the plan area were identified during development of this recreation plan. This information was identified based on reviews of various planning documents, restoration project proposals, and public access improvement summaries, and discussions with members of local organizations. The following documents were reviewed:

- ▶ *Feather River Parkway Strategic Plan* (City of Yuba City 2002<sup>1</sup>)
- ▶ *Feather River Parkway Opportunities for Public Access* (Stoll Engineering 2009)
- ▶ The Three Rivers Levee Improvement Authority (TRLIA) application to the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) Flood Protection Corridor Program for Phase II of the Three Rivers Flood Corridor Project (TRLIA 2011)
- ▶ The TRLIA application to DWR's FloodSAFE Environmental Stewardship and Statewide Resources Office for the Feather River Floodway Corridor Restoration Project (TRLIA 2013)

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<sup>1</sup> The *Feather River Parkway Strategic Plan*, a comprehensive plan that creates a framework for land improvements on the west bank of the Feather River, was developed by Yuba City and adopted as part of its general plan (City of Yuba City 2004).

Additional resources reviewed include a summary of CDFW's *Department of Fish and Game Proposed Public Access Improvement Projects for the Lower Feather River Corridor* (DFG n.d.) and communications with individuals knowledgeable about the plan area.

Chapter 3, "Existing Corridor Conditions," of the LFRCMP summarizes existing public access and recreation facilities and uses within the plan area (refer to Section 3.6, "Recreation"). Opportunities to improve access and recreation were evaluated in terms of their contribution to meeting LFRCMP objectives (listed in Chapter 1, "Introduction") and compatibility with overall floodway management goals, such as flood control and resource protection. Recommended improvements to public access and recreational facilities are summarized below and depicted in Exhibit N-1, along with the mapped locations of existing facilities and uses.

### **N.3 RECOMMENDED PUBLIC-ACCESS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

This recreation plan recommends the following primary public-access and recreation improvements for the plan area:

- ▶ Develop new and improve existing boat launch facilities for motorized, and especially nonmotorized, watercraft in the southern portion of the plan area.
- ▶ Use existing levee and access roads for multiuse recreation.
- ▶ Develop interpretive nature trails and centers for educational opportunities related to river ecology and floodway management in key areas of interest.
- ▶ Improve or develop associated parking and basic amenities.

The current levee system offers an exceptional opportunity for public access on both sides of the river and facilitates public access to the water's edge (Stoll Engineering 2009). Additionally, proposed floodway restoration projects are unique in that they can enable development of existing and new recreational uses (including interpretation/education) that are compatible with the goals of restoration, while protecting areas from unwanted use or degradation.

ORV use is currently popular in the plan area, primarily in its northeast portion; however, motorized uses are neither recommended nor compatible with pedestrian/biking/horse trails or habitat restoration efforts. Sufficient facilities for motorized recreation exist in other parts of Yuba and Sutter counties (Stoll Engineering 2009), and improving ORV facilities in the plan area is not recommended. Where ORV use is damaging roads, levee slopes, agricultural infrastructure and property, and sensitive habitat, this recreation plan recommends measures to discourage and curtail ORV use (e.g., physical barriers, ticketing and fines, signage) in combination with recreation improvements.

#### **N.4.1 PUBLIC ACCESS**

The recommended management actions described below would provide public-access opportunities in the plan area, including access to the floodway and riverbank. The goal is to provide public boat ramps and launches for

motorized and nonmotorized boating in high-activity areas and river access for fishing, swimming, scenic and wildlife viewing, and river interpretation. Placing boat ramps/docks in areas that link to the trail system could also eventually serve as drop-off and pick-up locations for a future water taxi (City of Yuba City 2002).

All access improvements should meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards, where possible; such improvements (i.e., gentle grades, smooth surfaces) would additionally benefit elderly and child users (Stoll Engineering 2009). Additionally, access improvements should include systemwide signage that encourages appropriate uses in desired areas and restricts or prohibits unauthorized uses (e.g., ORVs) in sensitive areas (Stoll Engineering 2009).

The State Lands Commission (SLC) has jurisdiction and management control over certain public lands of the state, including the beds of California's navigable rivers and lakes, which are known as sovereign lands (State Lands Commission 2010). The SLC holds its sovereign lands for the benefit of all the people of the State, subject to the public trust for water related commerce, navigation, fisheries, recreation, open space and other recognized public trust uses. The SLC maintains a multiple use management policy to ensure the greatest possible public benefit is derived from these lands. The SLC is responsible for safe-guarding the public's rights to use the public trust lands, including those of the LFRCMP study area. The proposed public-access opportunities described in the LFRCMP recreation management actions, including access to the floodway and riverbank, are consistent with the SLC policies of providing the greatest possible public benefit.

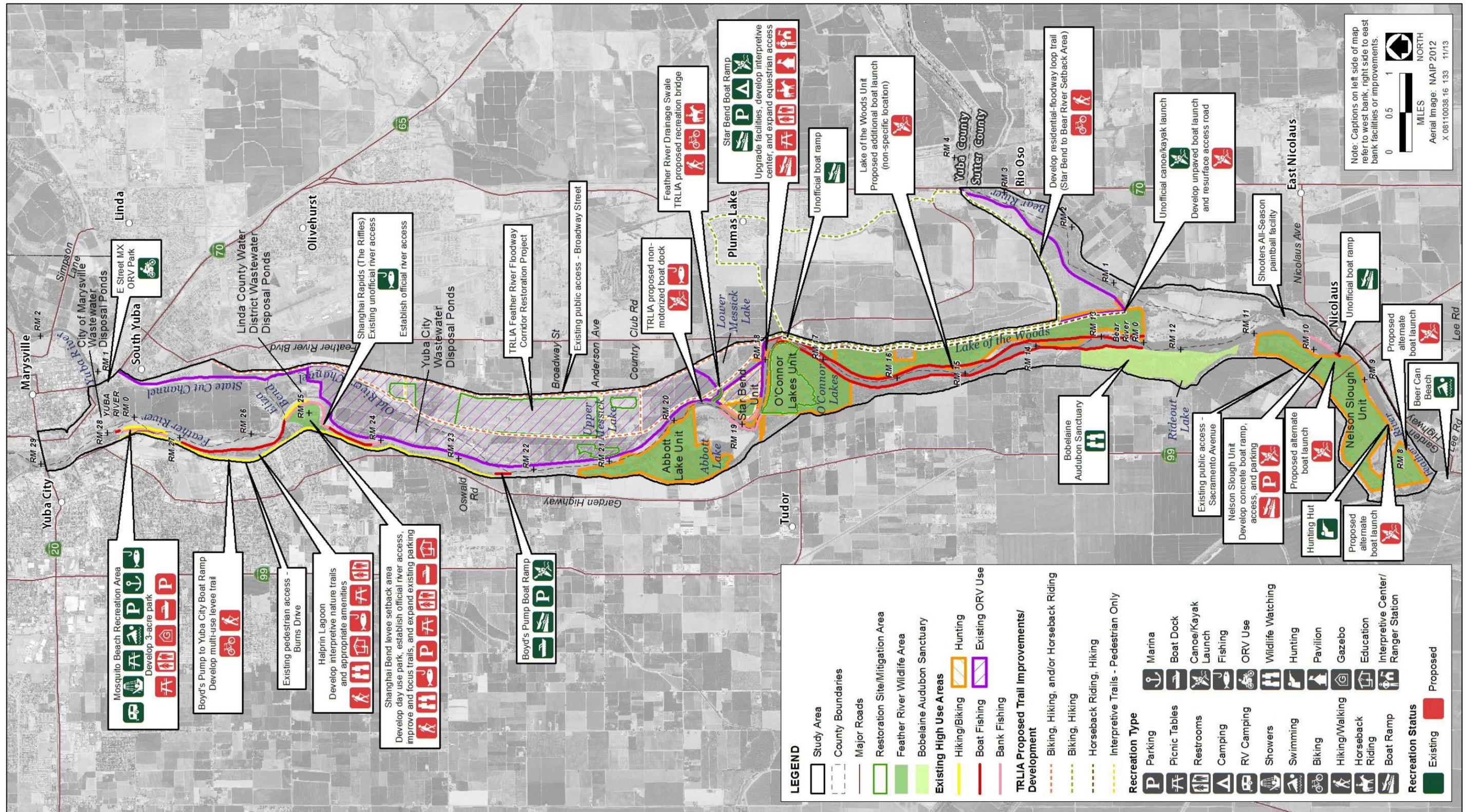
#### **DEVELOP EXISTING CANOE/KAYAK ACCESS RAMP AT THE BEAR RIVER**

Kayak/canoe access points downstream of Star Bend would provide more options for canoeing and kayaking, which is very popular in this portion of the corridor. One opportunity is to develop the existing unimproved access point near the mouth of the Bear River near into a nonpaved, improved canoe/kayak access ramp and to grade and resurface the access road (Stoll Engineering 2009). This access point was established to maintain the Bear River setback area drainage swale but is also used by the public as an unofficial canoe/kayak access point (Exhibit N-1, Feather River Mile [RM] 12.7, Bear RM 0).

#### **DEVELOP BOAT RAMP AND PARKING AT THE NELSON SLOUGH UNIT**

Boat access in the Nelson Slough Unit of the FRWA has also been identified as a key need. This area is frequently used for rafting, canoeing, and kayaking and would be an ideal location for boaters to end their floats. Good fishing opportunities also occur along this stretch of the river. Developing a boat ramp in the Nelson Slough Unit has been proposed in a number of locations between Feather RM 7.5 and RM 10 (Exhibit N-1): the west bank at RM 9.5, the west bank 1,000 feet upriver from RM 9.5, the west bank at RM 8.4 (the mouth of Nelson Slough), or the east bank at RM 8 (Neubert, pers. comm., 2011).

CDFW proposes to locate this boat ramp along the canal at the existing access point to the Nelson Slough Unit (from Sacramento Avenue), on the west bank north of the State Route (SR) 99 Bridge. This site would provide river access along a long stretch of the river that currently has no access, and would support additional fishing opportunities and improve rafting, canoeing, and kayaking opportunities by reducing float distances between existing boat access points. CDFW proposes to develop a concrete boat ramp with a gravel access road, develop a gravel parking area for 100 cars on the levee side of the road, and possibly pave the levee road and portions of Sacramento Avenue to accommodate increased access and use.



Source: City of Yuba City 2002, Stoll Engineering 2009, Neubert 2011, TRLIA 2013, AECOM 2013

Exhibit N-1

Lower Feather River Corridor – Location of Existing and Proposed Recreational Improvements



When developing proposed boat-launch facilities, CDFW should consider the sedimentation patterns in the river reach along Nelson Slough, particularly downstream of RM 15. As described in Chapter 5, “Hydraulic, Hydrologic, and Sediment Transport Modeling of Potential Future Conditions,” alternating sandbars and the shallow channel conditions during low flows create potentially hazardous situations for motorized boating. Ramps and channel inlets established in this reach might also have to be cleared frequently to remove accumulated sediment.

### **UPGRADE FACILITIES AND DEVELOP AN INTERPRETIVE CENTER AT THE STAR BEND BOAT RAMP**

The Star Bend Boat Ramp was recently improved by the addition of campsites and paved parking, but it continues to lack basic amenities and sufficient capacity. Potential additional improvements could include widening the boat ramp ; providing restroom facilities, drinking fountains, picnic facilities (including a covered facility), trash cans, signage; and expanding the parking area, including providing parking for horse trailers as described further in Section N.4.2, “Trails” (Exhibit N-1, RM 18) (Stoll Engineering 2009).

This area also has potential as an ideal staging area/gateway for land and water access to the Feather River setback area to the north. A river interpretive center, or park host site, has been proposed for development here as well, between the Star Bend Boat Ramp and Feather River Boulevard, to serve as the primary gateway for recreation in the FRWA and adjacent Feather River setback area (TRLIA 2013). The center would provide interpretation of cultural and natural resources, including trails that lead to key mitigation areas (e.g., valley elderberry longhorn beetle mitigation site, drainage swale, and wetland mitigation area; see Section N.4.4, “TRLIA Feather River Floodway Corridor Restoration Project”). Pending available funding, full-time staffing of the facility would also increase safety and general site upkeep (e.g., decrease dumping) through increased presence and visibility by park attendants and attendees.

It is important that developments at this location be planned with sensitivity to adjacent landowners. Upgrading and developing the Star Bend Boat Ramp would also improve access via land and water to the underused Lake of the Woods Unit.

## **N.4.2 TRAILS**

This section summarizes opportunities for trail improvements in the plan area. Recommendations for trail development include those for biking, hiking, river walking, fitness, nature viewing and interpretation, and horseback riding. The trail system would provide connectivity throughout the plan area, with areas to rest, orient, and learn, and would be designed and sited to take advantage of nature viewing and educational opportunities that minimize impacts on sensitive resources.

### **ESTABLISH RIVER ACCESS TO “THE RIFFLES” AT SHANGHAI BEND**

Currently there is unofficial access to the river’s edge at “The Riffles” on the east bank, via access roads across the east levee and past the wastewater treatment pond facilities. Current users are attracted to this popular area primarily for fishing. Developing formal public access to the west side of the river at this location (Exhibit N-1, RM 25) would be consistent with Yuba City’s past commitment to developing its riverfront lands (City of Yuba City 2002). Formalizing access on the east bank would involve developing and designating an official access

route, which could be based on improving the existing informal access. Additional recreation improvements in the greater Shanghai Bend area are described below.

### **DEVELOP MULTIUSE TRAIL NETWORK ON THE EAST BANK LEVEE AND ACCESS ROAD**

The existing system of levee and maintenance roads provides a basis for a trail network that could be improved to better facilitate multiuse recreation by hikers, bikers, and equestrians and provide connectivity along the floodway corridor. However, continuity and access are currently restricted by a series of levee gates. To better facilitate multiple uses and continuity, the following trail improvements have been proposed along the east bank from the Feather River setback area south to the Bear River setback area (Stoll Engineering 2009):

- ▶ Replace existing vehicle gates on the levee road with bollards that facilitate multiple uses.
- ▶ Resurface the levee road and maintenance roads on the waterside of the levee from SR 70 to Star Bend with a combination paved/aggregate surface.
- ▶ Widen and resurface the narrow informal trails north of the Star Bend Boat Ramp to accommodate multiple uses and provide a key linkage between the boat ramp area and adjacent access roads/trails.
- ▶ Resurface levee and maintenance roads from Star Bend to the Bear River for use by equestrians, bikers, and hikers.

### **EXPAND EQUESTRIAN ACCESS AT STAR BEND**

To further enhance equestrian opportunities, the parking area at the Star Bend Boat Ramp could be expanded, repaved, and restriped to accommodate horse trailers, and additional equestrian amenities could be developed at the trailhead (Stoll Engineering 2009). These improvements would improve equestrian trail accessibility along most of the east bank of the floodway, primarily north of the Bear River setback area.

### **DEVELOP A LOOP TRAIL BETWEEN STAR BEND AND THE BEAR RIVER SETBACK AREA.**

This loop would connect the east end of the Bear River levee at SR 70 to the Star Bend Boat Ramp (Stoll Engineering 2009). The loop would use existing levee roads, existing bike lanes, and sidewalks along River Oaks Boulevard and within the Plumas Lakes residential area, and would involve developing additional bike lanes along Algodon Road and Feather River Boulevard.

### **DEVELOP MULTIUSE LEVEE TRAIL FROM BOYD'S PUMP TO THE YUBA CITY BOAT RAMP**

Particularly high levels of use by bikers, walkers, and runners occur along the section of levee road between Boyd's Pump and the Yuba City Boat Ramp (Exhibit N-1). Therefore, improvements to the existing road system like those suggested for the east bank to facilitate continuity and multiple use (e.g., replacing gates with bollards) could be implemented to develop bike and pedestrian use along this portion of the levee road.

### **IMPROVE TRAILS TO SHANGHAI BEND FISHING/SCENIC SITES AND EXPAND PARKING**

One area of particular beauty and interest that has been identified as a scenic and wildlife viewing opportunity is The Riffles at Shanghai Bend. A viewing platform and trailhead along the west bank at this location could serve

as a gateway to encourage users to explore surrounding natural areas, primarily northward (Stoll Engineering 2009). Trails could be developed in the Shanghai Bend area (Exhibit N-1, RM 25), with habitat preservation as the primary goal, by using raised trail platforms and restricting motor vehicle access (City of Yuba City 2002). Specific developments could include improving existing informal trails that provide access to and between the two best fishing sites (immediately upstream of the rapids and farther upstream at Jesus Hole) and incorporating interpretive exhibits along the trails (DFG n.d.). Observation decks could highlight the Dunes (i.e., sandbar area) and Riffles (City of Yuba City 2002), and picnic facilities could be developed for day users away from sensitive resource areas (Stoll Engineering 2009). The Shanghai Bend sandbar is one of very few locations in the plan area that provide swimming access. However, because of the ecological sensitivity of this area, formalizing beach access at this location is not recommended.

To support proposed trail developments, expanded public parking west of the levee at the end of Shanghai Bend Road would also be needed. The parking area would be screened from the adjacent residential area, and could be developed to provide ADA-compliant wheelchair and bike ramps over the levee, as well as ADA access to the viewing platform at The Riffles (DFG n.d.).

### **DEVELOP NATURE TRAILS AT HALPRIN LAGOON**

North of Shanghai Bend is a natural area along the west bank with a mix of forest and wetland that could accommodate interpretive nature trails, wildlife viewing areas, and an outdoor classroom (City of Yuba City 2002). Three miles of unpaved nature trails proposed in this area (Exhibit N-1, RM 26) would connect significant viewing areas such as Halprin Lagoon, a backwater pond near the rivers' edge, and provide a prime location for the above-mentioned activities. Like Shanghai Bend, this area is generally targeted for improvements that would result in minimal impacts, given the high quality of riparian habitat that is present. Adding information kiosks along trails would provide educational opportunities. A fishing platform/rest area is also proposed, as well as picnic areas along the woodland edge with tables, turf, shade, barbeque pits, and restroom facilities. Additionally, portions of the trails in this area could have a fitness/obstacle course component (City of Yuba City 2002).

### **N.4.3 PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS**

Development of parks and recreation areas is intended to provide ample open space for active and passive recreation (e.g., tot lots, open turf area for pick-up games, picnic areas with restrooms, plazas, and covered pavilions). A more extensive civic center and commercial district proposed for the northern portion of the plan area, along the west bank, would be intended to serve the adjacent urban centers; however, these facilities may be outside the initial scope and priorities for recreational development.

### **DEVELOP A 3-ACRE PARK AT MOSQUITO BEACH RECREATION AREA**

This area is heavily used by fishermen and recreationists (Neubert, pers. comm., 2011) and generally lacks the natural resource sensitivity of other areas within the floodway (e.g., Shanghai Bend and adjacent woodland/wetland areas, the FRWA, the Bear River setback area). Therefore, developing a park here would directly address recreation priorities without compromising natural resource protection goals. Improvements could include picnic areas along the beach with tables, barbeques, shade, turf, and restrooms; hard-surface plazas and a gazebo for events; and docking facilities south of the marina (Exhibit N-1, RM 27.7). Brush clearing and

native plantings would improve the natural character of the beach park. Parking would be available at the existing marina, park, and commercial area.

### **DEVELOP A DAY-USE PARK AT SHANGHAI BEND**

In the Shanghai Bend vicinity, a small passive park could be developed in the “levee bowl” (formed by the horseshoe shape of the old levee), with open turf areas, picnic and restroom facilities, and a boat dock (Exhibit N-1, RM 25). Developing an information center in the park would provide opportunities to educate the public about the area’s resource sensitivities.

## **N.4.4 TRLIA FEATHER RIVER FLOODWAY CORRIDOR RESTORATION PROJECT**

As part of the Feather River Floodway Corridor Restoration Project, TRLIA identified opportunities to improve recreational amenities in the Feather River setback area and provide access to the 500 acres being restored to natural habitat as part of the project. Potential opportunities include developing biking, hiking, and equestrian trails, and providing a boat dock for fishing access and launching canoes and kayaks. To facilitate development of a connected trail system in this location, TRLIA also proposed constructing a recreation bridge across the Feather River drainage swale. These opportunities would be developed further in combination with mitigation concepts and ecological objectives identified for the project. Development of these amenities would have further recreational benefits if connected to facilities to the south at Star Bend where recent improvements have been made, as described above.

Specifically, TRLIA proposed the following recreational improvements on the east side of the Feather River:

- ▶ Improve (e.g., widen, grade, resurface with gravel) the existing levee road for biking and hiking, from the northern end of the Feather River setback levee south to and along the north levee of the Bear River setback area.
- ▶ Improve existing access roads along the old levee and those connecting to the existing public-access point across the levee at Broadway Street for hiking, biking, hunting, fishing, and equestrian uses.
- ▶ Develop a new access road (including a foot bridge over the drainage swale in the Feather River setback area) along existing informal trails between the drainage swale and Star Bend Boat Ramp and Day Use Area to further connect hiking, biking, and equestrian trails between the Feather River setback area and areas to the south.
- ▶ Construct a boat dock for canoe, kayak, and fishing access in the southern portion of the Feather River setback area, near Lower Messick Lake near RM 19.
- ▶ Develop a nonmotorized trail for equestrian use along the waterside of the levee between Star Bend and the Bear River setback area.
- ▶ Develop interpretive trails to existing mitigation and restoration sites in the Feather River setback area.

## N.5 ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Various stakeholders have offered additional recommendations for improving or expanding recreational opportunities in or adjacent to the LFRCMP plan area, as described below. These recommendations are not proposed as management actions in the plan area, because priority was given to improvements that support multiple goals of the LFRCMP and contribute to an overall enhancement of recreational opportunities in the plan area. However, in some cases, specific features were incorporated into the LFRCMP recommendations described above (e.g., improvements at Mosquito Beach). The following stakeholder recommendations focus primarily on improvements in the developed areas of Marysville and Yuba City in the far north of the LFRCMP plan area:

- ▶ **Upgrade boat launch facilities at Marysville Riverfront Park and the Yuba City Boat Ramp.** The existing boat launch facilities at Marysville Riverfront Park and the Yuba City Boat Ramp are aging and could be rehabilitated by adding amenities such as restrooms and drinking fountains (Stoll Engineering 2009). Specifically for the Yuba City Boat Ramp and adjacent marina and recreational vehicle (RV) park, opportunities exist to improve vehicle circulation at the RV park and add campsites and restrooms; develop an inland small-craft marina for up to 100 boats, including floating docks, a public boat launch, and a fishing platform; develop trails that would connect to the remainder of the parkway (e.g., along the levee road and river's edge); and develop a commercial district and park improvements at Mosquito Beach.
- ▶ **Improve downtown-floodway routes and rehabilitate the pedestrian undercrossing at the Union Pacific bridge.** Access to the LFR corridor from downtown Marysville and Yuba City is less than straightforward for bikers and pedestrians; therefore, an opportunity exists to improve the routes for these users between the downtown areas and existing floodway access points (Stoll Engineering 2009). To additionally improve connectivity between these urban centers and the floodway, the existing pedestrian undercrossing beneath the Union Pacific Railroad bridge should be rehabilitated to be ADA compliant and more safe and inviting to multiuse recreation, particularly bicycle riding (Stoll Engineering 2009).
- ▶ **Develop river and “shelf” trails between the Yuba River and SR 20.** North of the confluence with the Yuba River, additional bike and pedestrian trails are proposed along the river and between the river and levee, with occasional “plazas” (pedestrian nodes for resting, viewing, picnicking, vending, and docking when along the riverfront) (City of Yuba City 2002). These trails would link to other trails along the rest of the corridor.
- ▶ **Develop a civic center along the west bank in south Yuba City (B Street).** This area could serve as a gateway connecting the city to the parkway. The civic center would include a river pavilion and plaza for events, including focal points for gatherings by large groups, and several smaller areas with seating distributed throughout to serve as resting places. Boat moorings would be developed to accommodate riverside access.
- ▶ **Develop a commercial district at the Yuba City Boat Ramp.** This improvement would provide economic opportunities in the plan area. The commercial district would be sited between the boat ramp and the levee, with access via Second Street. It would be intended to attract and facilitate activity in the marina region and would have a waterfront theme; structures would be located outside the flood zone and accessible to trail users on top of the levee (City of Yuba City 2002). Restaurants, recreational supplies, and gift stores would be included in the commercial district.

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