

### 3.10 RECREATION

This section describes the existing recreation facilities and uses in the project area as well as applicable state and local policies. It then assesses the potential effects of the proposed project restoration activities (both construction and post-construction) on these uses. Mitigation measures are identified as applicable.

#### 3.10.1 Setting

##### Environmental Setting

###### *General Setting*

###### Existing Recreation Facilities and Uses

The Project extends from below the Putah Diversion Dam to the western boundary of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. Publicly accessible trails and other recreational areas abut the creek in several areas. The public can enjoy views of the creek and start/end canoe trips from picnic areas and trails in these parks; however, the creek is not heavily used for boating due to numerous stagnant pools, shallow areas, and vegetation hazards.

###### Public Access/Recreation

Public access is available on publicly owned lands in and near lower Putah Creek in or near the Project alignment. These include (from west to east):

- **Lake Solano County Park:** Lake Solano Park is located off of Highway 128, just west of the upstream terminus of the project alignment. It caters especially to campers, picnickers, kayakers, canoers, and anglers. The park has a Nature Center and trail opportunities for short day hikes, bird watching, and wildlife photography. Owned by the Bureau of Reclamation, Lake Solano is managed for public recreation by Solano County. More than 60,000 visitors a year enjoy recreational activities both on and off the water. The lake is considered one of the best fly-fishing spots in the Sacramento Valley. The County operates a campground with 58 campsites, many with water and electric hookups. There are restrooms with flush toilets, sinks, and hot showers. The day use area has picnic sites, group picnic pads for rent, a free boat launch (non-motorized boats only), parking, and restrooms. The picnic area is located directly east of the campground.
- **Winters Putah Creek Nature Park:** This City of Winters Park, located in Winters between the proposed Duncan/Giovannoni and East of 505 sites, is partially open

and nearing completion. It includes a restored stream channel as well as picnic areas, bicycle and pedestrian trails.

The old railroad bridge will be converted for pedestrian and bicycle access to a trail system connecting the two sides of the stream. A spiral ramp leading from the south end of the railroad bridge will provide access to the south floodplain trail network, and a footbridge across the full floodplain of the Creek, near the I-505 bridge right of way, will provide crossing downstream.

- **Stevenson Bridge:** This bridge spans Putah Creek which lies about 100 feet below at the junction of County Road 95a (Yolo County) and Stevenson Bridge Road (Solano County). The bridge area is host to substantial informal recreation use, is heavily used by graffiti artists, and includes an informal path along the creek. The bridge was built in 1923 and has been identified by the state of California as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of only three bridges in California that utilizes an architectural design known as the "overhead tie arch." The age and condition of the bridge have led the state to declare it "structurally deficient" and "functionally obsolete." In 2007, Yolo and Solano counties approved a \$5.5 million rehabilitation plan. The construction, to date, has not happened, and an outpouring of support from the community stopped the City's plan to buff the graffiti.
- **University California, Davis (UC Davis) Putah Creek Riparian Reserve:** The Putah Creek Riparian Reserve is a stream and grassland ecosystem, managed for teaching, research, wildlife, and habitat protection. There are approximately 640 acres within the Reserve, with 380 acres at the Russell Ranch and the remainder on the main UC Davis campus. A majority of the Putah Creek Riparian Reserve lands on the main campus are open to the public for passive recreation activities, such as fishing, boating, swimming, and hiking. The publicly accessible areas are located along Putah Creek, from the parking area at Pedrick Road/Road 98, downstream to the parking area at Old Davis Road, on the north side of the creek. Other areas, such as Russell Ranch, are not open to the general public, but are open to research and teaching use. Bicycles are allowed on the Preserve but must remain on the levee road, and are not allowed on trails. The south bank of the creek is privately owned, and not accessible to the public for recreation use.

The Preserve includes four access/parking areas:

- The Old Davis Road Parking Area is located on the north side of the creek, downstream from the Old Davis Road Bridge via the paved levee road to the gravel parking area. There are no restroom facilities.

- The Brooks Road Parking is located south of the intersection of Levee Road and Brooks Road, west of Highway 113. It includes a gravel parking area with two picnic tables. There are no restroom facilities.
- Fire Ring Picnic Grounds is on the north side of Levee Road next to the picnic area. There are picnic tables, a drinking fountain, and a fire pit. There are no restroom facilities.
- The Road 98/Pedrick Road Parking Area is located west of County Road 98, just north of Putah Creek at the County Road 98/Pedrick Road Bridge. This is a gravel and dirt lot and there are no restroom facilities and is located at the western-most end of the Putah Creek Reserve. There is one portable restroom available at this location.
- **Davis South Fork Preserve:** The City of Davis has restored 120 acres of riparian woodland and grassland habitat along the South Fork of Putah Creek. The South Fork Preserve is intended to demonstrate that wildlife habitat, managed public access, commercial agriculture and flood control facilities can coexist with minimal conflicts. There is a parking lot and interpretive signage with plans for trails in the future.
- **Informal Recreation Use:** Informal recreational use of the creek occurs at various points along the creek. The primary informal recreation use is swimming in some of the deep pools, including the large pool at the eastern edge of the Winters/Putah Creek Park.

Specific recreational uses along each Project reach are described under Project Site Conditions, below.

### **Project Area Conditions by Reach**

#### *NAWCA/Mariani*

There is no formal recreational access to this North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) alignment. Informal public access to the creek is available from farm roads off of Putah Creek Road, which runs east/west, south of this alignment. Informal access to this site on the south side of the creek also may be available from the Lake Sonoma Park area, to the west.

#### *Duncan-Giovannoni*

There is no formal recreational access to this alignment. Public access to the creek is available from Putah Creek Road, which parallels the southeast edge of this alignment. This alignment also lies just upstream from the Winters Putah Creek Nature Park.

*Winters Putah Creek Nature Park*

This reach is subject to heavy recreational use. Recreation improvements on this reach, including trails, benches, picnic areas, and creekside access areas along this reach have been implemented in the past few years as part of the Winters Putah Creek Nature Park project. Informal recreational use of the large pool at the eastern edge of this Park as a swimming hole also has occurred.

*East of 505*

Public access to the creek is available from Putah Creek Road, which parallels the southeast edge of this alignment. There is no formal recreational access to this alignment.

*Warren*

There is no public access to the creek in this reach. There is no formal recreational use of this alignment.

*Upper McNamara*

There are no formal recreational facilities or access in this reach. There is informal public access to the creek from Putah Creek Road, which extends along the western half of the Upper McNamara Pool.

*Lower McNamara*

There is no public access to the creek in this reach. There is no formal recreational use of this alignment.

*MacQuiddy (Lester)*

There is no public access to the creek in this reach. There is no formal recreational use of this alignment.

*Russell Ranch*

The north side of this reach is a part of the UC Davis Putah Creek Riparian Reserve; however, there is no public access to the creek in this reach. There is no formal recreational use of this alignment.

*Stevenson Bridge*

There are no formal recreational facilities or access in this reach. As described above there is heavy informal recreational use of the east side of the bridge. The access to the

bridge is proposed for realignment, which could potentially provide an opportunity for enhanced public access (Marovich, 2014).

#### *Glide Ranch*

There are no formal recreational facilities or access in this reach. Levee Road provides informal public access to the creek for recreation in this reach.

#### *Nishikawa*

There is public access to the north side of the creek from Pedrick Road/Lincoln Highway. There is also a walking path (Putah Creek Riparian Preserve Trail) that provides recreational access within this reach.

#### *Olmo-Hammond-UCD*

There is public access from UC Davis in both directions along the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve Trail, which runs into the Olmo-Hammond-UCD site (continuing from the Nishikawa site) along the north side of the creek. A paved levee road and a picnic area also provide recreational access to the creek.

#### *I-80 to Old Davis Road*

Putah Creek is crossed by U.S. Highway 80 on the west, and Old Davis Road provides public access from the east. Additionally, the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve Trail crosses the creek and provides recreational access.

#### *Old Davis Road to Mace*

There is substantial access for pedestrians and drivers to this site from UC Davis, which is to the north of Putah Creek. There is informal public access to the creek from Levee Road.

#### *Mace to Road 106A*

There is public access to the creek from Road 106A and 5<sup>th</sup> Street runs along the creek on the south end for the lower third of the alignment. There is a gated parking lot and a trail that provides access to the previously restored riparian area (City of Davis South Fork Preserve) on Putah Creek on the south side of Mace Road.

#### *Road 106A to Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area*

There is informal public access to the creek via farm roads from Road 106A.

## Regulatory Setting

### *Federal Regulations*

There are no federal regulations applicable to recreation on this stretch of Putah Creek.

### *State Regulations*

### Land Use

The only State land use regulations applicable to this stretch of Putah Creek are associated with the University of California, Davis 2003 Long Range Development Plan (UC Davis, 2003). With respect to recreational uses along the area of Putah Creek adjacent to the University, the Plan states:

Maintain and expand low-density academic, support, and research park uses along the Hopkins Road corridor. Include an open space setback along the west side of Hopkins Road for an off-street bike path and landscaped area to connect points north to the Putah Creek Riparian Reserve. (UC Davis, 2003, p. 44)

### *Local Regulations*

### Solano County

The Park and Recreation Element (Solano County, 2003) includes the following proposal relevant to the proposed Project (p. 34):

Work with public agencies to solve the silt problem at Lake Solano County Park.

### *Rationale*

The siltation build up on Putah Creek adjacent to the County Park is causing a negative impact on the park resources and recreation uses. Historically, Putah Creek in this location has been 7 to 8 feet deep; however, it is currently about 2 to 4 feet deep. As the water becomes shallower, it becomes warmer which results in an increase growth of algae. Algae growth can be harmful to aquatic life and humans engaging in water contact activities. The creek is located on federal land (Bureau of Reclamation) as is most of the County Park. The integrity of its water source is important to the Solano Water Agency (SWA).

Although it would be very expensive to dredge the entire creek (reportedly \$50 billion dollars), less expensive methods should be explored with government

agencies and others who have an interest in the water quantity and quality of the creek. The County should initiate discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation and the SWA to encourage the development of a strategy for the future protection of Putah Creek and its recreation use for visitors to Lake Solano County Park. Once a strategy is adopted, the County should assist to the extent of its capability.

#### Park and Recreation Element

The Park and Recreation Element (Solano County, 2003), adopted before the current General Plan, identifies general policies for managing and improving the county's park and recreational facilities. Objectives and associated policies in the Park and Recreation Element include the following.

Objective 3: Identify, preserve and manage significant regional recreation and natural areas.

Policy C: The County shall work to protect identified recreational sites and natural resource areas.

Objective 5: Encourage appropriate multiple uses of public land for recreation and other uses.

#### Yolo County

The 2030 County of Yolo Countywide General Plan (Yolo County, 2009) Conservation and Open Space Element includes the following goals and policies applicable to the Proposed Project:

Goal CO-1: Natural Open Space. Provide a diverse, connected and accessible network of open space, to enhance natural resources and their appropriate use.

Policy CO-1.1 Expand and enhance an integrated network of open space to support recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, habitat, water management, aesthetics, and other beneficial uses.

Policy CO-1.2 Develop a connected system of recreational trails to link communities and parks throughout the county.

Policy CO-1.3 Create a network of regional parks and open space corridors that highlight unique resources and recreational opportunities for a variety of users.

Policy CO-1.6 Develop “gateways” or trailheads that provide access for the public to County, State, and Federal lands. Where located on private land, gateways shall be developed working with willing landowners.

Policy CO-1.7 Support efforts by willing landowners and non-profit groups to provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation. (Policy CO 1.29)

Policy CO-1.8 Encourage responsible stewardship of private lands. Promote increased opportunities for public access to waterways and other natural areas.

Policy CO-1.9 Promote the conservation of resources in new and existing park and open space facilities.

Policy CO-1.11 Coordinate the development of recreation areas and public open space with regional trail planning.

Policy CO-1.21 Emphasize the use of native grasses, shrubs and trees as the primary focus of restoration within resource parks and other open spaces.

Policy CO-1.23 Increase public access and recreational uses along waterways wherever feasible, particularly Cache Creek, Lower Putah Creek, the Yolo Bypass, and the Sacramento River.

Policy CO-1.26 Support improved access for bank fishing.

### **3.10.2 Significance Criteria**

The criteria used for determining the significance of an effect on recreational resources are based on Appendix G of the State of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Environmental Checklist) and professional standards and practices. Effects on both water-dependent and water-enhanced (land based) recreation opportunities may be considered significant for purposes of CEQA if an alternative would result in any one of the following conditions.

- The permanent loss or closure of well-established recreational facilities or activities.
- The substantial long-term reduction of recreation opportunities and experiences, such as reduce the amount of area available for a particular type of recreation.
- Cause an increase in the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.

- Result in potential inconsistencies with plans and policies related to the protection of recreation resources in the project area.

### **3.10.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Impacts and mitigation measures are described below both generally and by reach. Applicable impacts and mitigation measures for each reach are summarized in **Table 3.10-1**, at the end of this section.

#### **General Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

##### **Impact 3.10-1: Adverse Effects on Recreation.**

Recreation within the reaches would be temporarily affected during construction and potentially for a period of time following construction due to disturbance of facilities due to construction and associated access restrictions. The primary impacts would be loss of access to the creek and associated recreational amenities, including trails, picnic areas, and boating access. Because of the staging of the project (no more than 5 miles of restoration/year) this loss of access would be limited. However, for certain high-use areas (e.g., near UC Davis, at segments adjacent to Winters Putah Creek Park, and just downstream from Lake Sonoma), loss of access could be significant. Mitigation Measure 3.10-1 would reduce this impact, however depending on the feasibility of mitigation; the impacts may remain significant and unavoidable at certain higher-use sites. After restoration is complete, then access to most sites would be restored and, in some cases, improved.

During construction, certain segments of the creek would be dewatered, eliminating boating access. This impact would be less than significant because few boaters use the creek and limitations would be temporary. After restoration, boating conditions on many of the sites may be improved compared to existing conditions, with better defined channels, better flow currents, and less dangerous, non-native vegetation in and around the channel.

Removal of the deep pools as part of the Project would eliminate some informal swimming holes. It is possible that some pools may be retained off-channel. Because this use is generally on private lands, and not formally permitted in most cases, and because the Project would generally improve stream conditions for recreation, as described above, this impact is considered less than significant.

As described under Local Regulations, above, Yolo County's General Plan includes numerous policies promoting recreational access to Putah Creek. Although the Proposed Project does not include specific recreational access enhancements, it would replace existing trails and recreational facilities that would be affected by construction, and would not preclude future recreational enhancement along the creek. Mitigation Measure 3.10-2 would reduce this impact to a **less-than-significant** level.

*Mitigation 3.10-1: Provide Alternate Access to High-Use Recreational Sites.*

The following measures shall be implemented as feasible to reduce impacts of construction access:

- Where feasible, provide alternate trail and creek access where such access would be eliminated due to Project construction.
- Stage restoration work in high-use areas to permit continued access to parts of reaches that are not undergoing active construction activities.
- Minimize construction work limits.
- To the maximum extent feasible, store equipment and soil stockpiles within the active construction zone.
- If necessary, provide alternate access to picnic areas and formal trails/pathways that avoid the active construction zone.
- Provide an alternative canoe take out above the Olmo-Hammond-UCD site when boat take-out at that site is interrupted.

*Mitigation 3.10-2: Implement Applicable Yolo County Recreation Policies, Where Feasible.*

The Project sponsors shall work closely with Solano and Yolo Counties, UC Davis, and adjacent landowners to facilitate their provision of public access and recreational infrastructure into the proposed Project on public lands and in places where the landowner is a willing participant and where impacts to sensitive biological resources can be avoided.

### **Site-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

#### *NAWCA/Mariani*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Informal use of the creek in this reach would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is

minimal and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long-term, boating access through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

#### *Duncan-Giovannoni*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Informal use of the pool in this reach would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is minimal and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long term, boating access through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

#### *Winters Putah Creek Nature Park*

Recreation improvements proposed for this reach have already been implemented as part of the Winters Putah Creek project. Maintenance activities proposed by the Project would not adversely affect recreational activities in this reach. There would be **no impact** to recreational resources in this reach from the proposed Project.

#### *East of 505*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Any informal use of the pool in this site would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is minimal and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long term, boating access through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

#### *Warren*

Given that there is no public access to this reach, it is not currently used for any formal or informal public recreational activities. Although the Project has **no impact** on this reach, implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.10-2 would potentially improve recreational infrastructure and public access to the site.

#### *Upper McNamara*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. There is informal recreational use of the pool in this site, accessible via Putah Creek Road, which would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is minimal though and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long term, boating access through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

#### *Lower McNamara*

This reach is not currently publicly accessible by any road crossings or trails and thus it is not used for any formal public recreational activities. Any informal use of the pool or

creekside in this site would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is minimal and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long term, re-vegetation would improve the site and boating access as compared to existing conditions.

*MacQuiddy (Lester)*

This reach is not publicly accessible by any roads or trails and it is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Potential informal use of the pool or creek banks in this site would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. The elimination of any informal recreational access, if any, would be **less than significant**. In the long term, the vegetation and riparian resources of this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

*Russell Ranch*

This reach is in an agricultural area (privately owned south of the creek and part of the UC Putah Creek Preserve north of the creek) and is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Any informal use of the pool or creek banks in this site would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. Given that this use is minimal its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long-term, the recreational resources of this site (e.g., boating access) would be improved compared to existing conditions.

*Stevenson Bridge*

While this reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities, there is heavy informal recreational use of the area near the bridge that would be temporarily disrupted during construction. The site may be enhanced by the Project after construction, with the potential for more formal recreational access to be created. Thus, the impact on current informal recreational activities would be **significant but mitigated** by Mitigation Measure 3.10-1. In the long term, recreational resources (e.g., boating access) through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

*Glide Ranch*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. Informal use of the pool in this site would be reduced or eliminated by the Project. This use is minimal and its elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long-term, recreational access through this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

*Nishikawa*

This reach is currently publicly accessible by Pedrick Road and the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve Trail for recreational activities. Recreational use of this site would be temporarily reduced or eliminated by the Project during construction. This impact would be **significant but mitigated** by Mitigation Measure 3.10-1. In the long-term, recreational resources and access associated with this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

*Olmo-Hammond-UCD*

As described in the Setting section, above, this reach is publicly accessible via Putah Creek Riparian Preservation Trail, includes a public picnic/camp area, and is crossed by hiking trails, views from which could be adversely affected during construction. This impact would be reduced to a **less-than-significant** level by implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.10-1. Long-term impacts on recreational resources on this reach would be positive because the existing stagnant pool would be transformed to a free-flowing creek, and the channel habitat would be enhanced. Trails and boating access would be restored after construction of the creek restoration.

*I-80 to Old Davis Road*

This reach is has limited formal public recreational activities associated with the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve and there is informal use via the Putah Creek Riparian Preserve Trail to the creekside and pool in this site. The Project would reduce or eliminate this access during construction but the recreational value would be enhanced in the longer term (e.g., boating access and creekside vegetation) compared to existing conditions. These temporary impacts would be reduced to a **less-than-significant** level by implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.10-2.

*Old Davis Road to Mace*

As described in the Setting section, above, this reach is publicly accessible, includes a public picnic/camp area, and is crossed by hiking trails, views from which could be adversely affected during construction. This impact would be reduced to a **less-than-significant** level by implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.10-1. Long-term impacts on recreational resources on this reach would be positive because the existing stagnant pool would be transformed to a free-flowing creek, and the channel habitat would be enhanced. Trails and boating access would be restored after construction of the creek restoration.

*Mace to Road 106A*

This reach has formal and informal access for recreational activities, pedestrians, and drivers from UC Davis and informally from Levee Road. There is a gated parking lot and a trail accessing the previously restored riparian area (City of Davis South Fork Preserve) on Putah Creek on the south side of Mace Road. This parking lot has not been consistently accessible to the public but nonetheless has provided some public access. The use of this site would be temporarily reduced or eliminated by the Project during construction. In the longer term, with Mitigation Measure 3.10-1, the recreational value of the site (potentially including the parking access) would be improved compared to existing conditions. The impact is **less than significant**, with the potential for site improvement resulting from mitigation.

*Road 106A to Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area*

This reach is not currently used for any formal public recreational activities. The limited informal use of the pool or creekside riparian zone in this site would be temporarily reduced or eliminated by the Project during construction. As the recreational use is minimal, its temporary elimination would be **less than significant**. In the long-term, boating access and other recreation associated with this site would be improved compared to existing conditions.

**Table 3.10-1 Summary of Recreation Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

| <b>Sites</b>                    | <b>Level of Recreational Access/Use (High, Limited, or None)</b> | <b>Impact 3.10-1 Adverse Effects on Recreation</b> | <b>Applicable Mitigation Measures</b> |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| NAWCA/Mariani                   | None   | NI   | n/a                                   |
| Duncan-Giovannoni               | Limited  | LTS  | n/a                                   |
| Winters Putah Creek Nature Park | High   | LTS  | n/a                                   |
| East of 505                     | Limited  | LTS  | n/a                                   |
| Warren                          | None   | NI   | n/a                                   |
| Upper McNamara                  | Limited  | LTS  | n/a                                   |
| Lower McNamara                  | None   | NI   | n/a                                   |
| MacQuiddy (Lester)              | None   | NI   | n/a                                   |
| Russell Ranch                   | None   | NI   | n/a                                   |
| Stevenson Bridge                | High (Informal)  | SM   | NM 3.10-1                             |
| Glide Ranch                     | Limited  | LTS  | n/a                                   |
| Nishikawa                       | High   | SM   | MM 3.10-1                             |
| Olmo-Hammond-UCD                | High   | SM   | MM 3.10-1                             |
| I-80 to Old Davis Road          | High   | SM   | MM 3.10-1                             |
| Old Davis Road to Mace          | High   | SM   | MM 3.10-1                             |
| Mace to Road 106A               | Limited-High   | SM   | MM 3.10-1                             |
| Road 106A to YBWA               | Limited  | LTS  | n/a                                   |

NI = no impact, LS = LTS = Less than Significant Impact, SM = Significant but mitigatable to less than significant with measures identified in this section, and SU = Significant and Unavoidable, even after mitigation.

