STATE OF THE WATERSHED REPORT
NORTH FORK/MIDDLE FORK FEATHER RIVER SUB-WATERSHED

Watershed Description

The North Fork/Middle Fork Feather River watershed above Lake Oroville covers 3,222 square miles. The watershed begins at the crest of the Sierra Nevada Range and drains west into the Sacramento River and the Central Valley of California. Much of the upper Feather River watershed has been affected by 140 years of intensive human use. Mining, grazing, timber harvesting, wildfire, and railroad and road construction have all contributed to watershed degradation, which down cutting and widening of tributary streams, causing erosion/sedimentation, increased water temperature, and other adverse impacts on water quality, fisheries, and aquatic habitat.

Water Quality Assessment

Existing conditions in the watershed are a result of five major historical and current land uses. They are (1) mining, (2) wildfire, (3) livestock grazing, (4) timber harvest, with its associated roads, skid trails and log landings, and (5) railroad and highway construction and maintenance. A recent survey of the North Fork Feather River found that at least 60% of the watershed has been adversely impacted, resulting in decreased soil productivity, degraded water quality, greatly reduced riparian plant and wildlife communities, lowered water tables and frequent damaging flood flows. The watershed was inventoried for water quality problems. Based on this inventory, it is estimated that as much as 50% of all stream channels are in a degraded condition as are the wetlands, meadows, and rangelands. In many areas, disturbance related to human activity has caused an estimated 6 to 12 inches, of top soil loss from meadows and upland areas, and has contributed to the formation of numerous large and small gullies. Annually, 1.1 million tons of sediment is delivered to Rock Creek Dam at the downstream end of the North Fork Feather River watershed, an estimated 80% of this yearly sediment yield is from "accelerated," human caused, erosion in the watershed.

The principal water quality impacts from this degraded watershed condition are increased sedimentation, increased water temperatures from the loss of riparian shade canopy and the progressive widening and shallowing of the stream channels, and loss of the water holding capacity of the watershed (in the extensive meadow systems) due to stream channel incisement.

Current Assessment and Strategy to Address Problems

In 1984, a Coordinated Resource Management Program (CRMP) group was formed to encourage local support for watershed improvement activities.

CRMP membership includes the following:

* U.S. Farm Service Agency
* California Department of Fish and Game
* California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
* California Department of Transportation
* California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Central Valley Region
* Feather River Resource Conservation District
* Pacific Gas and Electric Company
* U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Plumas National Forest
* U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
* U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
* U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
* Plumas County
* Plumas Corporation
* North Cal-Neva Resource Conservation and Development Area
* Plumas Unified School District
* State Water Resources Control Board
* California Department of Water Resources
* Feather River College

Since its formation, the CRMP has completed over 40 watershed restoration projects with over four million dollars ($4,000,000) contributed by agencies, landowners and private corporations (principally PG&E.) It is the goal of the CRMP to optimize the beneficial uses and to maintain, protect, and improve, where possible, water quality and quantity in the watershed. The CRMP emphasizes education to prevent future water quality degradation and cooperatively designs and assists with funding for water quality improvement projects. The CRMP structure and process were developed to maximize local initiative and local control over resource management issues. In practice, this means developing consensus among all watershed stakeholders to implement innovative watershed restoration techniques on a voluntary basis using a variety of public and private grants.

The Regional Board has been an active participant on the CRMP and has assisted the group in acquiring several State/EPA 205(j) planning and 319(h) nonpoint source implementation grants. Staff has also served on many of the project specific Technical Advisory Committees. The Regional Board's objective is to achieve water quality and beneficial use improvements though support of site specific stream restoration projects,

better land management practices and public education. To date, this approach has been very successful.

The Regional Board priorities for this watershed are to continue its participation on the CRMP and to continue efforts to provide technical and financial assistance to the watershed program. Specifically, this will be in the form of assistance on applications for grants, program administration, attendance at CRMP meetings, field surveys, and support of water quality monitoring.

Recently, the CRMP has received a Clean Water Act Section 319(h) grant to establish a monitoring program in the North Fork and Middle Fork of the Feather River. The purpose of this program is to assess long-term trends in watershed condition and evaluate the effectiveness of the CRMP efforts (i.e., projects, planning, best management practices and education). In addition, Plumas County has received State Board Proposition 204 funds to undertake extensive restoration work in the Indian Creek Watershed and to provide management/coordination support to the CRMP.

Staff oversight of timber harvest activities is another critical component of the Regional Board's watershed program. Staff resources are inadequate.

Budget

In the watershed, there are few problems associated with discharges from NPDES facilities, industrial facilities, underground and above ground tanks, Chapter 15 sites, Non-chapter 15 sites, etc. Less than 1% of the Regional Budget allocated to work on these types of problems is allocated to this watershed. Water quality control efforts focus on nonpoint source problems. Nonpoint source efforts in the watershed are supported by resources from the nonpoint source program (Tasks 436), basin planning (Tasks 401) and forest activities (Tasks 172). Staff resources allocated to this watershed from these tasks are as follows.

	Personal Services Task	Funding Source	PYs
1.	Continue participation in CRMP and continue efforts to provide technical and financial assistance to the watershed program	401 436	0.05 0.1
2.	Continue routine forest activities	172	0.1
3.	Review additional high priority timber harvest proposals	unfunded	