

6.5 Wetlands

Issues closely related to wetlands are also found in DEIR sections 6.1 Aquatic Resources, 6.2 Botanical Resources, 6.6 Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat, 7 Geology and Soils, 10 Hydrology and Water Quality. Management practices and mitigations addressed in these sections also can contribute to the protection of wetlands.

6.5.1 Regional and Project Setting

Wetlands are defined by the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) as those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (ACOE 1987). The quality and relative value of a wetland is dependent on its age, extent, and structure, and wetlands develop from both natural and anthropogenic causes.

California's wetlands provide vital habitat to many fish and other aquatic life forms, birds, and plants; they filter and clean water, prevent soil erosion, and provide flood control among numerous other benefits

(<http://ceres.ca.gov/wetlands/introduction/values.html>):

- **Water Quality Protection and Improvement** Water passing through a wetland carries with it organisms, sediments, nutrients, and pollutants. The vegetation and soil in the wetland form a kind of sieve, trapping those materials and filtering the water.
- **Flood Control and Groundwater Recharge** The retention and slow release of flows in freshwater wetlands can lessen the effects of flood peaks and provide groundwater recharge.
- **Erosion Control** Where a wetland borders a large or deep water body, vegetation protects against erosion by stabilizing banks and damping wave energy.
- **Fish and Wildlife** The combination of vegetation and open water in wetlands provides food, rearing areas, and cover for waterfowl and shorebirds, as well as spawning habitat and food for freshwater and marine fishes. Many species of birds and fish are dependent on wetlands.
- **Biological Diversity** Because aquatic and terrestrial habitats overlap in wetlands, they serve wildlife from both realms, as well as plants and animals that have adapted specifically to life within the wetlands. The multitude of wetland organisms includes 41 of the state's rare and endangered species.
- **Recreation** The diversity of wildlife and aesthetic qualities found in many wetlands attract large numbers of outdoor enthusiasts, including hunters, anglers, boaters, birdwatchers, and photographers.

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Estimates of wetlands that historically existed in California range from 3 to 5 million acres; the current estimate of wetland acreage in California is approximately 450,000 acres, or an 85 to 90 percent reduction (http://ceres.ca.gov/wetlands/introduction/wetland_past.html). The Central Valley once had wetlands extending over some 4 million acres; these have diminished to 300,000 acres. Only 5 percent of the state's coastal wetlands remain intact.

The National Wetlands Inventory is the major effort underway to map wetlands in the US (<http://www.nwi.fws.gov/>). Currently, only very limited information is available for the North Coast region (greater Humboldt Bay area, Marin County, and southern Sonoma County). In the vicinity outside of JDSF, wetland habitat types include northern coastal salt marsh, coastal brackish marsh, and coastal and valley freshwater marsh. A large man-made pond (McGuire's Pond) with associated wetland is located at the headwaters of the South Fork of the Noyo River, within a private in-holding surrounded by JDSF in the Highway 20 corridor.

Known wetlands on JDSF include two sphagnum bogs and the seeps in the Bob Wood's Meadow. Wetlands may also be associated with the seeps and springs elsewhere on the property. In addition, wetlands maybe associated with watercourses and along roadside drainage features.

6.5.2 Regulatory Framework for the Protection of Wetlands

Government responses to wetland losses have come in the form of legal restrictions on uses of wetlands as well as protection through acquisition, restoration, and management.

Section 401, Clean Water Act: Federal protection is described in Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. This requires that State water quality standards not be violated by the discharge of fill or dredged material into "Waters of the United States." Section 404 of the Clean Water Act authorizes the ACOE to issue permits for discharges of dredged or fill material into streams and wetlands.

State and Federal Coastal Acts: Wetlands found in the "coastal zone" are regulated under the California Coastal Act of 1976 (CCA) and the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and are within jurisdiction of the California Coastal Commission. JDSF does not lie within the coastal zone, although portions of the assessment area for this EIR do.

Forest Practice Rules: The California Forest Practice Rules provide protections for wetlands in Coastal Zone Special Treatment Areas, and generally for marshes, wet meadows, springs, riparian areas, and other wet areas.

6.5.3 Project Measures for the Protection of Wetlands

Wetland protection is specifically addressed in the management plan (DFMP p. 61, 63, 70-71).¹ JDSF will manage wetland habitats in a manner that maintains or restores productivity and contributes to the aquatic habitat, water quality, and ecological functions and processes. JDSF will protect site integrity and hydrologic function of wetlands. California Forest Practice Rule protections for wet meadows, springs and other wetland habitats will be applied.

Wetlands that occur within riparian zones will also be protected by the JDSF riparian and stream management program. The aquatic resources section has a complete description of the riparian protection measures.

Watershed and Ecological Processes: A goal of the DFMP is to promote and maintain the health, sustainability, ecological processes, and biological diversity of the Forest and watersheds during the conduct of all land management activities.

6.5.4 Thresholds of Significance

Based on policy and guidance provided by CEQA (PRC Section 21001 and the CEQA Guidelines), an impact of the proposed project would be considered significant if the proposed project would have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.

6.5.5 Impacts

Impact: A program-related management activity would have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means. (Less Than Significant)

In general, ground and vegetation disturbing activities have the potential to directly impact wetlands. Activities proposed on the JDSF with the potential to impact wetlands include timber harvest and log transport, road construction and maintenance, the fire protection program, and vegetation management.

Wetlands will be protected during management activities of the Forest. The DFMP specifically states that JDSF will protect the site integrity and hydrologic function of wetlands. In addition, JDSF will manage wetland habitats in a manner that maintains or restores productivity and contributes to the aquatic habitat, water quality, and ecological functions and processes.

In addition, the FPRs afford prescribed protection measures to wetlands in the form of WLPZs. Watercourses, seeps, and springs are given standard buffers that vary in width

¹ Page references to the DFMP refer to the electronic version (PDF) posted at the Board's website: http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/jdsf_mgtplan_master%203b.pdf.

based on slope with the width increasing as slopes increase. Since the incidence of wetlands are often associated with FPR defined watercourses, seeps and springs, it is expected that many of the wetlands that occur on the JDSF will be protected under these rules. Furthermore, the definition of a class II watercourse is more inclusive than the definition of an ACOE wetland. For this reason, wetlands within project areas will be encompassed by the WLPZ protections. Management activities that are subject to the THP review process will identify seeps, springs, and riparian habitat, and these areas will be incorporated in WLPZs.

Indirect impacts to wetlands may also result from the implementation of the DFMP. There is a potential for sediment transport into wetlands due to point and non-point sources. This is mediated by several facets of the DFMP including the protections for riparian areas, inner gorges, review of unstable areas by a licensed geologist, the road management plan and WLPZs protections. For further discussion regarding project effects on sediment transport, refer to Section VII-6.1 (Aquatic Resources) and Section VII-7 (Geology and Soils).

6.5.6 Mitigation

None Required.

6.5.7 Alternatives

A comparison of potential wetland impacts among the various alternatives is presented in Table VII.6.5.1.

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Table VII.6.5.1. Comparison of Wetland Impacts in relation to the Various Alternatives.						
Alternatives					Discussion	
Impact*	1	2	3	4	5	*Impact Levels: (1) Beneficial (2) No Impact (3) Less than Significant (4) Less than Significant after Mitigation (5) Significant–Mitigation Not Feasible
Impact: A program-related management activity would have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.						
Alt. A						Under this alternative, the primary land use on JDSF would be public recreation that would utilize current facilities. Wetlands would not be significantly impacted either directly or indirectly by recreational use of the Forest
Alt. B						The 1983 Management Plan does not specifically address the protection of wetlands for non-THP projects. Feasible mitigations could be developed for non-THP projects that reduce impacts to less than significant. Activities subject to the THP review process will provide protection to riparian areas that could be defined as wetlands.
Alt. C1 May 2002 DFMP						There is no substantial difference among Alternatives C1, C2, D E, and F regarding their potential impacts to wetlands. For each alternative, the DFMP requires protection of wetlands and activities subject to the THP review process and will provide protection to riparian areas that could be defined as wetlands.
Alt. C2 Nov. 2002 Plan						
Alt. D						
Alt. E						
Alt. F						