Black Butte
Wild and Scenic River including portions of Cold Creek

Resource Assessment

Covelo District
Mendocino National Forest
U.S. Forest Service
August 14, 2017
Introduction

In 2006, Congress passed the Northern California Coastal Wild Heritage Wilderness Act (HR233) that included 18.5 miles of Black Butte River (16 miles wild, 3.5 miles scenic) and 1.5 miles of Cold Creek (all wild designation) into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Black Butte River and Cold Creek are free flowing, without past or present major diversions.

The Black Butte River watershed is located on the west side of the California Coast Range approximately 150 miles north of San Francisco Bay, and several miles east of Covelo, California. Parts of Mendocino, Lake, and Glenn counties lie within its boundaries. Over 98 percent of the Black Butte watershed is within the administrative boundary of the Mendocino National Forest. The Wild and Scenic designation for Black Butte River and Cold Creek lies entirely within Mendocino County.

The Black Butte River originates at “The Basin” in the very south end of the watershed, and flows northwest for almost 36 miles before draining into the Middle Fork Eel River. The highest peak in the watershed is Black Butte at an elevation of 7,448 feet.

An interdisciplinary team from the Mendocino National Forest began a resource assessment in 2011. The purpose of the assessment is to identify river-related “outstandingly remarkable values,” which helps guide the focus of a river management plan. River-related values could also be identified as “significant” which means they contribute substantially to the rivers character and may need varying levels of protection and consideration during the river management planning process. The assessment work was interrupted due to changing forest priorities and wildfires. The assessment was resumed and final changes were incorporated in 2017.

Resource Assessment

The resource assessment is important to guide the preparation of a Comprehensive River Management Plan for the Black Butte River and Cold Creek, to provide for protection of river values. The assessment must take into consideration all features which are directly river-related and helps provide a holistic approach to investigating the relationship of river features. There are three components to the resource assessment process: 1) the identification of outstandingly remarkable values, 2) the identification and determination of significance levels for river-related values which contribute to its overall character, and 3) the confirmation of outstandingly remarkable values set forth for the river in the legislative history of its designation.

An interdisciplinary team was convened in April 2011 to begin this process. Members of the team included specialists in the following areas: hydrology, geology, fisheries, scenery management, wildlife biology, archeology, recreation management and ecology. The assessment was reinitiated in March 2017 and completed in August 2017.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values or ORVs

The term “outstandingly remarkable value” has never been precisely defined, but criteria have been described in The Wild and Scenic River Study Process which is a technical report of the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council (1999) and Forest Service Handbook
The resource assessment is based on the professional judgment of the interdisciplinary team and documents objective, scientific, analysis based on reviews of available literature, consultation with experts, and field work. The region of comparison for Black Butte River and Cold Creek is generally the Northern California Interior Coast Range area.

ORVs are commonly such things as: scenery, recreation, geology, fisheries, wildlife, prehistory, history, hydrology, or botany. To be considered “river-related” a value should:

1. Be located in the river or its immediate environment (generally within ¼ mile on either side),
2. Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem, and/or
3. Owe its existence to the presence of the river.

River-related value must be rated for level of significance. Levels include:

- **Outstandingly Remarkable** - Unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale.
- ** Significant (not outstandingly remarkable)** - Values which still contribute substantially to the rivers character. These values may still need varying levels of protection and consideration during river planning process.
- **Insufficient information** - If the level of existing data is insufficient to make a determination of significance, then it must be identified what is needed to get sufficient data. The value needs to be protected as “outstandingly remarkable” until more information is gathered.

The following significant and Outstandingly Remarkable Values were identified for the Black Butte River and Cold Creek:

**Outstandingly Remarkable Values:**
Fish- Population and Habitat
Cultural- Prehistory and Traditional Use
Geology

**Significant:**
Cultural- History
Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable

The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) or feature(s) associated with a significant event, an important person, or a cultural activity of the past that was rare, unusual, or one-of-a-kind in the region. A historic site(s) and/or feature(s) in most cases is 50 years old or older. Of particular significance are sites or features listed in, or are eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

Finding

The historical resources in the Black Butte and Cold Creek corridor are significant but not outstandingly remarkable. The primary historical use of the corridor area includes homesteading, grazing, hunting, and logging. Although significant on a local scale, they are not of outstanding regional or national importance or rarity.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

The historical use of the Black Butte River began in the mid 19th century with Euro-American “hide hunters” as the area was rich in faunal resources and lacking in mineral resources. Bear, deer and other fur bearing animals were still prevalent in large numbers due in large part to the remote setting of the canyon. Deer, in particular, were the target for not only fresh meat but for buckskin clothing and gloves. By the 1870s, trails began to dot the landscape connecting various homesteads to these hunting grounds. At least 25 homestead claims were filed on land parcels.
within the half mile wide Wild and Scenic River corridor in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Cattle and sheep grazing became a focus also in the 1870s. As roads improved, ranchers were able to haul their sheep and cattle up onto the forest to graze during the summer months. The early 20th century saw limited private logging, primarily for small homesteads and it was not until the mid-20th century, that logging on the National Forest became important. Under Forest Service management, trails were an integral part of transportation within the Black Butte River watershed as few roads existed. Trail systems were utilized to connect Forest Service facilities (Twin Rocks Ranger Station, Black Butte Fire Lookout, etc.) down secondary ridges to the river. Many of these trails built on road systems built by homesteaders at the turn-of-the-century.

While the Black Butte River watershed held a significant number of homesteads at one time, very little of that history remains intact. Remnants of old orchards associated with former cabins remain in some locations; however, few structures remain. The rehabilitated and restored caretaker’s cabin at the Keller Place, retains significant local and regional historical value although the old resort itself has been removed. The old homesteads in the canyon were joined by trails bringing various homesteaders into contact with each other, but this is not unique in California. As most historic sites in the watershed are largely destroyed, their historical remains are not pristine and likely are not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
CULTURAL – PREHISTORY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable
The river or area within the river corridor contains a site(s) where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must have unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value(s). Sites may have national or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; may be rare and represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; may have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or may have been used by cultural groups for rare or sacred purposes. Of particular significance are sites or features listed in, or are eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places.

Finding
The prehistory of the Black Butte River and Cold Creek Wild and Scenic corridor is an outstandingly remarkable value. The values identified by the resource assessment are all river related; the high concentration of sites and pristine nature of these sites contribute to the designation of this resource as an ORV. Some of these sites may still be used for traditional purposes today.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion
The Black Butte River drainage is situated in territory held by the Huititno'm Yuki at the time of Euro-American contact. The Huititno'm Yuki are hypothesized to have lived in the general vicinity for perhaps the past 4000 years and their population is estimated to have been about 400. They probably lived along the Black Butte River during the winter and traveled to the higher elevations in the spring, summer, and fall in the pursuit of game or to gather plant resources.

Numerous significant archaeological resources have been identified along the lower and upper reaches of the Black Butte River. Many of these sites represent long-term habitation and some contain structural remains. Some have been identified as ethnographic villages associated with the Huititno'm Yuki. The remoteness and undeveloped character of this river are the major contributors to the pristine quality of these sites. The information potential of these sites, coupled with their excellent integrity, make these archaeological resources exceptional compared to many other regions within the North Coast Ranges.
CULTURAL - TRADITIONAL USE

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable

The river or area within the river corridor contains regionally unique location(s) of importance to Native American tribes (religions activities, fishing, hunting, or gathering). Locations may have unusual characteristics or exceptional cultural value being integral to continued pursuit of such activities. Locations may have been associated with treaty rights on ceded lands or activities unprotected by treaty on ceded lands or in traditional territories outside ceded lands.

Finding

The traditional use of the Black Butte River and Cold Creek Wild and Scenic corridor is an outstandingly remarkable value. River-related resources of the creek including hydrology, fisheries, and prehistoric and current use relate to Native American history.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

California Indians settled in the area of the watershed approximately 2,750 years ago based on archaeological evidence of the few sites tested in the watershed. The area probably has a considerably older prehistoric past; however, more archaeological evidence would be needed to support that assertion. The home area of the Huititno’üm (Middle Ridge People) subgroup of the Yuki closely followed the extent of the Black Butte watershed (see Figure A1-3 in Appendix 1 for ethnographic distribution map). Highest populations were likely reached shortly prior to Euro-American contact (G. Greenway, pers. comm.). The Huititno’üm population in the watershed was estimated at approximately 400 persons. Settlement in the watershed may have been influenced by an abundance of deer (McCarthy, et al. 1982). The world view of the Huititno’üm was likely centered...
on their territory and the resources within it; their knowledge of the watershed must have been extensive.

California Indians used a vast array of local resources for a wide variety of spiritual, cultural, and livelihood purposes. Virtually every resource in the watershed was utilized in some way (G. Greenway, pers. comm.). V. K. Chestnutt (1902), documenting both Yuki and Pomo uses of plants in Mendocino County, included numerous species collected for each of the following uses: food, drink, forage, clothing, ornament, housing, heating, cooking, tinder, fuel, tools, hunting, fishing, poisons, harvesting, travel, transportation, war, amusements, ceremonies, religion, medicine and art. For example, approximately 20 plant species were used for the nets, ropes, traps, and other materials necessary for fishing alone. Fish were a primary resource for the Yuki; the Black Butte River fishery, like the Eel's, was a valuable resource.

Approximately 4,994 people are enrolled today as members of the Round Valley Indian Tribes; of these, approximately half reside on or adjacent to the Round Valley Indian Reservation. Members of the Yuki, Pit River, Achomawi, Little Lake, Pomo, Concow, Wylacki, Nomlaki, and Wintun are among the tribes (G. Azbill, pers. comm.). There are no treaty rights within the watershed. However, it contains numerous Yuki cultural sites and has been important to the Round Valley Indian Tribes for over a century.

Current uses of the watershed and adjacent areas by the Round Valley Indian Tribes involve hunting, fishing, gathering, and employment. Cultural and sacred aspects of the land are also important, with each feature and element of the watershed invested with unique significance. Peaks and high places within this watershed are believed to be spiritually significant. To Native Americans, hunting, fishing, and gathering are not purely recreational, as might be perceived by non-Natives. Neither are they solely the means to acquire food or materials. Rather, these traditions are sacred cultural practices which are an integral part of their way of life.

Gathering is very important to the Round Valley Indian Tribes, although the amount of gathering occurring in the watershed today is low compared to the pre-Euro-American era. Many traditional gathering places are located close to roads; often these roads were preceded by Indian trails. Plants are gathered for food, basketry, and medicinal purposes. Black oak acorns and pennyroyal tea are gathered as traditional food sources, and riparian-associated species such as sedge, willow, red dogwood, and redbud are of particular interest for basketry. Secrecy regarding the location of gathering sites is important to members of the tribes.
Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. When analyzing vegetation, additional factors such as diversity of species, numbers of plant communities, and cultural importance of plants may be considered.

Finding

The ecological and botanical values of Black Butte River and Cold Creek are not considered to be significant or outstandingly remarkable. Although the botanical diversity of the designated corridor has not been thoroughly surveyed or documented, site visits to the corridor did not find TES plant species or especially rich botanical communities, and much of the corridor that is outside of the immediate riparian zone is infested with non-native species, particularly annual grasses. There is likely some suitable habitat for riparian TES species within the corridor, especially in the upstream portions, but overall the botanical resources are not outstandingly remarkable.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species
There are no Federally Threatened or Endangered, or Region 5 Sensitive plant species documented within the designated Wild and Scenic corridor. However, there have also been no full floristic botanical surveys recorded within the corridor, likely due to very limited access and a lack of previous project work in the area. The only federally listed plant species on the Mendocino NF, *Howellia aquatilis* (water howellia), is found in shallow ponds and is highly unlikely to occur in the steep drainages of the designated corridor. Although riparian vegetation is also limited by the steep canyon, there is potentially suitable habitat for two Sensitive species: *Ophioglossum pusillum* (northern adder’s tongue), which can be found in riparian areas (although it is more likely to be in wetlands), and *Peltigera gowardii* (veined water lichen), which is found growing on rocks submerged in streams. Both of these species are quite rare, but even future possible detections of these species within the corridor would not be sufficient to elevate botanical resources to an outstandingly remarkable value.

Survey and Manage Plant Species
While there are no Survey and Manage plant species documented within the designated corridor, there are several documented occurrences of two orchid species within the watershed: *Cypripedium fasciculatum* (clustered lady’s slipper) and *Cypripedium montanum* (mountain lady’s slipper), and the corridor is within one half mile of some of the occurrences near Cold Creek. This suggests that there may be suitable habitat within the designated corridor for one or both of these species. However, these two species are the most frequently documented survey and manage species on the Mendocino NF, and their presence in the corridor would not make botanical resources outstandingly remarkable.

Non-native Invasive Plant Species
The narrow strip of riparian vegetation in the designated corridor appears to be largely free of invasive plant species – it is dominated by alders, willows, and in some places cottonwoods. However, the remainder of the corridor hosts a large number of non-native species, particularly annual grasses such as *Cynosurus echinatus* (hedgehog dogtail grass) and *Avena sp.* (wild oats). Areas with closed canopy (conifer) forest generally host fewer invasive species, but the understory of open areas with sparse oak trees are dominated by weedy annuals. The corridor does have a reasonably diverse spring wildflower display, but it is not outstandingly remarkable, especially coupled with the abundance of non-native species.
FISH

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value
Fisheries values should be judged on the relative merits of fish populations or habitat or a combination of both of these river-related conditions.

**Populations**
The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks considered to be unique, and/or populations of federally or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”

**Habitat**
The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region of comparison. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks considered to be unique, and/or populations of federally or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.” Also considered is habitat that may provide a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species.
Finding

The fish populations of Black Butte River and Cold Creek are an outstandingly remarkable value because of the presence of the federally listed “Threatened” NC steelhead trout as well as the federally listed “Threatened” CC Chinook salmon.

The fish habitat of Black Butte River and Cold Creek are also an outstandingly remarkable value because it provides designated critical habitat for NC steelhead and CC Chinook.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

Species Name: Northern California steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)
Listing Status: Threatened
Date Listed: June 7, 2000 (65 FR 36074), listing reconfirmed in a Final Rule published January 5, 2006 (71 FR 834).

Species Name: California Coastal Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
Listing Status: Threatened
Date Listed: September 16, 1999 (64 FR 50394) and listing reconfirmed in a Final Rule published June 28, 2005 (70 FR 37160).

The upper reaches, including Cold Creek, provide some of the better spawning and rearing habitat for winter steelhead, rainbow trout, and Chinook salmon within the Middle Fork Eel River Drainage. The upper mainstem of the Black Butte River and many of its tributaries (ie, Cold Creek), have been identified as important habitat for the recovery of NC steelhead trout and CC Chinook salmon. The Multi-species Recovery Plan (2015), identified the Black Butte River system as important holding and rearing habitat for winter-steelhead and fall-chinook salmon.

California Fish and Wildlife, has prohibited fishing within the Black Butte Watershed. The Wild and Scenic River corridor is an important contribution towards steelhead recovery under the Endangered Species Act.

This is a Tier 1 Key Watershed. Key watersheds are one of four components of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) as described in the Northwest Forest Plan. Tier 1 Key watersheds are drainage systems that have at-risk salmonid populations that are vital to the recovery of a species. These watersheds require management objectives designed to protect the fish population and their habitat. Tier 2 Key watersheds are drainage systems that have been found to have high water quality, therefore, these watersheds have management objectives designed to protect water quality.

Refugia are an important component of most species conservation strategies. They are areas that either provide, or are expected to provide, high quality habitat, serving as a refuge network for salmon and other fish species. As part of the ACS, Key Watersheds were identified and designated to serve this purpose. Key Watersheds that are currently in good condition serve as anchors for the potential recovery of depressed fish stocks, while watersheds characterized by having low quality habitat and high potential for restoration can serve as future refuge areas (USDA and USDI 1994). The Key Watersheds are spatially distributed to ensure that refugia
areas are widely distributed across the landscape. The Tier 1 key watersheds have been identified as contributing directly to the conservation of at-risk salmonids. Because Key Watersheds were identified as having a high value to native salmonids, they serve as focus areas for BLM and FS Watershed Analysis and Watershed Restoration.

**Literature cited:**


GEOLOGY

Rock outcrops on the SW flank of Black Butte; the fissure through the center of the knob on the skyline was formed by landslide movement Photo 9184, taken 7-26-17 by JdlF

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or the area within the river corridor contains one or more examples of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual or unique to the region of comparison. The features(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a “textbook” example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial, or other geologic structures).

Finding

The geologic features and characteristics of the Black Butte River and Cold Creek constitute Outstandingly Remarkable Values in the context of the Northern California Interior Coast Range area.

1) Large deep-seated landslides dominate the landscape, and play major role in geomorphic processes which operate there. This includes high sediment loads delivered to the river, and the direct delivery of huge boulders to the channel. They produce unique hummocky landforms with many closed basins which often contain meadows, ponds, or lakes (Such as Keller Lake). Lastly, they create complex patterns of groundwater flow.

2) Prominent rock knobs occur across the landscape. These blocks consist of erosion resistant bedrock of various types, and examples include Nebo Rock and Twin Rocks. They form a unique part of the ecosystem, particularly where they contain caves.

3) Glacial landforms have been identified in the Black Butte and Plaskett Meadows area, and also around Anthony Peak. Such features are relatively rare in the Coast Ranges.
4) **Caves** occur in a variety of settings across the watershed, including landslide fissures in bedrock, in talus at the base of landslide scarps and other types of bluffs, and along the river between huge boulders delivered there by landslides.

5) **Invertebrate fossils** have been identified along the River near its junction with Nebo Creek. They are characterized as megafossils, but have not been identified. They are likely molluscs.

6) **Waterfall** - A waterfall in Cold Creek, is mentioned in the Black Butte River project files, but its existence/location has not been verified.

### Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

The initial Resource Assessment for Black Butte River was begun in 2011, and a Geologist was not available to be on the Interdisciplinary Team. The initial conclusion of that team was that the geologic characteristics and features of the watershed qualified as “Significant”, but not “Outstandingly Remarkable”. In 2017, the Resource Assessment was resumed, and Geologists were added to the team. This resulted in the addition of caves, fossils, and glacial features to the list of geologic values at hand. After reviewing existing data, and conducting some limited field reconnaissance, the Geologists concluded that the geologic features and characteristics in the Black Butte watershed were in fact Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

**Summary:** The Black Butte watershed is a textbook example of a tectonically active and landslide driven landscape. The uplifting, faulted and folded Central Belt Franciscan rock is a major control on development of the river. The Black Butte River cuts through weak, altered and deformed Franciscan marine sedimentary rocks and around massive rock blocks of greenstone and greywacke. This directly results in complex landslides that can be massive in scale from stream bank to ridge top. Landslides significantly influence fluvial morphology with significant input of large woody debris, sediment and impressively large, stream-altering boulders. These factors have likely forced adaptations to fish in order to exist in a rapidly developing river system with unique, geologically-defined habitat. In addition, unique talus and tension crack caves within Black Butte Creek and the watershed are the direct result of landslide processes. Caves are closely linked to cultural resources and wildlife habitat. The high elevation glacial features of Black Butte Mountain have likely influenced broad scale morphology of the eastern part of the watershed with landforms that are landslide prone and important for groundwater storage. Groundwater helps maintain summer flows into Black Butte River. For these reasons, geologic features and characteristics in the Black Butte Watershed are Outstandingly Remarkable Values that directly control watershed function. The unique geologic features and characteristics include the following:

1) **Large Deep-Seated Landslides** - Large earthflows and slump-earthflow complexes occupy about 80% of the watershed. These landslides produce hummocky terrain with closed basins which often collect water and form meadows, ponds or lakes such as Keller Lake. Parts of these landslide deposits are active and deliver large volumes of sediment to the river. Earthflows in Blue Slides Creek and elsewhere have remained continuously active over the past 60 years or longer and are characterized by grass covered glades with scattered trees, dissected by streams with raw inner gorges. Many of the large earthflows deliver large rocks, up to 50 feet in diameter to the river, forming unique fish habitat as well as shallow caves. Some of the landslides develop amphitheater-shaped head scarps, such as on the SW flank of Black Butte, and tension cracks and fissures in the rock above the scarp form small caves.
2) Prominent Rock Knobs- Prominent rock knobs occur across the landscape and range from a few hundred feet to more than 1000 feet in diameter, with nearly vertical margins up to 200 feet high. In some areas within the Franciscan Complex, they are referred to as “knockers”. These blocks consist of erosion resistant bedrock of various types, and examples include Nebo Rock and Twin Rocks. They form a unique part of the ecosystem, particularly where they contain caves and likely have cultural significance.

3) Glacial Features- Glacial landforms have been identified in the area around Black Butte/Plaskett Meadows and also in the Anthony Peak area. A small glacial moraine forms the dam on the lake at Plaskett meadows. This dam has been raised to increase the size of the lake.

4) Caves occur in a variety of settings across the watershed, including landslide fissures in bedrock, in talus at the base of landslide scarps and other types of bluffs, and along the river between huge boulders delivered there by landslides. These caves provide habitats for a variety of flora and fauna, and if large enough, could have been used by humans for shelter or other purposes. There are historical accounts of human use of such caves along Black Butte River. A cave inventory has not been conducted in this watershed.

5) Invertebrate fossils have been identified along the River near its junction with Nebo Creek. They are characterized as megafossils, but have not been identified, and are likely mollusks.

6) Waterfall- A waterfall in Cold Creek, is mentioned in the Black Butte River project files, but its existence/location has not been verified.

7) Plate Boundary Observatory- Though not a geological resource per se, the Earth Scope Project has a high resolution GPS installation in the Black Butte watershed which is part of the Plate Boundary Observatory. This project is sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) the National Science Foundation (NSF), and UNAVCO, and it collects data for analyzing seismic and volcanic activity in the Pacific Northwest. UNAVCO is a non-profit university-governed consortium that facilitates geoscience research and education using Geodesy, which is the science of accurately measuring and understanding the Earth's geometric shape, orientation in space, and gravity field.
HYDROLOGY

Black Butte River upstream of Cold Creek confluence

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value
The river or the area within the river corridor contains one or more examples of a hydrologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual or unique to the region of comparison. The features(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a “textbook” example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of hydrological features (examples include: channel morphology, flow regime, streambank or stream bed erosion, and water-created features such as waterfalls, sinks, caverns, wetlands or springs). The river water itself is one of the best examples of clarity, purity, glacial “milk,” etc. or the combination of water chemistry and temperature supports life forms nationally unique or unique to the physiographic region.

Finding
The hydrological values of Black Butte and Cold Creek are not considered to be significant or outstandingly remarkable. While the channel floodplain morphology explains the river’s seasonal flashiness and high sediment yield, these values are not exemplary with the region of comparison.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion
River-related features include: high annual bedload and sediment yield; flashy (seasonal) system; confined transport channel. However, these features are not unique, especially when compared to the rest of the Eel River system.
RECREATION

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison or are unique or rare within the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting, and boating. Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the region of comparison. The river may provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage or competitive events.

Finding

The recreation resources of the Black Butte River and Cold Creek, some of which are river related, are not considered to be significant or outstandingly remarkable. Limited access to most stretches of the river, along with a scarcity of developed recreation sites and facilities, contributes to this finding. One recreation facility exists along the designated section of the river, but the recreation opportunities here are not exemplary within the region of comparison.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

Recreation use along these corridors is light to moderate. This is due to lack of access points available to the public; there are currently no Forest Service roads or trails that access the river. Thus, this allows for the ultimate solitude and primitive experience, though not a unique feature within the Mendocino National Forest as other places provide the same experience. There is one public facility open to the
public year round; Eel River Campground at the confluence between Black Butte River and the Middle Fork Eel River.

Primitive four-wheel drive roads approach the corridor in several locations, though only 20N22 crosses the river at the Basin. This is similar for Cold Creek; there are several roads that approach the corridor but no direct access.

At higher elevations in the watershed, use is limited to spring, summer, and fall. At lower elevations, the river is accessible year round. Dispersed recreation experiences such as hunting, hiking, horseback riding, and wading are common in the Black Butte watershed, as well as other parts of the Mendocino National Forest. Fishing is not allowed within the watershed. Hunting is popular at the headwaters of the river in the Basin area. The majority of hunters are from the Northern California area.
SCENERY

Typical scenery along the Black Butte River

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value
The landscape element forms of landform, vegetation, water, color, and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors—such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed—may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.

Finding
The scenic resources of Black Butte River and Cold Creek are not considered to be significant or outstandingly remarkable. While the climate, topography and geology along the river corridor provide a harsh, stark, but beautiful landscape, the scenery is not exemplary within the region of comparison. The frequent occurrence of landslides in the corridor adds to the dramatic scenery, though the frequency is not outstanding within the region of comparison.

Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

Visual Quality is rated as Variety Class B for the majority of the stream corridor. At the headwater (the Basin), outside of the designated corridor, the river is rated Variety Class A.

Variety Classes are obtained by classifying the landscape into different degrees of variety. This determines those landscapes which are most important and those which are of lesser value from the standpoint of scenic quality. There are three variety classes which identify the scenic quality of the natural landscape; Class A – Distinctive, Class B – Common, or Class C – Minimal. The visual quality for most of the Black Butte River stream corridors is rated as variety class B.

Class B variety class refers to those areas where features contain variety in form line color, and texture or combinations thereof but which tend to be common throughout the character type and are not outstanding in visual quality.
Class A variety refers to those areas where features of landform, vegetative patterns, water forms and rock formations are of unusual or outstanding visual quality. They are usually not common in the character type.

The Black Butte River can be seen from tops from travel routes in the background. Within the corridor, the stream banks are heavily vegetated, limiting views to the immediate stream corridor. In the lower reaches, foreground views may contain dramatic rock outcrops, middle and background views are of oak chaparral hillsides and some distant mountains. Cold Creek passes through a steep canyon with numerous large boulders. The extremely steep, heavily timbered side slopes limit the view to the immediate stream corridor. Landslides are common; the stream passes over numerous drops and large pools.

The landscape within the Black Butte River and Cold Creek are similar to that of many other locations along the Eel River; thus, excluding it from the classification of outstandingly remarkable.
WILDLIFE

Criteria for an Outstandingly Remarkable Value
Wildlife values should be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat or a combination of both of these conditions.

Populations
The river, or area within the river corridor, contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, and/or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”

Habitat
The river, or area within the river corridor, provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, and/or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of “outstandingly remarkable.”

Finding
Wildlife populations and habitat within the Black Butte River and Cold Creek corridor are not considered to be outstanding. While bald eagles benefit from river related wintering habitat within the corridor, no nests have been found for the species. The wildlife values are not exemplary within the region of comparison.
Discussion of Values – Rationale for Conclusion

Wildlife Populations
Wildlife in this area is common for the Coastal Range. The river corridor lies within key winter range for deer. Goshawk habitat is found along the middle of the river particularly on the southern side of Black Butte River. Goshawk habitat is also located along the south side of Cold Creek. Historically spotted owls have inhabited this area, and there have been numerous recorded spotted owl sightings. Pine martin sightings have been recorded along the river corridor.

The Black Butte River corridor may currently support nesting Northern spotted owls as it has in the past. The current status of Northers spotted owls within the Black Butte River corridor is unknown.

Other wildlife that may occur in the Black Butte are pallid bats, Townsend’s big-eared bats, fishers, fringed myotis, foothill-yellow legged frogs, and western pond turtles. These species are on the Forest Service Sensitive Species list for the Mendocino National Forest.

There is suitable habitat types for the wolverine and Karin’s checkerspot butterfly, but it is unlikely that these species occur in the Black Butte River corridor.

Wildlife Habitat
There is a variety of habitat for wildlife, from annual grasslands to late successional Sierran mixed conifer. There may be cliffs and rock faces along the Black Butte river that would be suitable for Peregrine falcons and bat species.

There is no Critical Habitat located within the Black River Wild and Scenic corridor, but there is Northern spotted owl Critical Habitat within the Black Butte Watershed.

Portion of the Black Butte River are key winter range for black-tailed deer.

Habitat for wildlife within the Black Butte corridor and the river itself do not provide exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife species that may be of national or regional significance.
Resource Assessment Team

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