Excerpts from the U.S. Forest Service *Wild and Scenic River Study/Environmental Impact Statement on the North Fork of the Mokelumne River*

Page S-3: Despite extensive hydroelectric power development in the area immediately outside of the study area, the canyon is considered unique because of the extensive archaeological sites in and adjacent to the study area. The important of the resources in the area was recognized in the establishment of the Mokelumne Archaeological Special Interest Area in the *Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.* Cultural analysis of the regional indicates the canyon has been occupied by humans for at least 2,000 years, and 114 prehistoric and historic-era sites have been identified through archaeological investigations. The integrity of the recorded sites is unusually high, and more than half of the sites are either undisturbed or show impacts only from erosion. The high site integrity combined with the sheer number and diversity of sites in the limited area has been determined to be outstandingly remarkable. The sites are believed to represent a rare opportunity to understand the cultural chronology, settlement, and linguistic history of the region (Wirth 1985)

Page 2-22, Historic, Cultural and Archaeological Resources

Cultural Resources Data Base

To assess the cultural resources within the study area and in the entire 12,200 Archaeological SIA, the IDT evaluated existing overviews and recorded site inventories. Most of the available site-specific information comes from three main sources: Forest Service project-related inventories since 1977; the Mokelumne River Project survey (Wirth 1981, 1985); and the Devil's Nose Hydroelectric Project surveys (Amador County 1986). Site-specific archaeological surveys have been conducted before timber management activities in the Eldorado and Stanislaus National Forests and as part of hydroelectric facility licensing or relicensing. Although sensitive cultural resource data is not specifically described in this document, it is available for review by qualified individuals at the Eldorado National Forest.

About 85 percent of the study area and archaeological SIA have been completely inventories for cultural resources, and the known resource base in quantitatively and qualitatively diverse. More than 100 prehistoric and historic sites have been noted and recorded in those areas, including single bedrock mortar milling stations (used by Native Americans to grind acorns), multi-feature site containing flake stone took scatters, depressions from dwellings and ceremonial roundhouses, petroglyphs (rock art), historic mining debris and hydroelectric development features (remnants of flumes, ditches, and cabin foundations), and twentieth century occupation sites. Dating of cultural materials from the area indicates at least a 2,000-year occupational sequence in the vicinity of the study area (Wirth 1985). Archaeological remains of this antiquity are rare in most of California, possibly because deep alluvial sediments have accrued over time throughout much of the state.

The recorded archaeological locations have been subjected to impacts from erosion, logging, road construction, cattle grazing, recreation, vandalism, and hydroelectric development. However the low intensity of historic use of the area has offered a high degree of protection to many sites. More than 50 percent of the recorded sites in the study area have had no impacts other than natural erosion. Several of the most complex sites along the North Fork are among the sites with no evident disturbance.

The known prehistoric sites within the study area and SIA provide a localized picture of a full range of past human activities. In 1985, based on test excavations and surface investigations at 18 sites within the drainage system between Blue Lakes and Electra Powerhouse, Wirth (1985) formulated a series of research domains that would contribute to the understanding of the prehistory of the ear. These domains include chronology, the relationship between cultural change and climatic change, subsistence/settlement systems, organization of space in prehistoric sites, trade, and linguistic history. Many of the research domains rely on an understanding of the relationships between villages, base camps, milling stations, and other site types. These and other aspects of prehistoric life are all represented within the relative small study area and present an unusual research opportunity.

The vast number of prehistoric sites along the North Fork, the high degree of site integrity, and the vast research potential for the area provide evidence that the archaeological resources in the study area are outstandingly remarkable.