

### **3.10.2.2 Thresholds of Significance**

#### **CEQA Significance Criteria**

The City and County of San Francisco has not formally adopted significance standards for impacts related to aesthetics, but considers that implementation of the proposed project would have a significant impact if it were to:

- Have a substantial adverse affect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and other features of the built or natural environment which contribute to a scenic public setting;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area or which would substantially impact other people or properties.

#### **NEPA Thresholds (National Park Service/US Forest Service Sites)**

The proposed project was evaluated using an approach informed by both National Park Service and United States Forest Service methodologies.

##### ***National Park Service (NPS)***

The overriding management purpose of any national park, as defined by the National Park Service 1916 Organic Act, is to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects. Following this direction, the NPS determined impacts on scenic resources by examining the potential effects of the Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade Project on the landscape character and/or features and how any changes may be experienced (visibility, viewpoints, etc.).

##### ***United States Forest Service (USFS)***

Management direction is defined in the National Forest Management Act as “a statement of multiple use and other goals and objectives, the management prescriptions and their associated standards and guidelines for attaining them” (USDA 2005). All projects must meet adopted Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs). A VQO is defined by USFS as “a desired level of excellence based on physical and sociological characteristics of an area...(it) refers to degree of acceptable alteration of the characteristic landscape” (USDA 1974).

High visual quality is to be maintained in areas of concentrated public use and in areas seen from major travel routes. Management activities are allowed in certain areas to dominate the surrounding characteristic landscape, so long as they borrow from natural forms and appear as natural occurrences when viewed from background distances. Private land concerns are considered during the evaluation of proposed management activities adjacent to privately developed subdivisions and recreation areas. Particular attention is given to visual quality in the foreground view areas of these private developments as well as any other values relating to their attendant use and enjoyment of the National Forest.

The project area includes project sites within National Forest land that must meet one or both of the following Visual Quality Objectives, as defined in National Forest Landscape Management, Volume 2, Chapter 1 (USDA 1974):

- Retention – A Visual Quality Objective which in general means man’s activities are not evident to the casual forest visitor.
- Partial Retention – A Visual Quality Objective which in general means man’s activities may be evident but must remain subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

Finally, National Forest Landscape Management, Volume 2, Chapter 2 (USDA 1975) provides guidance for the planning, design and construction of utilities on USFS land in a manner that will visually harmonize them with or subordinate them to the landscape. Electric transmission lines and microwave systems are specifically addressed in the document.

With National Park Service and USFS methodologies taken into consideration, impacts of the Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade project on visual resources were therefore examined and determined by:

- Comparing the existing visual character of the landscape in terms of the color, contextual scale, and formal attributes of landscape components and features, and the degree to which actions that may result from the Hetch Hetchy Communication System Upgrade Project would affect (i.e., contrast or conform with) that character;
- Analyzing changes in experiential factors, such as whether a given action would result in a visible change, the duration of any change in the visual character, the distance and viewing conditions under which the change would be visible, and the number of viewers that would be affected; and
- On US Forest Service lands, determining whether or not existing VQOs would be met and whether or not the proposed project, particularly utilities, would be in visual harmony or subordinate to the existing landscape.

Scenic resources impacts consist of substantial changes that would either: (1) alter existing landscape character and would be visible from viewpoints the NPS and USFS has established as important; (2) not meet existing VQOs for USFS lands; (3) reduce access to historically important viewpoints or sequence of viewpoints; and/or (4) alter the visibility of a viewpoint or sequence of viewpoints.

#### *Duration of Impact*

The duration of the impacts considers whether the impact would be short-term or long-term. A short-term impact would be short-lived or temporary due to construction, restoration, or demolition activities, and a long-term impact would be permanent and continual.

#### *Intensity of Impact*

The magnitude of impacts to the scenery within the view from specific vantage points and to specific scenic features is described as negligible, minor, moderate, or major as described below.

- Negligible impacts would be imperceptible or not detectable.
- Minor impacts would be slightly detectable or localized within a relatively small area.

- Moderate impacts would be those that are readily apparent.
- Major impacts would be substantial, highly noticeable, and/or result in changing the character of the landscape.

#### *Type of Impact*

Impacts were evaluated in terms of whether they would be beneficial or adverse to scenic resources. Beneficial impacts would enhance the existing landscape character, access to historically important viewpoints or sequence of viewpoints, or the visibility of a viewpoint or sequence of viewpoints. Adverse impacts would be effects that reduce the existing landscape character, access to historically important viewpoints or sequence of viewpoints, or the visibility of a viewpoint or sequence of viewpoints.

### **3.10.2.3 Environmental Consequences**

#### **Environmental Consequences of Alternative 1 (No Action)**

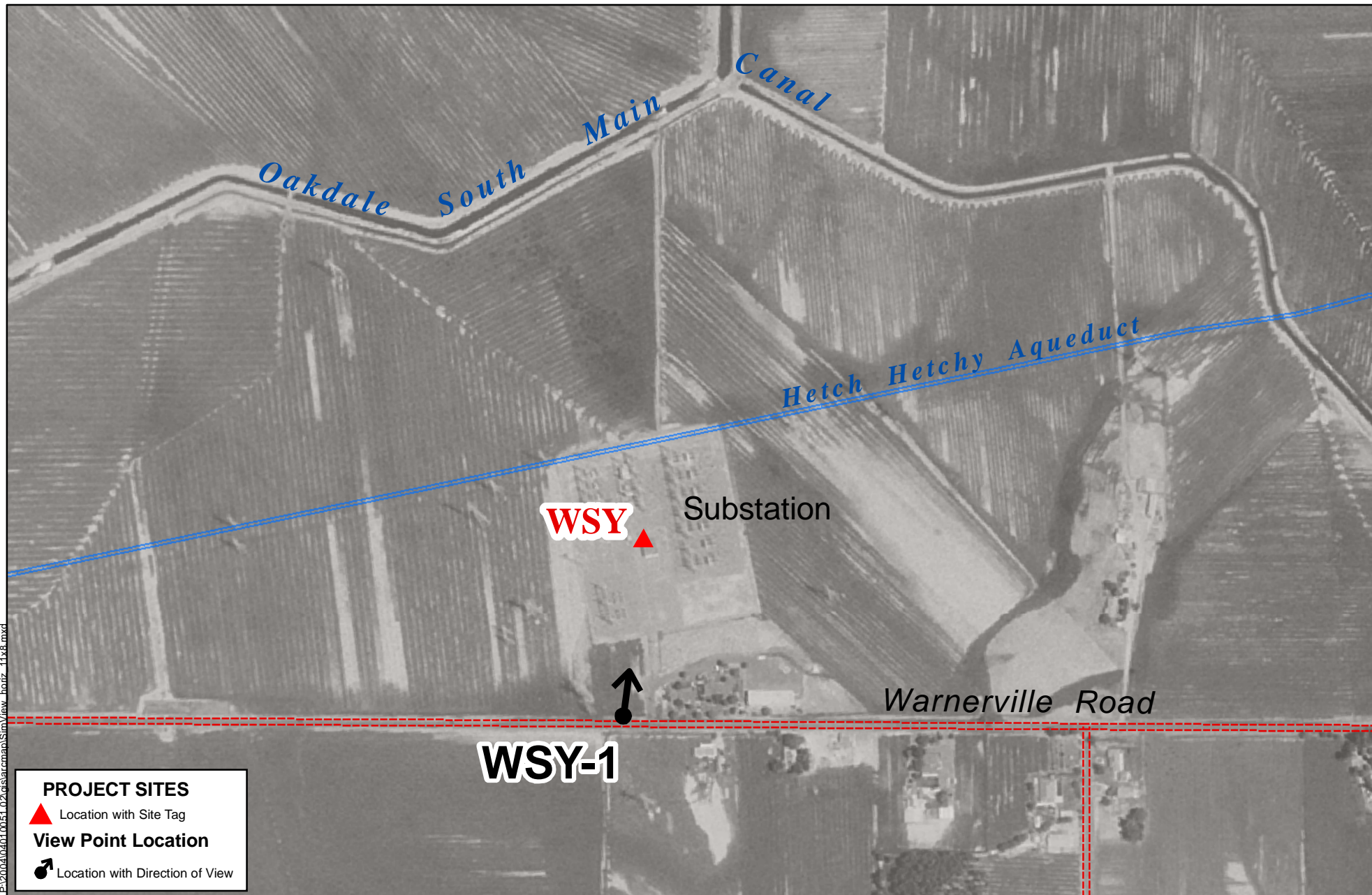
The No Action Alternative maintains the status quo at all communication facility sites. This alternative provides a basis to compare the action alternative, to evaluate the magnitude of proposed changes, and to measure the environmental effects of those changes. Under this alternative, all communication sites would remain in their current state. No impacts would be associated with this alternative.

#### **Environmental Consequences of Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative)**

Alternative 2 would involve a proposed communication system upgrade project at 32 communication facility sites operated by HHW&P. At the majority of the sites, proposed upgrades would involve replacement or installation of communication equipment in such a manner that construction on previously undeveloped sites would not occur: either existing communication towers would remain in use, with upgraded equipment mounted on the existing towers, or the entire towers and other equipment would be built or replaced in areas that have previously been developed. However, construction in undeveloped areas, and/or potential prominence of proposed structures, warrants an assessment of visual impacts at ten of the 32 project sites.

Impacts associated with the project are evaluated based on their context, duration, intensity and type. The following tables and discussion provide information regarding the nature of impacts from the proposed project as they relate to visual/scenic resources. Visual simulations were prepared by Timberline Engineering, Inc., (Timberline) for use in determining visual impacts at most project sites. Viewpoint locations are shown on the maps included here as Figure 3.10.2-11 (**Figures 3.10.2-11a – 11g**).

Viewpoints were selected to represent the most prominent public viewpoints from which proposed projects could potentially be visible.



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Source: USGS DOQQ Imagery / CASIL Ownership / Timberline Engineering -- Site locations / EDAW 2006

*Note: This map is for general locating purposes only.  
Raker Act right of way boundaries not shown.*

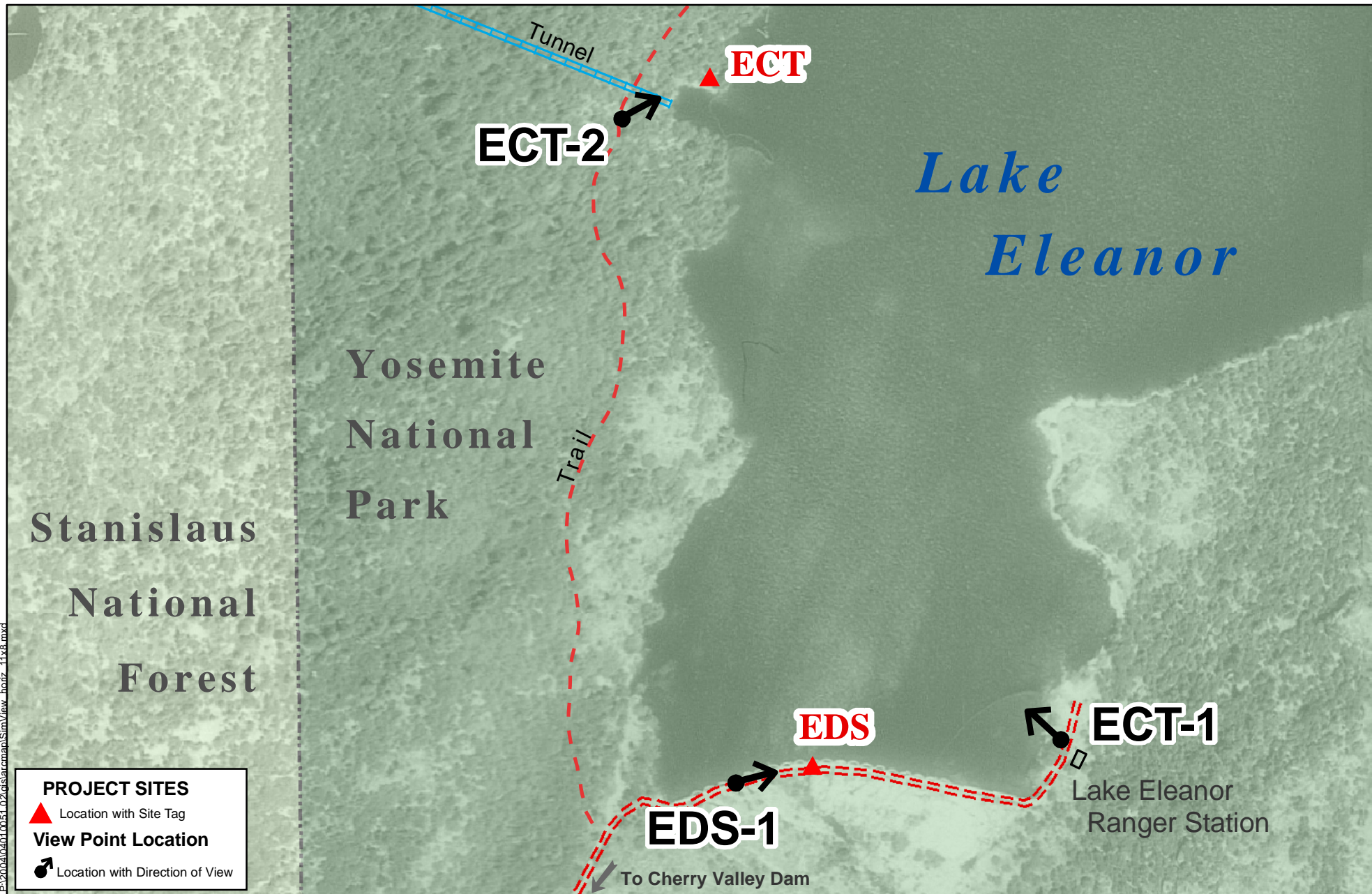
## Photo Simulation Viewpoints

**WSY -- Warnerville Switchyard**

Figure 3.10.2-11a

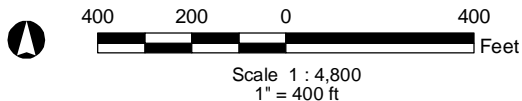






Source: USGS DOQQ Imagery / CASIL Ownership / Timberline Engineering -- Site locations / EDAW 2006

Note: This map is for general locating purposes only.  
Raker Act right of way boundaries not shown.



## Photo Simulation Viewpoints

**EDS -- Lake Eleanor Dam Level Gauge**  
**ECT -- Lake Eleanor-Cherry Lake Tunnel**

Figure 3.10.2-11b

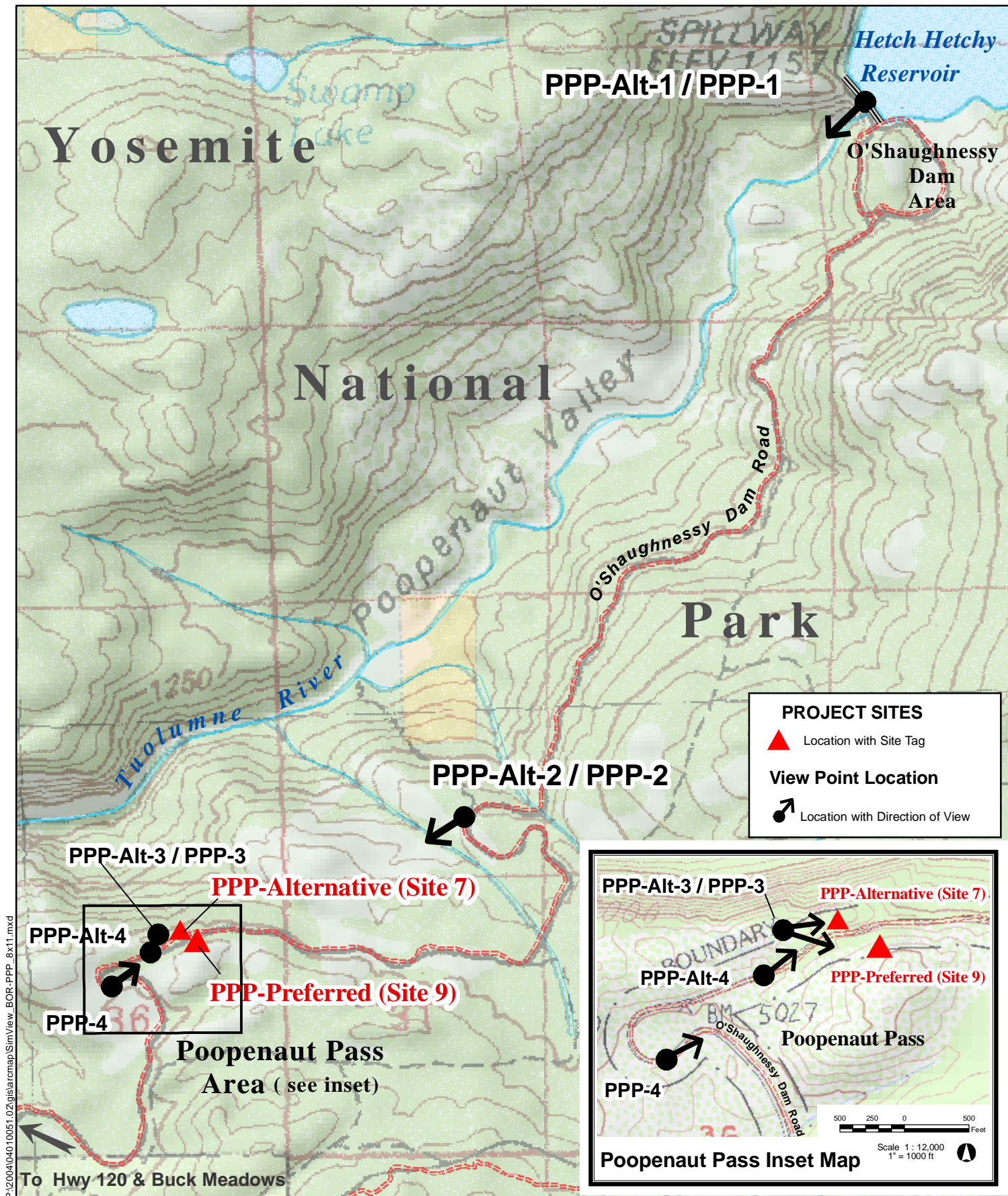
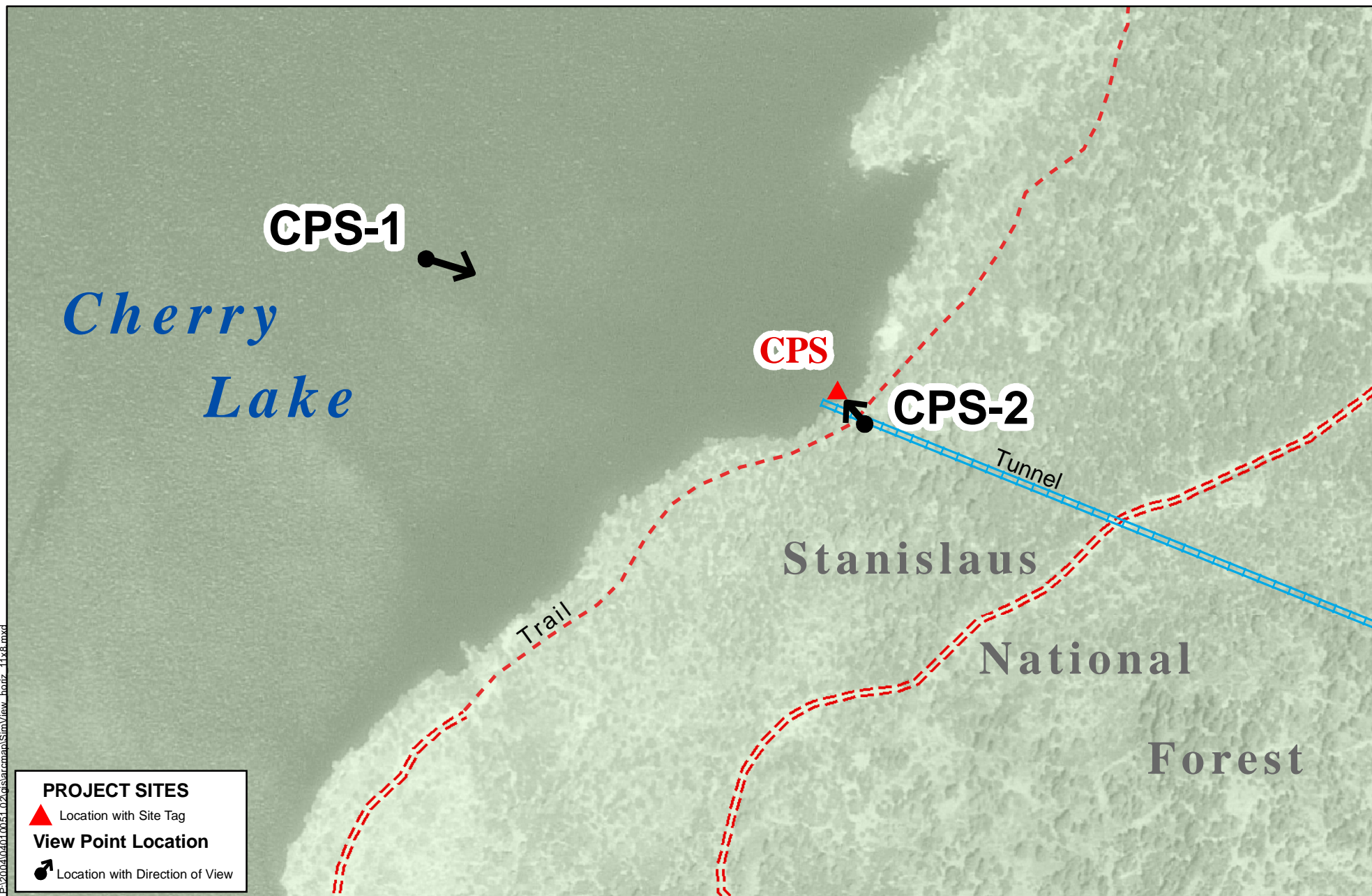


Photo Simulation Viewpoints  
PPP -- Poopenaut Pass  
Figure 3.10.2-11c



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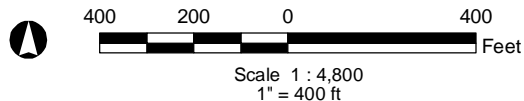
Source: USGS DOQQ Imagery / CASIL Ownership / Timberline Engineering -- Site locations / EDAW 2006

*Note: This map is for general locating purposes only.  
Raker Act right of way boundaries not shown.*

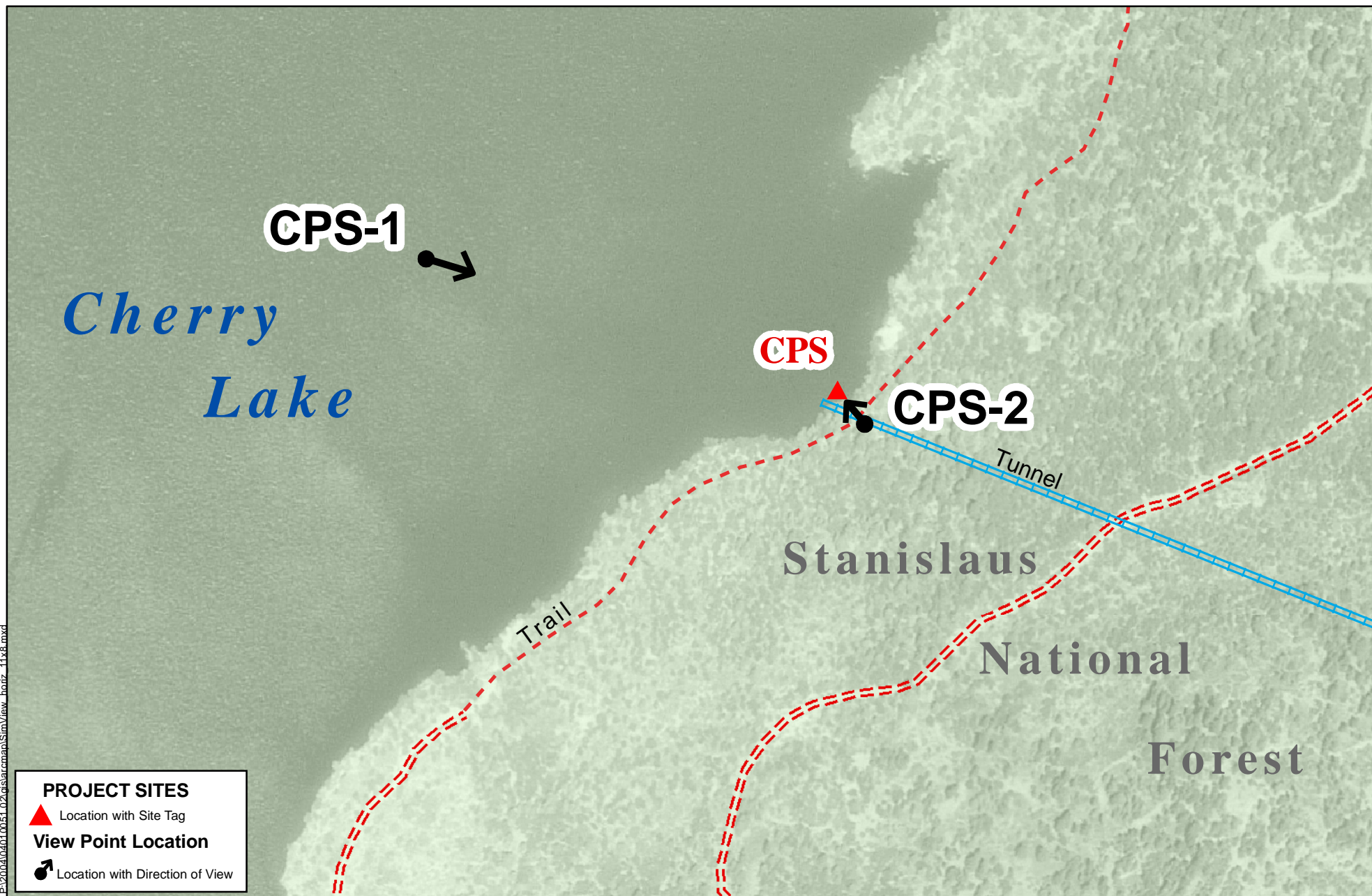
## Photo Simulation Viewpoints

**CPS -- Cherry Pump Station**

Figure 3.10.2-11d



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Source: USGS DOQQ Imagery / CASIL Ownership / Timberline Engineering -- Site locations / EDAW 2006

Note: This map is for general locating purposes only.  
Raker Act right of way boundaries not shown.

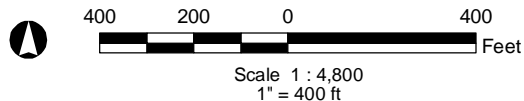
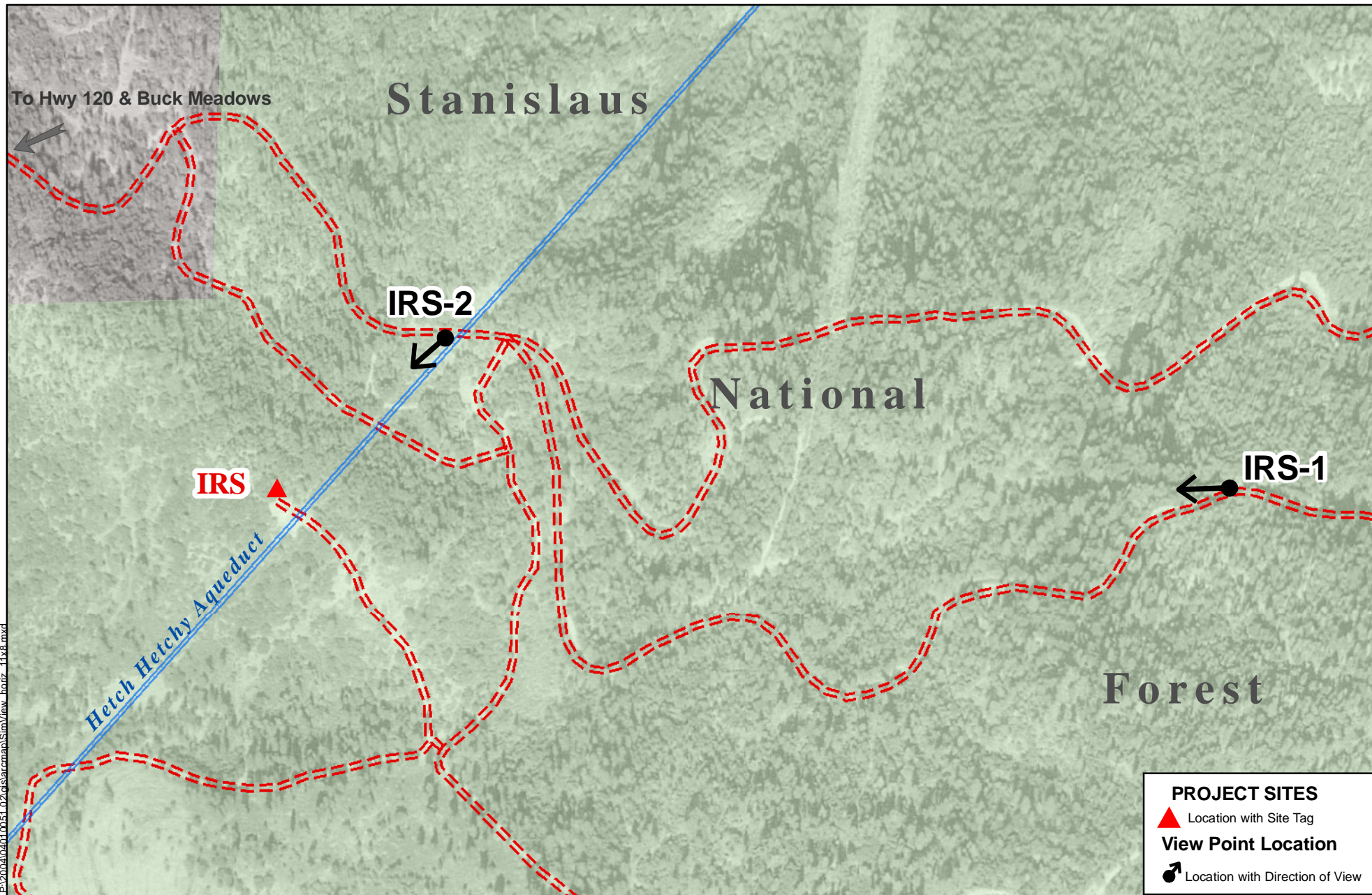


Photo Simulation Viewpoints

CTS -- Cherry Lake Tower Site

Figure 3.10.2-11e



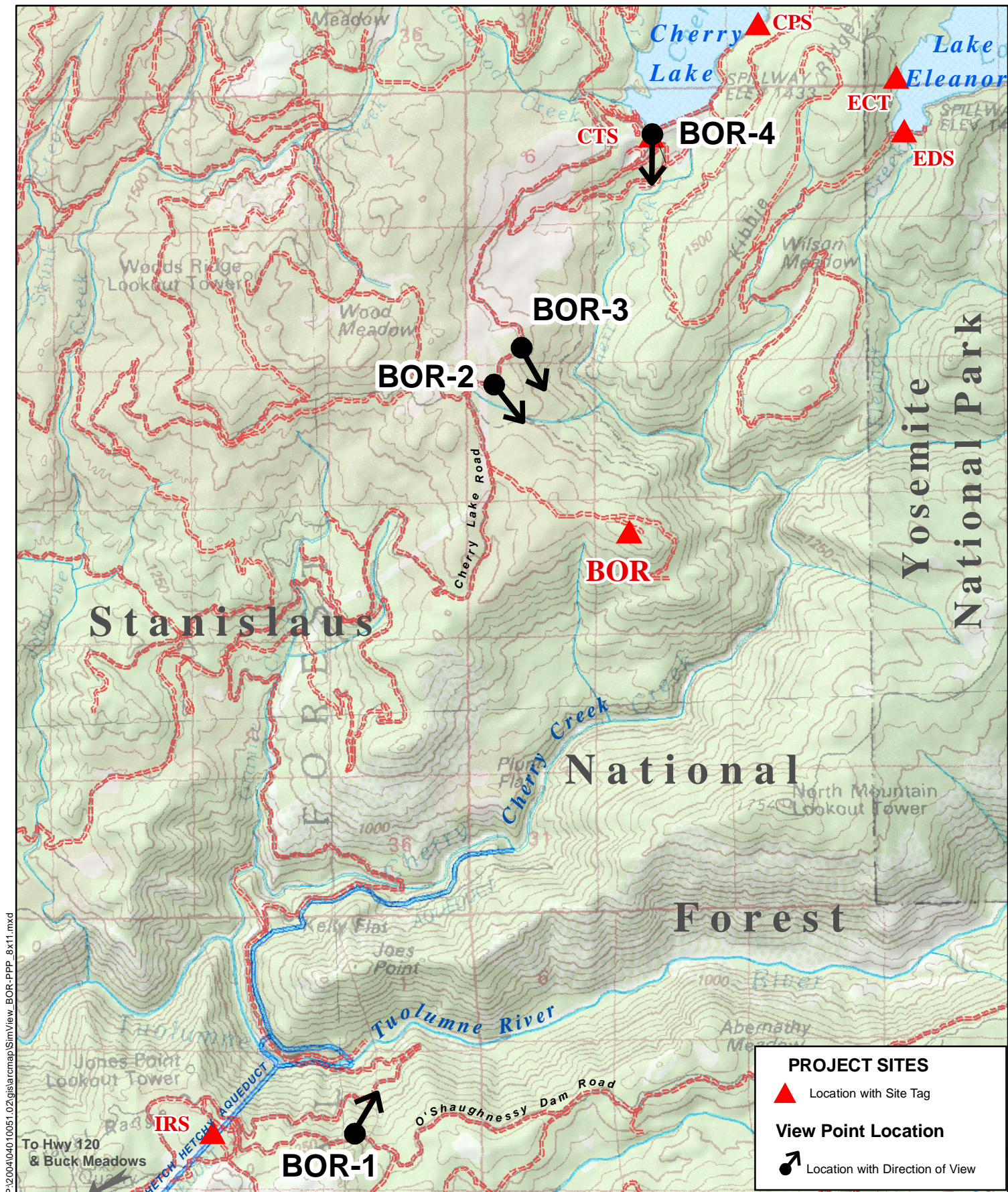


## Photo Simulation Viewpoints

**IRS -- Intake Radio Site**

Figure 3.10.2-11f





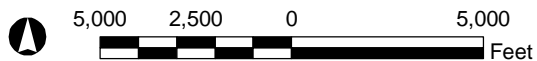
Source: Base map: USGS DRG / CASIL Ownership // Site locations: Timberline Engineering, Inc. / EDAW 2006

Note: This map is for general locating purposes only.  
Raker Act right of way boundaries not shown.

## Photo Simulation Viewpoints

**BOR -- Burnout Ridge**

Figure 3.10.2-11g



Scale 1 : 60,000  
1" = 5000 ft