# Notice of Preparation

# Draft Environmental Impact Report for Recreation Facilities Project at Lake McClure and McSwain Reservoir

**SCH# 2024051222**

**July 2024**

Merced Irrigation District (Merced ID) owns and operates five recreation areas at Lake McClure and McSwain Reservoir (Figure 1). Merced ID proposes to improve and upgrade recreation facilities at all recreation areas and to add one new recreation area. The proposed Project composes a discretionary action and has the potential to have physical effects on the environment. Merced ID is a local governmental agency and is subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code [PRC] §§ 21000–21178). Therefore, Merced ID is the lead agency under CEQA and has the principal responsibility for approving and implementing the Project. In compliance, Merced ID is preparing a draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for proposed recreation improvements and upgrades at six recreation areas at Lake McClure and McSwain Reservoir (proposed Project).

The proposed Project includes Merced ID’s proposed recreation improvements included in Merced ID’s 2015 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Final License Application (FLA) for the Merced River Hydroelectric Project (FERC Project No. 2179). Merced ID detailed proposed activities in their 2015 Amended Recreation Facilities Project Plan for Merced River Hydroelectric Project (Merced ID, April 2014; <https://www.lakemcclure.com/recreationceqainfo/>) that was included as an appendix of the 2015 FERC FLA. In December 2015, FERC issued a final environmental impact statement (Final EIS) for the Merced River Hydroelectric project, including the Amended Recreation Facilities Project Plan, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

In addition to the proposed recreation improvements included in the 2015 Amended Recreation Facilities Project Plan for Merced River Hydroelectric Project, the proposed Project includes other recreation area improvements. This allows Merced ID to assess potential impacts from all proposed Merced ID recreation area improvements within a single document. If the Merced ID Board approves the proposed Project and certifies the Recreation Facilities Project EIR, the analyses, findings, and mitigation measures corresponding to recreation improvements included in the 2015 FERC Recreation Facilities Project Plan will be incorporated by reference into the Final CEQA compliance documentation for the Merced River Hydroelectric Project and Merced Falls Hydroelectric Project, a draft of which is being developed separately and concurrently.

## Scoping and Public Involvement Process

Release of this Notice of Preparation (NOP), consistent with CEQA guidelines (PRC § 21083), starts a 30-calendar day review period of the NOP and informs CEQA responsible and trustee agencies and other interested parties about Merced ID’s CEQA compliance plan for the proposed Project.

The public review period will be open for **30 days,** from **July 9 to August 7, 2024**.

Merced ID will be accepting written comments and suggestions concerning the proposed Project until 5:00pm on August 7, 2024. Comments may be submitted via the following communication methods:

* E-mail to RecreationCEQAInfo@mercedid.org
* Submit via the “Comment on Recreation EIR NOP” button on the Merced ID Recreation website at <https://www.lakemcclure.com/recreationceqainfo/>
* postal mail [Direct to: Brooke Gutierrez, Merced ID Parks and Recreation, 9090 Lake McClure Road, Snelling, CA 95369].

Pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 21083.9 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3 (“CEQA Guidelines”) Section 15082(c)(1), Merced ID will present an overview of the proposed Project at the Merced ID Board Meeting scheduled for July 23, 2024. For the Board meeting, comment cards will be available for the public to submit written comments as to the appropriate scope and content of the draft EIR. Merced ID encourages all interested parties and agencies to respond to this notice via the preferred communication methods bulleted above or, if necessary, at the Board meeting. Please provide current contact information if you wish to be notified of the Draft EIR release and circulation.

The details of the Merced ID Board meeting are as follows:

**Merced ID**

July 23, 2024

10:00 a.m.

3321 N. Franklin Road, Merced, CA 95348

The Draft EIR is scheduled to be made available for public review and comment in fall of 2024. At that time, a 30-day public review period will be opened for interested parties and agencies to review and comment on the Draft EIR.

Merced ID will also post project updates periodically on the Merced ID Parks and Recreation website (<https://www.lakemcclure.com/>).

## Responsible and Trustee Agencies

Merced ID requests your agency’s views on the scope and content of the environmental information relevant to your agency’s statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed Project, in accordance with the CEQA PRC § 21080.4. Your agency will need to use the EIR prepared by Merced ID when considering any permits or other project approvals that your agency must issue. As such, your responses to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), at minimum should identify: (1) the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that your agency will need to have explored in the PEIR; and (2) whether your agency will be a responsible or trustee agency for the proposed Project.

## Project Location

The proposed Project is in the Merced River watershed in the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada, in Merced and Mariposa counties, California. Facilities are located on the main stem of the Merced River, about 23 miles northeast of the city of Merced, California (Figure 1 inset). The proposed Project ranges in elevation from approximately 880 feet (ft) at the upstream end of Lake McClure to 320 ft at McSwain Reservoir. A portion of the Project is on federal land managed by USDOI, Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Figure 1. Proposed Project Locations

A map of the water and the mountains

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

## Project Background

Merced ID became a legal entity on December 8, 1919, and has owned and operated hydroelectric generating facilities on the Merced River since 1927. Merced Irrigation District owns, operates and maintains the New Exchequer and McSwain dams, reservoirs, and hydroelectric facilities. Lake McClure and McSwain Reservoir are MID’s primary water storage facilities on the Merced River. The reservoirs are in the foothills on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, approximately 23 miles northeast of Merced (Figure 1). Lake McClure (also referred to as New Exchequer Reservoir) has a storage capacity of about 1,025,000 acre-feet, while Lake McSwain (also referred to as McSwain Reservoir) has a storage capacity of 9,730 acre-feet. In total, the lakes combined include a total shoreline length of 94.5 miles.

The two dams and reservoirs are integral parts of the 1964 Merced River Development Project and are licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). MID is authorized to function as an electric utility under the California Water Code. In 1996, MID exercised its authority to begin selling power to retail electric customers.

Since the 1970’s, Merced ID has owned, operated, and maintained five recreation areas adjacent to lakes McClure and McSwain. While the Lake McSwain Recreation Area is located adjacent to Lake McSwain, McClure Point, Barrett Cove, Horseshoe Bend and Bagby recreation areas are all located adjacent to Lake McClure (Figure 1). Public recreation facilities’ use at the lakes grew in popularity and in 1970, major improvements were completed at the recreation areas. Since that time, most upgrades and improvements have been part of ongoing maintenance and operations activities. Currently, a total of six boat launch facilities are available in the Parks system, more than 600 campsites are available year-round, floating marinas and boat docks are located on Lake McSwain and in two locations on Lake McClure, and activities enjoyed in the recreation areas include fishing, motorized, non-motorized and whitewater boating and kayaking, swimming, picnicking and group gatherings, youth education, camping, hiking and bicycling.

The initial license for the Project dams was effective March 1, 1964, through February 28, 2014. In February 2012 Merced ID filed with FERC an *Application for a New License for Major Project – Existing Dam for Merced ID’s 103.5 megawatt Merced River Hydroelectric Project, FERC Project No. 2179*. In the application for the new license, Merced ID proposed to continue to operate the existing Merced River Hydroelectric Project with no new capacity additions and no new construction, other than construction related to recreation facilities. As noted earlier, recreation improvements corresponding to Merced ID’s 2015 FERC FLA are detailed in the *2015 FERC Amended Recreation Facilities Plan for Merced River Hydroelectric Project* that can be found at <https://www.lakemcclure.com/recreationceqainfo/>) and are described in further detail under *Project Description,* below.

## Project Purpose and Objectives

Following completion of the two dams (New Exchequer and McSwain dams) in 1967 that created the two lakes, Lake McClure and the McSwain Reservoir have afforded many opportunities for public recreational use. Currently, with everything from fishing to boating, swimming to camping, and biking to hiking, Lake McClure and Lake McSwain offer some of the best recreational opportunities in California.

As such, the purpose of the proposed Project is to maintain flood control benefits provided by the two dams, while also making the most of opportunities to further protect and enhance environmental and recreational resources at the two lakes.

Corresponding with this broader purpose, the objectives of the proposed Project include:

1. Replacing and expanding capacities of aging underground and surface water, sewer and electrical utilities infrastructure, including, as necessary, original equipment that dates back to the 1970’s;
2. Continuing the Merced ID recreation legacy by providing upgrades to existing facilities to meet new and evolving recreation customer demands and upgrading facilities to meet new accommodation standards;
3. Expanding capacities at day use and camping areas, houseboats moorings and cabin rentals in response to recognized growth trends in recreation facilities’ seasonal use, while minimizing potential recreation use impacts to natural, historic and prehistoric resources; and
4. Modernizing existing recreation areas with new and enhanced features, such as restrooms, adding electric car charging stations, upgrading boat ramps to allow more use during dryer water years, and adding in more fish cleaning and recycling stations.

## Project Description

Merced ID proposes to develop one new recreation area (Mack Island) and to rehabilitate, upgrade, and expand recreation facilities and utilities at five recreation areas (Bagby, Barrett Cove, Horseshoe Bend, McClure Point, and McSwain). Collectively, these individual projects comprise the proposed Project.

### Projects Common to Multiple Recreation Areas

A list of common projects that are proposed across recreation areas as part of the proposed Project are included in Table 1. The timing and phasing for implementation of individual projects that comprise the proposed Project and will be covered under the draft EIR are dependent on several factors, such as size of proposed facilities and existing conditions at the sites, funding availability (including grant funding), year-to-year repair and rehabilitation priorities, sufficiency of existing project-specific environmental review, and securing agreements with cooperating partners and potential concessionaires. Those projects that would be consistent as to how they are constructed could be executed individually at a single site or at multiple recreation areas concurrently, such as painting structures and installing consistent signage across recreation areas. Larger and/or more individualized projects are discussed by recreation area in the next section.

Staging and laydown areas for a common project would occur in previously disturbed areas at a recreation area. It is anticipated that there would be no tree removal or new habitat disturbance resulting from temporary staging or laydown for projects.

Table 1: Proposed Project Types Common to Multiple Recreation Areas

|  | Bagby/ Shepherd’s Point | Barrett Cove | Horseshoe Bend | McClure Point | McSwain | Mack (new) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| New or Upgraded Signage | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Expanded Campgrounds1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New Campfire Center and/or Meeting Area1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New Park Model Cabins1 | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| New or Upgraded Small Vault Restroom Facilities (max four vault toilets)1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Upgraded Campground Restroom Facilities (max 12 vault or septic toilets, and 2 showers)1 | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| New or Upgraded Host and Staff Sites/Storage Sheds | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Upgraded Hiking and Biking Trails | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Improvements to Day Use and Picnic Area1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Upgraded Off-lake Water Play, Swim and/or Fishing Area | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| New or Upgraded On-lake Swim Area |  | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Upgraded Motorized Boat Ramps | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| New or Upgraded Non-motorized Boat Takeout | X |  |  |  | X |  |
| New or Upgraded Marina or Boat Dock Facilities1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New Houseboat Mooring Buoys2 |  | X | X | X |  |  |
| New Concession Facilities1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New or Upgraded Roads and Parking Lots1 | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| New Electric Vehicle Charging Stations | X | X | X | X | X |  |
| New or Upgraded Packaged Wastewater Treatment Plant | X | X |  |  | X |  |

1 Upgrades to existing or new facilities at non-primitive sites will follow requirements and standards set by The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other federal regulations, to the extent possible at that specific location.

2 During low water years, Merced ID relocates mooring buoy lines to areas that are accessible to boaters.

#### Utility Infrastructure Upgrades and Expansions

The proposed Project would also include installing, expanding, and replacing utilities necessary to support construction and operations of individual projects. These include:

* Water pipes and ancillary facilities – for such uses as restrooms, potable water, splashpads, off-lake swim areas, concessions, Park Model hookups, and water spigots at campground and day use areas. Upgraded water treatment systems and new water storage tanks are proposed at a few locations.
* Wastewater pipelines and treatment facilities – including flush (mostly septic) and vault toilets, RV dump sites, and on-site wastewater treatment options.
* Electrical service lines and ancillary facilities – updating the power capacity of existing electrical drops to 30 to 50 amps to support upgraded and replaced campground facilities, electric vehicle chargers, and other utilities, including aerators, water intakes and generators. New electrical drops would also be installed where facilities are new (Park Model cabins or new concession locations) or expanding (marina upgrades). Existing transformers, distribution boxes and control panels would be upgraded and new ones installed, as necessary, to support new and expanded facilities.

Whether existing assets would be replaced or rehabilitated is determined by which option is more financially and environmentally effective. As possible, upgraded and new utility corridors would be located within existing or new road alignments; however, where not possible, appropriate avoidance, minimization and mitigation measures would be applied.

### Projects Specific to Individual Recreation Area

This section provides a summary of existing conditions and describes individual projects that comprise the proposed Project by recreation area.

#### Bagby Recreation Area

Bagby Recreation Area follows the south shoreline along the eastern finger of Lake McClure that connects to the upstream reach of the Merced River. All recreation facilities at Bagby Recreation Area are located on Merced ID land. Primary access to the recreation area is by State Route (SR) 49 north of Bear Valley (Figure 1). Bagby Recreation Area is comprised of two campgrounds at Bagby and Shepherd’s Point.

##### Bagby Recreation Area Existing Conditions

Table 2 provides a summary of existing recreation facilities and other site elements at Bagby Recreation Area.

Table 2: Bagby Recreation Area Existing Facilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition | ADA Compliant |
| Bagby Campground | 20 Std; 10 RV | 0 | 1 Flush; shower | 22 a | 1 | Fair-to-good | Inaccessible |
| Shepherd’s Point Primitive | 15 Std | 0 | 1 Pit | 0 | 1 b | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Boat Ramp | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 31 | 1 | Good | Inaccessible |

Std = Standard one-family site; RV = Recreational Vehicle site with water and electric hookups.

a Includes informal overflow parking along the shoulder of the campground circulation road.

b Informal whitewater boat takeout/launch area without formal parking or road to launch area

###### Bagby Campground

The campground consists of 30 total campsites, which includes 20 standard campsites and 10 RV campsites. Each campsite consists of a table, pedestal grill and vehicle spur. In addition, each of the 10 RV campsites has a hookup (water) and a shelter over the table. The flush restroom building consists of two stalls (male and female) each with a toilet, sink, shower, and trash receptacle.

###### Boat Ramp

The boat ramp facilities consist of a boat ramp, flush restroom, fish-cleaning station and parking area. The boat ramp has a functional water surface elevation (WSE) range from 840 ft down to 786 ft. In addition, an informal low water boat ramp (asphalt and gravel) extends approximately 400 ft from midway down the main boat ramp. A fish-cleaning station is located adjacent to the restroom building.

###### Shepherd’s Point Primitive Area

The primitive campground consists of fifteen standard campsites and 1 pit toilet building. Each campsite consists of a table, pedestal grill, and informal vehicle spur (dirt/gravel). The restroom building has two stalls each with a pit toilet. The facility does not have water. An informal whitewater boat takeout has been created by the public with access via a primitive road that follows the shoreline from Bagby Campground.

###### Informal Hiking Trail

On the opposite (north) side of the Lake McClure shoreline, an informal trail (Old Railroad Grade Trail) starts up just to the east of Flyaway Gulch Creek and follows the shoreline moving east by Shepherd’s Point Primitive Area on the opposite shore and then beyond the easternmost end of Lake McClure. This trail has been created by the public and is not a formal trail that is maintained by Merced ID.

##### Bagby Recreation Area Proposed Projects

Besides the common projects noted in a previous section, proposed projects that are specific to the Bagby Recreation Area are listed below:

* Install a new water tank at Bagby Campground.
* Install twelve new Park Model cabins with group site amenities.
* Develop a formal trailhead at SR 49 (north of Lake McClure/ Merced River crossing) with a parking lot and a pedestrian connector trail that would run from parking area to existing Old Railroad Grade Trail and include a bridge over Flyaway Gulch Creek (no in-stream work).
* Updates to the existing primitive facilities at the Shepherd’s Point Campground that would include adding new and rehabilitating existing tent campsites and replacing existing pit toilets.
* Improving existing informal whitewater boat takeout at Shepherd’s Point Primitive Area to include:
* A permanent whitewater boat takeout
* A new vault restroom facility
* A graded parking area, including up to 10 spaces, and an aggregate takeout trail or path from the parking area to the lake.

#### Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area

Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area is located on the north shoreline of Lake McClure to the northeast of Barrett Cove Recreation Area. All recreation facilities, besides the boat ramp, are located on Federal land (that is, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land). This includes the entrance station at the west access, campground, swim area, and most of the boat launch facilities – parking area, restroom facilities, and boat cleaning station – in addition to all circulation roads. Primary access to the recreation area is by SR 132 from the west, southwest and northwest and SR 49 from the east, southeast and northeast. Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area consists of a campground, day use and swim area, and boat launch.

##### Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area Existing Conditions

Table 3 provides a summary of existing recreation facilities and other site elements at Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area.

Table 3: Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area Existing Facilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition a | ADA Compliance a |
| CAMPGROUND |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loop A | 22 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | -- |
| Loop B | 12 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | -- |
| Loop C | 18 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | -- |
| Loop D | 16 Std; 2 RV | 0 | 2 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | -- |
| Loop E | 7 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | -- |

Table 3 (Continued).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition a | ADA Compliance a |
| Loop F | 12 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | -- |
| Loop G | 20 RV | 1 Grp | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair-to-Good | -- |
| Day Use and Off-lake Swim Area | 0 | 12 Std | 1 Flush | 50 | 0 | Fair | -- |
| Boat Launch | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 49 | 1 with 2 lanes | (Merced ID) Fair; (BLM) Fair-to-Good | Inaccessible |
| *Total* | ***65 Std; 44 RV*** | ***12 Std; 1 Grp*** | ***5 Flush*** | ***99*** | ***1*** |  |  |

Std = Standard one-family site; RV = Recreational Vehicle site with water and electric hookups; Grp = Group Site

a Condition assessment and ADA compliance rating only included for those facilities on Merced ID land.

###### Campground (BLM Land)

The campground consists of 109 total campsites in 7 loops. The campground has 53 standard sites, 12 walk-in sites, and 44 RV sites. Forty-two of the campsites also have shelters, where trees do not provide shade. The facility also has three flush restrooms with showers, water spigots, and trash receptacles dispersed throughout the campground. A group picnic shelter, located in campground loop G, consists of six tables, two sinks, and a food preparation area.

###### Day Use and Swim Area (BLM Land)

The day use and swim area are a short walk from the campground loops and consist of an off-lake swim area with a beach, 12 picnic units and 1 flush restroom building (including outdoor showers). Overflow parking for 50 vehicles (single spaces) is also available nearby.

###### Boat Launch

The boat launch facility consists of a two-lane concrete motorized boat ramp (located on Merced ID land). The boat ramp has a functional WSE range from 800 ft down to 761 ft WSE. All other facilities are on BLM land, including a parking area, a flush restroom building, and a boat cleaning station.

###### Ranger Court (BLM Land)

The ranger court is located to the north of the public recreation facilities with a variety of facilities used by Merced ID to operate and maintain the recreation area facilities, including: potable water system facilities, a water well, water treatment facility and an 85,000 gallon water tank; electric service meter (for service to Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area facilities); shop and storage buildings; ranger residences; equestrian corral and facilities; and other remnant maintenance facilities.

The wastewater treatment plant is located to the east of the boat launch parking area and consists of a return activated sludge treatment system, and a fenced field where the effluent is dispersed by spray irrigation.

###### Private Recreational Club Areas

Merced ID allows two private recreational clubs to use areas near the Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area, but they are located primarily outside of the FERC Project boundary. Each private club pays Merced ID an annual fee for use of Merced ID-managed lands within the FERC Project boundary.

**Mother Lode Sky Riders Hang Gliding Club (Private)**

The club’s current membership includes a total of thirty-four members. Typically, the club will hold two to three open events each year. The hang glider club area consists of two access roads (entrance and exit), a camp area and a landing zone. The entrance access road is gated at the junction with the main Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area access road.

**Horseshoe Bend Field Archery Club (Private)**

The private archery club currently has ten family memberships. In addition to the club members’ events and use, the club typically holds two to three open events each year. The archery club area consists of an access road, a practice target range with parking (dirt), an archery course, fire ring, water spigot, vault toilet, and storage facilities. The archery range consists of 28 shooting stations with walking trails connecting the stations. Club members built and maintain the shooting targets.

##### Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area Proposed Projects

Besides the common projects noted in a previous section. Proposed projects specific to the Horseshoe Bend Recreation Area are listed below:

* Remove the existing ranger court at Horseshoe Bend
* Add a new host site at the Horseshoe Bend Campground
* Enhance the existing day use off-lake swim area by installing an aerator in the swim pool which will provide a recreation water feature (i.e., spray area).
* Install new anchored, floating swim platforms and upgrade the existing on-lake swim area along the south shoreline. A watercraft restriction zone would be created around the swim platforms, demarcated by new swim buoys and signage.
* Develop a new pedestrian loop trail (Horseshoe Bend Loop Trail) within the recreation area. The non-motorized loop trail would begin at the boat launch facilities and extend to the east. The dirt loop trail would be approximately 1 mile in length, up to 6 feet wide, and designed to BLM trail standards for foot travel only. The current trail alignment is not finalized but may include creek/water crossings in areas of sensitive resources. No fill or footings would be placed in the creeks/streams.
* Enhance the existing hang glider club area, including closing and rehabilitating the existing exit access road to SR 132 to the north, improving road access from the south with parking, and installing a vault toilet facility.
* Enhance the existing archery course area, including closing and rehabilitating any sites that are not being used or that may cause injury to potential non-archery participants, replacing older toilet facilities with new vault toilets, and improving road access from south.

#### Barrett Cove Recreation Area

Barrett Cove Recreation Area is located on the west shoreline of Lake McClure to the north of McClure Point Recreation Area. Primary access to the recreational area is by Merced Falls Road from the southwest, SR 132 from the west and northwest, and SR 49 from the east, southeast and northeast. All recreation facilities at Barrett Cove Recreation Area are located on Merced ID land. Barrett Cove Recreation Area consists of a campground, day use and swim area, two boat launches, marina, and an overflow parking area.

##### Barrett Cove Recreation Area Existing Conditions

Table 4 provides a summary of existing recreation facilities and other site elements at Barrett Cove Recreation Area.

Table 4: Barrett Cove Recreation Area Existing Facilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition | ADA Compliant |
| CAMPGROUND |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loop A | 8 Std | 0 | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop B | 9 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop C | 19 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop D | 6 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop E | 13 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop F | 30 Std; 4 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 5 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop G | 8 Std; 20 RV | 0 | 2 Flush | 14 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop H | 10 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop I | 24 Std | 0 | 1 Flush | 5 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop J | 30 Std | 0 | 2 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop K | 10 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop L | 15 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Main Loop | 54 Std; 15 RV | 0 | 3 Flush | 15 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Day Use and Off-lake Swim Area | 0 | 12 Std; 1 Grp | 1 Flush | 30 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |

Table 4 (Continued).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition | ADA Compliant |
| Boat Launch – North (concrete) | 0 | 6 Std | 1 Flush | 186 | 1 with 2 lanes | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Boat Launch – South (concrete) | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 81 | 1 with 3 lanes | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Overflow Parking |  |  |  | 30 |  |  |  |
| *Total* | ***177 Std; 98 RV*** | ***18 Std; 1 Grp*** | ***15 Flush*** | ***366*** | ***2*** |  |  |

Std = Standard one-family site; RV = Recreational Vehicle site with water and electric hookups; Grp = Group Site

###### Campground

The facility consists of 275 total campsites throughout 13 loops; 177 are standard sites and 98 are RV sites. The facility also has 12 flush restrooms with outdoor showers, parking (39 spaces) adjacent to the restrooms, water spigots, and trash receptacles dispersed throughout the campground.

###### Day Use and Off-lake Swim Area

The day use and swim area facilities consist of an off-lake swim area with a beach, 12 standard picnic areas, sand lot volleyball, a children’s playground with stationary playground equipment, 1 flush restroom building (including outdoor showers), and gravel parking area for 30 vehicles (single spaces). The facility also includes one group picnic shelter.

###### North Boat Launch

The North Boat Launch consists of a boat ramp, parking area, and a flush restroom building. The boat ramp has a concrete surface with two lanes and a floating courtesy dock (that connects to a marina). The boat ramp has a functional WSE range from 750 ft down to 593 ft. The paved (asphalt) parking areas provide a total of 186 spaces in 2 paved lots, and 30 additional single spaces in a gravel lot. The facility also has six picnic areas, each with a table and shelter; and a marina with a general store, boat slips, fuel station, and restroom facilities.

###### South Boat Launch

The South Boat Launch consists of a boat ramp, parking area, and a flush restroom building. The boat ramp has a concrete surface with three lanes and a floating courtesy dock. The boat ramp has a functional WSE range from 750 ft down to 633 ft. The paved (asphalt) parking area has 81 spaces.

##### Barrett Cove Recreation Area Proposed Projects

Besides the common projects noted in a previous section, proposed projects that are specific to the Barrett Cove Recreation Area are listed below:

* Rehabilitating and upgrading restrooms, parking lots and other facilities at both North and South boat launch areas.
* Adding up to fifty additional houseboat moorings at the Barrett Cove Houseboat Area north of Barrett Cove Recreation Area.
* Day use and swim area improvements would include adding sand at the existing off-lake beach, including along the slopes and bottom of the swim area, as feasible; installing aerators in swim pool; adding up to 15 additional picnic tables and pedestal grills; upgrades to existing sand lot volleyball court; and rehabilitation of an existing children’s playground with stationary playground equipment.
* Rehabilitating marina facilities.
* Installing up to twelve new prefabricated Park Model cabins and group site amenities at the Barrett Cove Recreation Area. The cabins would include water, electric, and sewer connections.
* Converting one camping loop to a group camp site.
* Rehabilitating all paved roads within recreation area

#### Mack Island Recreation Area

Mack Island is in Lake McClure (just north of McClure Point Recreation Area) and the proposed Recreation Area includes the recently developed Exchequer Mountain Bike Park adjacent to Mack Island on the mainland. As Mack Island is currently undeveloped, all projects on the island itself would create new disturbances in previously undisturbed areas. Access to the mainland portion of Mack Island Recreation Area is from Barrett Cut-Off Road, a dirt and gravel road extending from the water tower at Barrett Cove to McClure Point. Access to Mack Island would be limited to boat or foot traffic only, and facilities on Mack Island would be primitive in nature and would not include potable water, utilities, or electricity on the island.

Proposed projects that are specific to the proposed Mack Island Recreation Area are listed below:

* New facilities would be included on Mack Island. These new facilities would include a dock, up to two swim platforms, up to 10 campsites, and strings of water buoys reaching from the top and bottom of the island to the adjacent section of mainland to block motorized boat traffic and allow for safe swimming and other water recreation.
* A pedestrian bridge from the proposed trailhead parking area on the mainland to Mack Island would be constructed.
* On the mainland portion of Mack Island Recreation Area near the Exchequer Mountain Bike Park, water lines and a potable water tank, electricity lines, and vault toilets would be added.

#### McClure Point Recreation Area

McClure Point Recreation Area is located on the southwest portion of Lake McClure. Primary access to the recreational area is from the southwest by County Road J-16 and Lake McClure Road. McClure Point Recreation Area consists of a campground, picnic area, swim lagoon, marina, and boat launch.

##### McClure Point Recreation Area Existing Conditions

Table 5 provides a summary of existing recreation facilities and other site elements at McClure Point Recreation Area.

Table 5: McClure Point Recreation Area Existing Facilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Facility | Campsites | Picnic Sites | Restrooms | Parking Spaces | Boat Ramp | Overall Condition | ADA Compliant |
| CAMPGROUND |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loop A | 16 Std | 0 | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop B | 11 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop C | 21 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 4 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop D | 18 Std | 0 | 1 Flush | 5 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop E | 13 Std; 10 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 5 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop F | 12 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair-to-Good | Inaccessible |
| Picnic Area | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Day Use Swim Area | 0 | 22 | 1 Flush | 60 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Marina | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 50 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Boat Launch | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 140 | 1 with 3 lanes | Fair | Inaccessible |
| *Total* | ***47 Std; 54 RV*** | ***30*** | ***7 Flush*** | ***272*** | ***1*** |  |  |

###### Campground

The campground consists of 101 campsites in six campground loops. The campground has 47 standard sites and 54 RV sites. Four flush restroom buildings are dispersed throughout the campground in loops A, C, D and E, which includes showers. In addition, parking (14 spaces), water spigots, and trash receptacles are dispersed throughout the campground.

###### Picnic Area

The picnic area facility consists of eight picnic units each with a table, shelter and pedestal grill. The facility provides parking for approximately eight vehicles with a single space in a gravel area adjacent to each picnic unit.

###### Off-lake Swim Area

The off-lake swim area includes a beach area, 22 picnic units, 1 flush restroom building (including showers), and a gravel parking area for 60 vehicles (single spaces).

###### South Boat Launch

The south boat launch consists of a boat ramp, parking area, and a flush restroom building. The boat ramp has a concrete surface with three lanes and a floating courtesy dock, and has a functional water surface elevation (WSE) range from 750 ft down to 653 ft. A paved (asphalt) parking area consists of an upper and lower lot with 100 parking spaces. In addition, a gravel parking area provides 40 additional spaces for overflow parking.

###### North Boat Launch and Floating Dock

The north boat launch includes an undeveloped boat ramp and parking for 50 vehicles in a dirt/gravel lot. The boat dock also has a flush restroom building onshore and offers rentals and boat slips for power boats and houseboats.

##### McClure Point Recreation Area Proposed Projects

Besides the common projects noted in a previous section, proposed projects that are specific to the McClure Point Recreation Area are listed below:

* New anchored, floating lake swim platforms and areas would be installed along the shoreline at the swim area.
* A new group day use facility for up to 90 people would be developed at McClure Point Recreation Area. The facility would include a large group shelter with picnic tables, pedestal grills, and a restroom. The restroom would serve this facility as well as the existing Park Model cabins located on the peninsula. The new day use facility would require substantial underground trenching to connect to existing water and sewer utilities.

#### McSwain Recreation Area

McSwain Recreation Area is located on the north shoreline of McSwain Reservoir near McSwain Dam. Primary access to the recreational area is by County Road J-16 and Lake McClure Road from the southwest. McSwain Recreation Area consists of a campground, picnic area, group picnic area, swim lagoon, marina, boat launch, and informal day use area.

##### McSwain Recreation Area Existing Conditions

Table 6 provides a summary of existing recreation facilities and other site elements at Bagby Recreation Area.

Table 6: McSwain Recreation Area Existing Facilities

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Facility** | **Campsites** | **Picnic Sites** | **Restrooms** | **Parking Spaces** | **Boat Ramp** | **Overall Condition** | **ADA Compliant** |
| **CAMPGROUND** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Loop A | 28 Std; 10 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 0 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop B | 3 RV | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop C | 6 Std; 9 RV | 0 | 1 Flush | 8 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop D | 7 Std; 6 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Poor | Inaccessible |
| Loop E | 7 Std | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop F | 11 RV | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Loop G | 13 Std | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Overflow | 13 Std | 0 | 0 | 15 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Picnic Area | 0 | 12 | 0 | 52 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Group Picnic Area | 0 | 1 | 1 Flush | 55 | 0 | Good | Inaccessible |
| Day Use Swim Area | 0 | 6 | 1 Flush | 15 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| Floating Dock Facilities | 0 | 0 | 1 Flush | 20 | 0 | Good | Inaccessible |
| Boat Launch | 0 | 0 | 2 Flush | 89 | 1 with 2 lanes | Good | Inaccessible |
| Informal Day Use Area | 0 | 8 | 1 Vault | 24 | 0 | Fair | Inaccessible |
| ***Total*** | ***51 Std; 61 RV*** | ***18 Std; 1 Grp*** | ***7 Flush; 1 Vault*** | ***283*** | ***1*** |  |  |

###### Campground

The campground consists of 112 campsites in 8 campground loops (including an overflow loop). The campground has 51 standard sites and 61 RV sites each with hookups (water and electric). Two flush restroom buildings are dispersed throughout the campground in loops A and C and include showers. In addition, parking (28 spaces), water spigots, and trash receptacles are dispersed throughout the campground. A group picnic shelter located in campground loop G consists of six tables and trash receptacles.

###### Picnic Area

The picnic area facility consists of 12 picnic units. Four pedestal grills are dispersed throughout the picnic area. The facility also has a paved (asphalt) parking area for 52 vehicles, a floating fishing pier, and playground equipment for kids.

###### Group Picnic Area

The group picnic facility consists of nine long tables under three large metal shelters and a large group pedestal grill. The facility also has a flush restroom, paved (asphalt) parking area for 55 vehicles, and playground equipment for kids.

###### Day Use Swim Area

The day use swim area facilities include a beach area, 6 picnic units, 1 flush restroom building, and a gravel parking area for 15 vehicles (single spaces).

###### Marina

The facility consists of a general store with restrooms, boat dock and slips, and a gravel parking area for 20 vehicles.

###### Boat Launch

The boat launch consists of a boat ramp, parking area, and two flush restroom buildings. The boat ramp has a concrete surface with two lanes and a floating courtesy dock. The boat ramp has a functional WSE range from 400 ft down to 387.6 ft. A paved (asphalt) parking area provides 89 parking spaces. In addition, a nearby gravel parking area provides 40 additional spaces for overflow parking for the boat launch and other recreation area visitors.

###### Informal Day Use Area

The facility consists of eight picnic units, a pit restroom building, and an informal gravel parking area for approximately 16 vehicles.

##### McSwain Recreation Area Proposed Projects

Besides the common projects noted in a previous section, proposed projects that are specific to the McSwain Recreation Area are listed below:

* A non-motorized shoreline trail (McSwain Reservoir Shoreline Trail) would be developed that extends from the Informal Day Use Area at McSwain Recreation Area upstream to the existing gravel pullout at new Exchequer Dam. The dirt trail would be approximately 4.1 miles in length and up to 4 ft wide. The proposed trailhead locations have existing dirt/gravel parking areas that can accommodate parking for trail users.
* A new 5-mile-long paved bike lane would be developed adjacent to the reservoir side of Lake McClure Road. The new paved bike lane would mostly fit within the existing roadway clearing, and may require widening (away from road), addition of fill, possible retaining walls along steep grades, or drainage upgrades.
* Sand would be installed at the on-lake swim area and the length of the lagoon beach would be expanded on the inland side up to 50 percent. Two new anchored floating swim platforms would be installed. A fishing pond for children and/or trout farm would also be installed to be stocked seasonally.

### Types of Construction Activities

To achieve the types of projects listed in Table 1 as common projects, as well as projects specific to individual recreation areas as described above, the proposed Project would require the following types of activities, depending on what type of project is being constructed, current conditions at the recreation area, and accessibility of construction equipment:

**Site Clearing**– Removing existing vegetation, including shrubs, trees, and roots, as well as all logs, stumps, brush, and debris.

**Grading** – Following site clearing, altering areas could be necessary to level and contour ground areas to improve existing roads, install new parking areas, improve stormwater drainage and align with proposed land use.

**Landscaping** – Depending on planned use, most construction sites would be returned to previous or better conditions, unless permanent clearing is required. Implementing plant management plans would ensure appropriate conditions for intended land use and minimize future maintenance needs.

**Open Trenching** – Trenches would need to be dug to install or rehabilitate utility lines and infrastructure, improve roads, install or upgrade bathroom facilities, and add electric vehicle charging stations. All trenched areas would be restored to previous or better conditions following construction.

**Concrete Work** – Concrete would be used to install, replace, repair, and update facilities including, but not limited to, restrooms, parking lots, barbeque pit areas, cabins, concession areas, Park Model cabins, and splashpads at off-lake recreation areas. In most cases, concrete slabs would only be used as foundations for proposed facilities, and/or anchors or footings for small structures to provide stability.

**Paving** – Developing new and rehabilitating or expanding some of the existing roads and parking lots could require the use of asphalt and related materials. This could also include minor chip sealing and/or fog coating of those elements.

**Installing Small Structures** – Improving campgrounds, trails, trailheads, and other facilities could include installing informational and educational signage, trailhead markers and maps, playground equipment, upgraded day use facilities, weather protection facilities, and resting benches. Types and numbers of structures would depend on type and extent of recreation area, with less installations planned at more remote and primitive locations. Simple fencing for protection of resources could also be installed.

**In-Lake Work** – In-lake work would be limited to the minimal footprint necessary to implement the project, would comply with federal and state permitting requirements, and would not result in a net loss of waters or wetlands. Appropriate protections would be included to reduce the potential for effects on aquatic species and ecosystems. In-lake work would be required for the following types of projects:

* Expanding and rehabilitating boat ramps,
* Adding sand for inland expansion of existing beach areas,
* Expanding numbers of mooring buoys for houseboats,
* Installing swim platforms at in-lake swim areas,
* Adding swim floats or buoys to protect in-lake swim areas,
* Installing additional floating bathrooms,
* Installing floating bridges along trails or for new Mack Island access, and
* Installing proposed on-lake or lakeside concession facilities.

**Increasing Existing Disturbed Footprint** – Implementing new facilities at and adjacent to existing recreation areas could require clearing new areas outside of the existing disturbed footprint. These projects would include expanding beaches, installing new trails, installing new or expanding existing parking lots, expanding or adding new campsites or restrooms to existing campgrounds, clearing areas for proposed concessions, installing new Park Model cabins, and developing the new Mack Island Recreation Area.

### Operations and Maintenance

Consistent with current operations, future operations and maintenance at all proposed Project recreation facilities, including new facilities that would be constructed as part of the proposed Project, would be performed by Merced ID, its hired contractors, or contracted concessionaires. Merced ID intends to use its Parks Department for the administration, operation and maintenance of the recreation facilities, including the lake moorings and marina facilities operated through its subsidiary, Twin Lakes Management Company, Inc.

Operational maintenance activities keep permanent assets in an acceptable condition and include repairs, painting, replacement of minor parts and minor structural components. Operational maintenance, or reconditioning, neither materially adds to the value of the property nor appreciably prolongs its life. Operational maintenance excludes activities aimed at expanding the capacity of an asset or otherwise upgrading it to serve needs different from, or significantly greater than those originally intended. The work serves only to keep the facility in an ordinary, efficient operating condition.

Examples of regular or routine operational maintenance activities include, but are not limited to interior painting, repair of broken windows, light bulb replacement, cleaning, unplugging drains, greasing, servicing, inspecting, oiling, adjusting, tightening, aligning, sweeping and general snow removal. Maintenance activities may also include work needed to meet applicable laws, regulations, codes, and other legal direction (such as compliance with the ADA) as long as the original intent or purpose of the fixed asset is not changed. Merced ID may contract for the necessary personnel, equipment, and/or materials to achieve the maintenance standards.

## Environmental Review

Merced ID has preliminarily determined that the proposed Project could have potentially significant environmental impacts. The draft EIR would discuss the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Project and will identify mitigation measures to avoid or substantially reduce any potentially significant impacts, to the extent feasible. Merced ID would also identify and consider feasible alternatives to the proposed Project in the draft EIR analysis.

Based on preliminary analysis, the environmental factors checked below would have the potential to be affected by this project.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Aesthetics |  | Agriculture and Forestry Resources |  | Air Quality |
|  | Biological Resources |  | Cultural Resources |  | Energy |
|  | Geology/Soils |  | Greenhouse Gas Emissions |  | Hazards & Hazardous Materials |
|  | Hydrology / Water Quality |  | Land Use/Planning |  | Mineral Resources |
|  | Noise |  | Population/Housing |  | Public Services |
|  | Recreation |  | Transportation |  | Tribal Cultural Resources |
|  | Utilities/Service Systems |  | Wildfire |

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive or to imply a predetermination of impacts. Merced ID invites interested stakeholders to suggest specific issues, including possible mitigation measures, within these general categories, or other categories not included above, to be considered in the EIR.

Alternatives to the proposed Project are still being developed and evaluated and will be analyzed further in the draft EIR.