



UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
"Conserving Water Since 1927"

Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project  
FERC Project No. 2153

## **Lake Piru Recreation Area Recreation Management Plan**

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Prepared by:

United Water Conservation District  
106 North 8th Street  
Santa Paula, California 93060  
&  
Stantec Consulting Services Inc.  
Santa Barbara, CA

**September 14, 2018**

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# LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Executive Summary

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the need to address recreation provisions of the current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project, United Water Conservation District has prepared this recreation management plan to guide short and long term management and development needs for public access and Project recreation uses. The Plan evaluates recreation uses and recommends management measures and recreation planning provisions to meet current and future needs at Lake Piru.

The Plan describes current FERC license conditions related to recreation, provides a detailed inventory of the facilities and uses at Lake Piru and undertakes a visitor analysis based on surveys and recreation needs assessment that included a series of interviews with recreation providers in the region.

Article 412 of the current FERC license issued in 2008, called for a plan for completing improvements at the informal day-use area on the lakefront at the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch area including provision to add an additional 25 picnic tables, additional restrooms and parking. However as found in this study, because of the drought and other factors in the last 5 years, the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area has not been open or capable of operating in its intended capacity due to consistently low lake levels such that there is no accessible shoreline or waterfront areas. As a closed, unusable part of the reservoir under current long-term drought conditions, the existing Article 412 improvements planned for formalizing previously used informal day-use areas in the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch area are not warranted at this time, rather a commensurate amount of day use improvements would be appropriate at the Condor Point Picnic Area in an area used by recreationists at all lake levels with other improvements to the existing Juan Fernandez Boat Launch day use area so that when lake levels are suitable the existing facility offers shaded picnic sites for future use.

Instead of making previously planned improvements at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, the recreation plan and associated proposed amendment changes to Article 412 find that making improvements to existing facilities in the main “core” areas of the Lake Piru Recreation Area make the most sense and would provide the greatest value to recreationists to help meet current and near term future needs. Those improvements along with adding shade ramadas and picnic sites to the existing Juan Fernandez Boat Launch area would be more appropriate given the long-term drought conditions and associated low lake levels and would also not require removal or harm to native oak trees and other vegetative habitats. As outlined in this recreation plan and accompanying Proposed Changes to License Article 412 document, these changes involve new improvements to the Condor Point Picnic area and adjoining core area shoreline swim beach areas, and also, the addition of two shade ramadas and associated picnic facilities at the existing Juan Fernandez Boat Launch.

# LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Introduction

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

United Water Conservation District (UWCD) owns the Lake Piru Recreation Area in Ventura County, California at Lake Piru. The recreation area is operated by an independent concessions service. A majority of the recreation facilities within Lake Piru Recreation Area are also part of the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project (Project) as licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) as FERC Project No. 2153. This recreation management plan (Recreation Plan) is intended to help guide short and long term management and development needs for public access and Project recreation uses.

### 1.1 LOCATION AND REGIONAL SETTING

Lake Piru is located about 50 miles north of Los Angeles in Ventura County, California. The town of Piru (population 2,165 in 2017) is 5 miles south of the lake and is the closest community to the lake. Further west is Fillmore, a town of just over 15,000 people that is approximately 13 miles to the southwest of the Project. Santa Clarita, a neighboring city, has an estimated population of 216,350. The Project is located on Piru Creek and occupies approximately 140 acres of U.S. land that is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service in the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests. The Los Padres National Forest administers the Angeles National Forest land that is in the Project boundary (Figure 1).

The primary function of Santa Felicia Dam is to provide a supplemental supply of water to meet the agricultural, municipal and industrial needs of District lands in the Santa Clara River Valley and Coastal Plain. Storing waters of Piru Creek and subsequently releasing them to percolate into the downstream basins and aquifers or direct deliveries of surface flow accomplishes this function. The hydroelectric plant is operated in conjunction with the District's water conservation and resource management functions. Power is generated either during the District's water conservation releases or in anticipation and during reservoir spillway discharge periods. The power plant is operated manually and is not used for peaking.

The production of hydroelectric power from Santa Felicia dam is a secondary benefit of the water stored in Lake Piru and provision of recreation access, opportunities, and facilities are also considered a secondary use of the Project. Ventura County oversees development standards at the Project's recreation facilities through a conditional use permit (CUP-2949) that is generally guided by a Lake Piru Recreation Area Master Plan, approved in 2008.

The Project is located in southern California, which has a Mediterranean climate with hot and dry summers and mild and variably wet winters. Most of the yearly precipitation within the watershed falls from November through April, and the average annual precipitation is 20 inches. At the highest elevations of the watershed, some winter precipitation arrives as snow, but a substantial snowpack is not common. In the last six years, the area has experienced a severe drought and as a result Lake Piru water levels have been very low limiting conservation water releases, recreation, and power generation uses.

## **LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

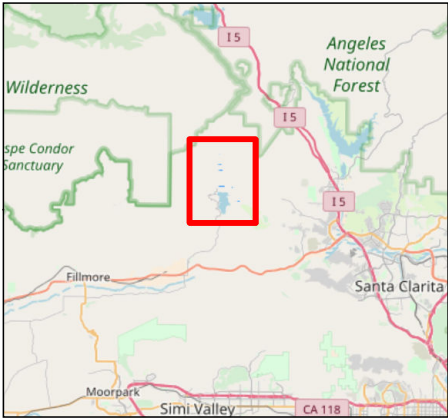
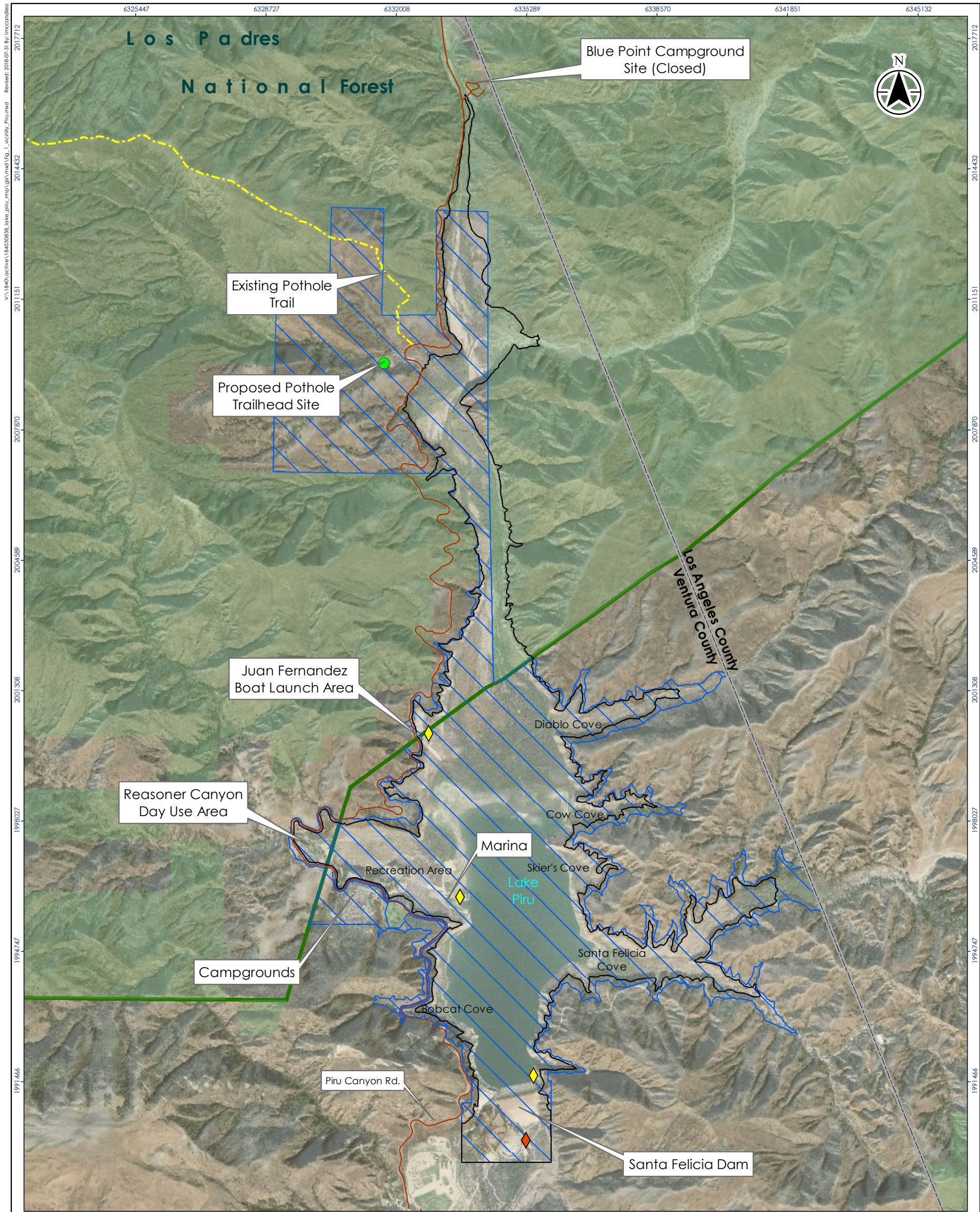
### **Introduction**

The Project received a new 40-year operating license from FERC in September 2008 that outlines several license conditions regarding recreation management and improvements over the term of the new license.

# LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

## Introduction

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- Legend**
- Proposed Pothole Trailhead Site
  - Whitewater Boating Put-In
  - Whitewater Boating Take-Out
  - Pothole Trail
  - Piru Canyon Road
  - P-2153-012 FERC Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Ownership
    - US Forest Service
    - United Water Conservation District; UNITED WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
    - Los Padres NF Boundary

0 0.5 1 Miles

1:30,000 (At Original document size of 11x17)



Project Location  
Lake Piru  
Ventura County, CA

184030838  
Prepared by L. McCandless on 2018-07-30  
Technical Review by K. Gilbert on 2018-08-01  
Independent Review by K. Gross Gray on 2018-08-03

Client/Project  
United Water Conservation District  
Project Vicinity  
Lake Piru Recreation Management Plan

Figure No.  
**1**

Title  
**Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project Area**

1. Coordinate System: NAD 1983 2011 StatePlane California V FIPS  
0405 Ft US

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### 1.2 FERC LICENSE CONDITIONS

The new FERC license issued on September 12, 2008 included the following Project facilities:

- The 214-foot-tall, 1,260-foot-long earth-filled Santa Felicia Dam;
- Lake Piru, the Project's reservoir occupying approximately 1,213 surface acres at maximum reservoir level of 1055 feet mean sea level (msl);
- An ungated spillway and associated works;
- A powerhouse with two units with a total installed capacity of 1,420 kW;
- Appurtenant facilities; and
- Seven developed recreation facilities and one unconstructed trail facility.

The existing FERC Project boundary encompasses approximately 1,552 acres of land and waters. The Project boundary generally follows the 1,078.3 foot elevation contour (the approximate elevation of the parapet wall on top of the dam crest) around Lake Piru except at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area and the main recreation development in the Reasoner Canyon arm of the lake where the boundary follows Piru Canyon Road thereby encompassing Project licensed recreation facilities.

The FERC license included 23 specific license articles, standard L form (Form L-6) terms and condition articles and USDA Forest Service Section 4 (e) terms and conditions for National Forest System lands occupied by the Project. Of the 23 special articles, six outline requirements regarding recreation management and improvements as follows.

**Article 406** requires UWCD to continue operation and maintenance of the following six developed Project recreation facilities: Lake Piru Marina Area, Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area, Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area, Reasoner Canyon Overflow Area (Dog Park), Lower Oaks Campground and Oak Lane Campground.

**Article 407** required to implement erosion control and landscaping measures at Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area. By 2012, native vegetation was established on the shoreline, resulting in FERC's approval on January 29, 2013.

**Articles 408, 409 and 410** addressed whitewater boating provisions including flow notification requirements, interim and permanent whitewater boating access downstream of Santa Felicia Dam, and a plan for providing portage around the dam. Whitewater boating releases were to be accommodated for times when flows exceeded 200 cfs. Between 2009 and 2011, UWCD provided escorted access for 21 total users; however, dense vegetation in the stream channel had made the run difficult as noted in a newspaper article in September 2011 (Ventura County Star, September 22, 2011). In November 2011, UWCD filed its whitewater boating access plan pursuant to article 410 of the license.

UWCD's November 2011 plan for whitewater boating was approved by FERC on February 21, 2012. The plan provides whitewater boaters escorted access below Santa Felicia Dam between

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Introduction

9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. on week-end days during fall water conservation releases when flow exceeds 200 cfs. Per Article 408, UWCD provides American Whitewater and its members on UWCD's e-mail list with the water conservation release schedule, noting the weekend dates when the flow from the Santa Felicia Dam is estimated to exceed 200 cfs. Release flow information is also posted on UWCD's website and provided in a local daily newspaper. UWCD requires interested whitewater boaters to make reservations at least 24 hours in advance of scheduled release dates in order to arrange for escorted access to the Piru Creek put-in site on UWCDs' property.

Whitewater boating access on Lake Piru with portage around Santa Felicia Dam is also available to whitewater boaters during conservation water release weekends in fall or any other weekend when greater than 200 cfs is being released. To portage over the Santa Felicia Dam and put-in at the designated put-in site on UWCDs property (at the USGS gauge), boaters must notify UWCD at least 24 hours in advance. The whitewater boating provisions also include three identified locations that whitewater boaters using Lake Piru could take-out or put-in. These sites are: 1) along the bottom section of the middle Piru Creek (just upstream of Lake Piru), 2) the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area, and 3) the Lake Piru Marina.

The 2011 plan provides that should demand for access increase such that the number of whitewater boaters accessing the put-in sites below Santa Felicia Dam reach at least 120 persons annually for two consecutive years, UWCD would work with the County of Ventura and Rancho Temescal (private property) to construct improvements to provide permanent whitewater boating access.

Consistent with FERC's February 21, 2012 order approving UWCD's whitewater boating plan UWCD monitors whitewater boating use and prepares and files annual reports regarding whitewater boating use at the beginning of each year summarizing the past year's dates of fall water conservation releases, the number of days escorted access was available, flow rates, and any comments or feedback received by boaters. The report is provided to American Whitewater, the U.S. Forest Service, and California Department of Parks and Recreation and posted on UWCD website.

Each year monitoring reports have been prepared and submitted. In March 2014 there was one half day that release flows exceeded 200 cfs but due to the requirements associated with protection of the endangered steelhead trout, UWCD was not able to get enough advance notice of the required flow to make it known to potential whitewater boaters. In January 2017 there were 7 consecutive days the discharge was greater than 200 cfs for migration flows. United conducted an "emergency" water release in May and June 2017. Between May 29 and June 16, 2017 (18 days) the flows exceeded 200 cfs and peaked at 500 cfs. UWCD is working to improve the notification process and procedures during unplanned water release operations.

The whitewater boating needs and management considerations addressed in the November 2011 plan, as approved by FERC, are incorporated by reference into this recreation management plan.

**Article 411** required a plan to provide additional trail access at the Project. The original plan looked into the feasibility of adding trails on the east side of Lake Piru. However, in a study

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Introduction

completed by UWCD in November 2013, the east side of the lake was found to be all in private land with no roads or other feasible trail opportunities on lands controlled by the license. FERC as well as the U.S. Forest Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation all agreed with this finding in 2014, and efforts were shifted to enhancing trail access on the northwest end of Lake Piru related to the existing U.S. Forest Service Pothole Trail (No. 18W04).

An updated trail plan was prepared in 2016 that outlined a phased approach for gaining approval and planning for a new trailhead on UWCD's Lisk Ranch property that could allow hikers access the existing U.S. Forest Service Pothole Trail using short connections on the existing Piru Canyon Road. The Recreation Trail Plan was approved by FERC on January 6, 2017 and UWCD submitted a trail plan update to FERC on November 1, 2017. Work is continuing by UWCD and the U.S. Forest Service in finalizing the plans and approvals for the new trailhead and associated actions by the U.S. Forest Service regarding Pothole Trail improvements. As described in the trail plan update, the Pothole Trailhead Parking Area Project will lead to enhanced vehicular access into National Forest System lands and access to the Pothole Trail by providing access through previously closed gates as well as providing a compacted base surfaced trailhead parking lot that includes a vault toilet facility. Vehicular access to the new trailhead parking lot will be achieved by United locking open in-place the existing gates on Piru Canyon Road at Reasoner Canyon and at a location just past the entrance to the Juan Fernandez Launch Ramp facility. Additionally, UWCD will install a new gate just beyond the proposed Pothole Trail trailhead parking lot to prevent public vehicle access to the north of the trailhead where sensitive species may be present and would continue to benefit by maintaining closure to motorized vehicles. The existing road from Juan Fernandez to the proposed trailhead has been closed to public access since 2000 for resource protection purposes and is currently in disrepair. The USFS is seeking funding to make improvements to this section of road with the reestablishment of the Pothole Trail. As noted in the trailhead plan improvements to Piru Canyon Road itself are separate actions from United's improvements under the Pothole Trailhead Parking Area Project. The April 2016 Santa Felicia Project Recreation Trail Plan and the associated 2017 and 2018 trailhead progress updates filed by UWCD are incorporated by reference into this recreation management plan.

**Article 412** requires a plan for improving the existing informal day-use area on the lakefront at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area (Juan Fernandez). In FERC's January 2007 environmental assessment for the Project relicensing, a finding was made that formalizing and enhancing the (then) existing informal day-use and access areas in and around Juan Fernandez swim beach area would help meet existing recreation needs and future recreation demands. FERC's conclusion was that improving the existing informal day-use area and developing a new access point would help meet future recreation demand at the Project. At the time the recreation studies were performed for UWCD's license application (that FERC based its conclusions on), there were no developed day use facilities at Juan Fernandez. However, in 2004 the site was developed with boat launch, paved parking, picnic area and restroom facilities that now provide formalized access. Part of the area around the informal day use area is located outside the FERC boundary.

In July 2016, UWCD provided FERC with a letter notifying that due to prolonged drought conditions the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area was closed and thus inaccessible to the

## **LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **Introduction**

general public. Low water levels made the boat launch inoperable and existing day use facilities were not being fully utilized. Because the expansion of Juan Fernandez could not be justified based on current conditions, UWCD proposed to undertake a recreation assessment and needs analysis and prepare a recreation management plan that identifies current and future recreational needs related to the Project. In an October 17, 2016 order, FERC found UWCD's proposed actions to address the required improvements at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area reasonable and required UWCD to file a Recreation Plan for the Project by November 15, 2017. The November 2017 Recreation Plan was reviewed by FERC and has been updated in 2018 to include more information on improvements at Condor Point Picnic Area in lieu of those at Juan Fernandez and those improvements are proposed to be included as part of the FERC Project license. This Recreation Plan addresses recreation needs beyond those planning efforts underway with the Article 411 Trail Plan and Articles 409, 410, and 411 related to whitewater boating.

In addition to the FERC license articles related to recreation, under Article 413, UWCD has prepared a Land Resource Management Plan that was updated in September 2016. The Land Resources Management Plan address several elements related to recreation use and includes a visual management plan, a sign plan, and a roads and facilities maintenance plan. These plans are incorporated by reference into this recreation management plan.

### **1.3 PURPOSE AND NEED OF RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The development of the Recreation Management Plan (RMP) is important to help prioritize short and long term management needs of the Lake Piru Recreation Area. Additionally, development of a recreation plan for the Project will assist UWCD in fulfilling its license requirements. The RMP identifies existing recreation facilities and conditions, constraints and opportunities for development and use, and potential improvement projects that are relevant to the current and long term needs of the recreation area.

The purpose of this RMP is to identify recreation facilities and use needs as part of current and future management of recreation facilities and opportunities at Lake Piru. The RMP establishes a basic process for planning, developing and implementing any new recreational facilities and opportunities at Lake Piru.

## 2.0 EXISTING RECREATION INVENTORY (SUPPLY)

To understand recreation demand or future needs, it is important to understand the current recreation supply and facilities serving the present public needs. As part of the supply analysis, this plan updates and documents the inventory of recreation facilities and opportunities at the Project.

### 2.1 REGIONAL RECREATION SETTING AND CONTEXT

Within Ventura and Los Angeles Counties, there are recreation opportunities and facilities abound. With its unique natural character including mountains, beaches, regional parks as well as mild year round climatic conditions, the area attracts visitors from beyond the local vicinity. There are extensive recreation facilities along the coastal shoreline and several state and local parks of statewide significance including Point Mugu State Park, Castaic Lake State Recreation Area, Lake Casitas, Lake Cachuma, Mount Pinos, Pyramid Lake, and Carpinteria State Beach Campground.

In addition to State and local facilities, there are federally administered recreation facilities of statewide significance including the Channel Island National Park, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and the recreation opportunities in the Los Padres National Forest.

Recreation is currently the predominant use of the Los Padres National Forest. Almost all visitations to southern California national forests are local in origin. This forest's recreation areas are primarily very popular local day-use attractions, often for large, diverse urban groups of extended family and friends engaging in relaxing activities. (USFS 2005).

About 13 percent of the land and waters in the Project boundary are National Forest System lands administered by the Los Padres National Forest. While no recreation facilities are on the Forest Service lands, the connectivity to the middle Piru Creek canyon and into the Los Padres National Forest offers a great opportunity to enhance use through shared management of the lands and transportation routes.

Piru Canyon Road is the main access into the area and is a county maintained road leading into the Lake Piru Recreation Area. From the recreation area north, the road is maintained by the UWCD and the U.S. Forest Service as it also serves as USFS Road 4N13. The road is currently open to public vehicular traffic between the town of Piru and the core area of Lake Piru Recreation Area, a distance of about 7.1 miles. Prior to closure of the Blue Point Campground along middle Piru Creek above the Project, vehicular access for recreationists extended an additional 4.4 miles above Juan Fernandez.

Lake Piru is one of several lakes in the region that offers reservoir-related activities including motorized and non-motorized boating, water-skiing, fishing, camping, picnicking and it is the only lake in Ventura County to offer swimming. Notable attributes of Lake Piru include its moderate level of shoreline development and the opportunity for a relatively quiet and remote experience.

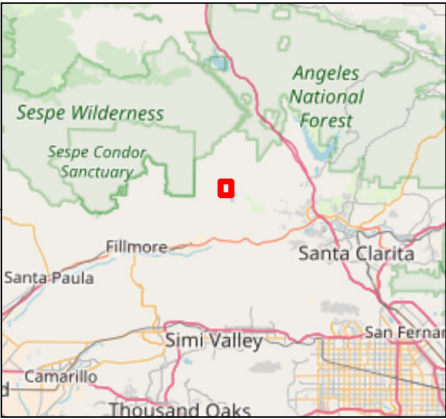
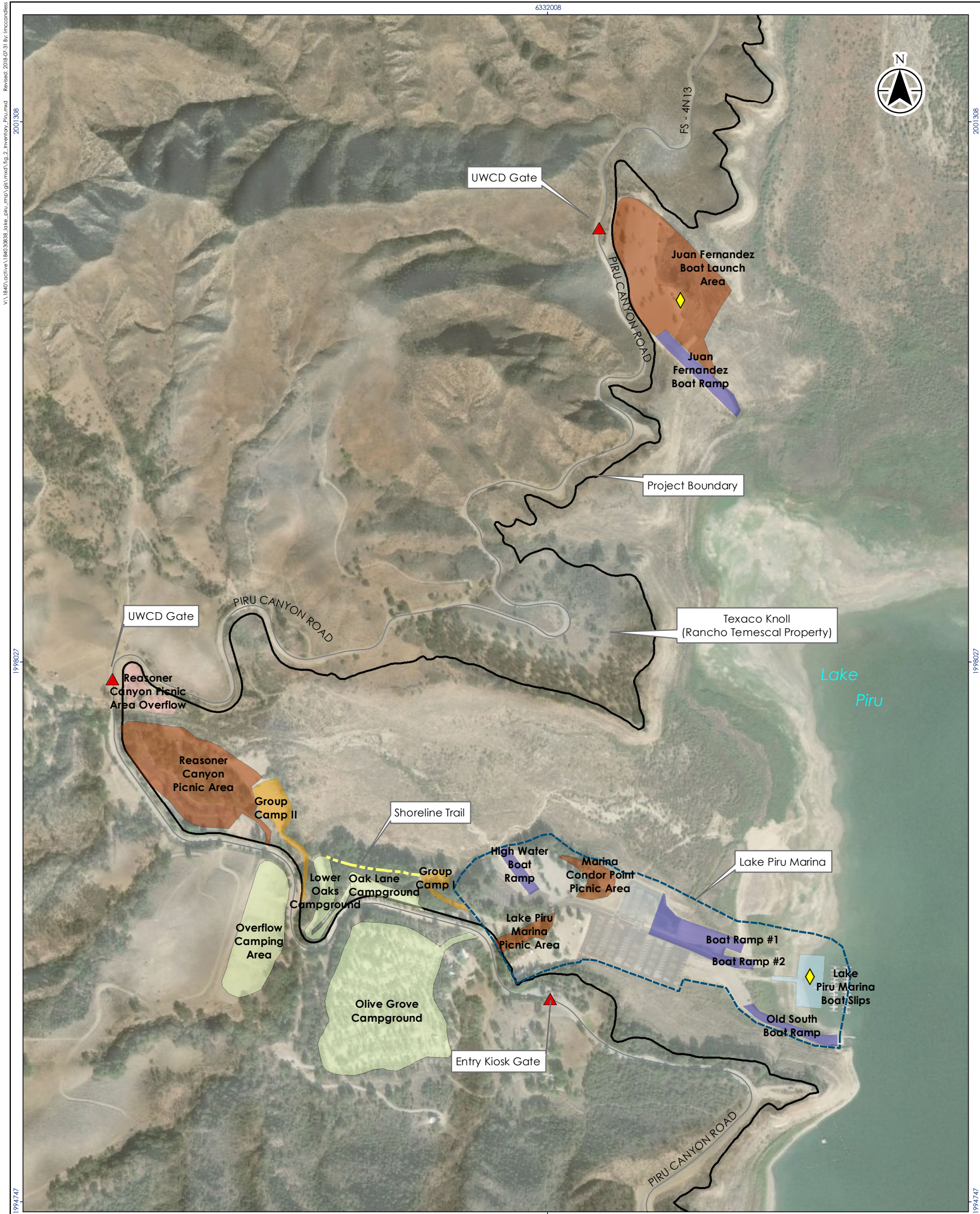
## 2.2 EXISTING PROJECT FACILITIES

Recreation facilities at Lake Piru are clustered along the west shoreline, accessible by Piru Canyon Road, where most development is situated in what is often referred to as the “core area” (Figure 2). The developed facilities in the core area and the remainder at the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch site, located 2.3 road miles north, are all part of the “fee area”, an area where visitors pay an entrance fee per vehicle to use the developed facilities including parking and restrooms. Prior to entering the core area, there are about 1.4 miles of road along the western Lake Piru shoreline that are part of the non-fee area. In this area visitors can park at limited pull outs along the county maintained road and walk down steep shorelines to access the water for fishing or swimming.

### 2.2.1 Developed Sites

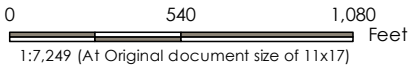
Developed sites at Lake Piru include a marina, several boat launches, 236 developed campsites, two group campgrounds, primitive overflow camping, restroom facilities, picnic areas, dog park, and one large day use area. Most of the facilities are located in the core area and have associated parking areas with informal shoreline and upland trails interconnecting most of the sites for pedestrians. Juan Fernandez is to the north of the core area and offers picnic sites and a large boat launch facility that is usable when lake levels reach at least 990 feet and above. Additionally, UWCD maintains two floating restroom facilities for boaters on Lake Piru. UWCD has implemented its Rules and Regulations for Public Use of the Lake Piru Recreation Area including boating. The current rules govern watercraft use and restrict speeds on the lake to 35 miles per hour with a restriction of 5 miles per hour in all coves (when coves exist, typically above 1,020 foot lake levels), at the north end of the lake and at the dam. All rules are enforced by District employed Park Services Officers. Most of the recreation facilities at Lake Piru are within the FERC boundary, but the Olive Grove Campground and Overflow Camping Area are not part of the FERC licensed Project recreation facilities.

As part of this study an inventory of existing facilities was performed during the summer months of 2017. Data was collected on May 29 and August 12, 2017 and the information in the below tables is current as of those dates. Recreation facilities at Lake Piru were inventoried via GPS and data sheets to gather information about conditions and existing facilities at the recreation area. Methods of data collection included using ESRI Collector with an iPad and conducting observational surveys of the recreation areas to gather updated facility information. As noted above, most but not all facilities within the core area are within the FERC boundary.



Legend

- |  |                             |                  |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------|
|  | Whitewater Boating Take-Out | <b>Amenities</b> |
|  | Gate                        | Boat Slips       |
|  | Shoreline Trail             | Boat Ramp        |
|  | Piru Canyon Road            | Day Use          |
|  | P-2153-012 FERC Boundary    | Campground       |
|  | Lake Piru Marina Boundary   | Group Camp       |
|  |                             | Dog Park         |



Project Location  
Lake Piru  
Ventura County, CA

184030838  
Prepared by L. McCandless on 2018-07-30  
Technical Review by K. Gilbert on 2018-08-01  
Independent Review by K. Gross Gray on 2018-08-03

Client/Project  
United Water Conservation District  
Project Vicinity  
Lake Piru Recreation Management Plan

Figure No.

2

Title

Lake Piru Recreation  
Area Developed Facilities

Notes

1. Coordinate System: NAD 1983 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Feet
2. Imagery Date: 7/11/2016 (969' Lake Level)

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## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Existing Recreation Inventory (Supply)

Facilities that are included in the FERC licensed project are listed in the recreation facilities and recreation amenities tables below (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1. Recreation Facilities at the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2153)**

Recreation Site Name	Recreation Facilities (Inventory Observations)
Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area	4-lane concrete boat ramp (usable at mid-high lake levels); 10 vehicle (including 2 ADA) and 127 vehicle with trailer (including 3 ADA) paved parking spaces; picnic area, partially developed swim beach; 2 vault toilet restrooms with 2 bathrooms each; 2 courtesy docks for boat launching
Lake Piru Marina	<p><u>Marina Area</u>: 90 boat slips; 6-lane concrete boat ramp; 48 vehicle (including 4 ADA) and 164 vehicle with trailer (including 13 ADA) paved parking spaces; dock/pier access</p> <p><u>Day Use</u>: Dry boat storage/repair facility; 1 restroom, 53 vehicle (including 3 ADA) and 75 vehicle with trailer (including 2 ADA) parking spaces; 8 picnic tables and 7 grills (located west of concessionaire and marina areas)</p> <p><u>Condor Point Area</u>: 4-lane high-water boat ramp (north-west of the marina); 17 vehicle and 43 vehicle with trailer (including 2 ADA vehicle and 1 ADA vehicle with trailer) parking spaces, concessionaire-run general store; snack bar, 17 picnic tables and 11 grills (at Condor Point); 1 restroom</p>
Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area	129 vehicle (including 6 ADA) and 29 vehicle with trailer (including 1 ADA) paved parking spaces; 2 restrooms (vault toilets); potable water (3 drinking fountains); 64 picnic tables on concrete pads (some with shade ramadas), lawn area with 40 grills, 22 shade ramadas; Group area with 16 picnic tables (accommodates approximately 120 people)
Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area Overflow	26 vehicle (including 2 ADA) paved parking spaces; 1 restroom; horseshoe pit; 1 fire pit; potable water (1 spigot); fenced dog park
Lower Oaks Campground	16 camp sites with picnic tables (16) and fire rings (16), potable water (spigot)
Oak Lane Campground	17 camp sites with picnic tables (17) and fire rings (17), group camp site, RV dump station, 1 restroom, potable water (spigot)
Group Camp I	Large common group camp, dumpster, portable restroom, potable water spigot
Group Camp II	15 individual, adjoining camp sites, dumpsters, portable restrooms that can serve as group camp or overflow area when other campgrounds are full
Whitewater Boat Access	Escorted access to put-in at USGS gage No. 11109800 (west side of Piru Creek below Santa Felicia dam; seasonal parking area inside fenced gate at access to lower Piru Creek put-in location. Designated take-out locations at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, Lake Piru Marina, and along the far left abutment of Santa Felicia Dam.
Pothole Trailhead	New trailhead for USFS Pothole Trail in final planning and design stages.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Existing Recreation Inventory (Supply)

**Table 2. Recreation Amenities at the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2153)**

Recreation Amenity Name	Recreation Amenity Type	Amenity Status	Latitude	Longitude	Notes (Inventory Observations)
Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area	Boat Launch Area	Constructed	-118.75951	34.48555	4-lane boat ramp: usable at mid and high lake levels, 2 courtesy docks
Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area	Swim Area	N/A	-118.75951	34.48555	Swim Beach, graded when in use
Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area	Picnic Area	Constructed	-118.75951	34.48555	10 picnic tables (2 with shade ramada), 5 grills, 2 vault toilet restroom
Lake Piru Marina	Marina	Constructed	-118.76034	34.47549	90 boat slips
Lake Piru Marina	Boat Launch Area	Constructed	-118.76034	34.47549	Two, side-by-side, boat ramps one is 3-lane other is 2-lane. Also 1-lane low water boat ramp
Lake Piru Marina Day-Use Area	Picnic Area at Marina Restroom	Constructed	-118.762258	34.475784	8 picnic tables, 7 grills
Lake Piru Concessionaire Area	Boat Launch Area	Constructed	-118.762722	34.476839	4-lane boat ramp (usable at high water; northwest of the marina)
Lake Piru Concessionaire Area	Picnic Area at Condor Point	Constructed	-118.761052	34.476629	10 picnic tables, 11 grills
Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area	Picnic Area	Constructed	-118.76917	34.4777	63 picnic tables (43 covered tables w/grills; 20 additional tables; lawn area w/ 42 grills.
Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area	Group Picnic Area	Constructed	-118.76917	34.4777	Group area with 16 picnic tables (accommodates approximately 120 people)
Group Camp II	Campground	Constructed	-118.767633	34.477894	15 overflow camp sites (with 15 fire rings) and picnic tables
Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area Overflow	Picnic Area	Constructed	-118.77007	34.47857	1 picnic table, fenced dog park area

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Existing Recreation Inventory (Supply)

Recreation Amenity Name	Recreation Amenity Type	Amenity Status	Latitude	Longitude	Notes (Inventory Observations)
Lower Oaks Campground	Campground	Constructed	-118.76649	34.47675	16 camp sites with picnic tables and fire rings
Oak Lane Campground	Campground	Constructed	-118.7654	34.47644	16 camp sites with picnic tables and fire rings
Group Camp I	Campground	Constructed	-118.764392	34.476623	Group camp site for up to 50 people
Whitewater Access	Whitewater Access	Constructed	-118.75108	34.45785	Escorted access to put-in at USGS gage, Piru Creek below Santa Felicia dam as well as designated take-out locations at Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, Lake Piru Marina and at Santa Felicia Dam.
Trailhead - Access to Pot Hole Trail	Trailhead	Unconstructed	-118.76267	34.51168	Trailhead and associated gate and sign improvements anticipated construction in Fall of 2019.

A few facilities within the core area at Lake Piru Recreation Area are outside of the FERC boundary but are generally managed similarly to the FERC approved recreation facilities. These recreation facilities are:

- Olive Grove Campground; and
- Overflow Camping Area.

Olive Grove Campground is the largest campground at Lake Piru. Olive Grove has 203 developed campsites total (eight of these sites are used by the camp host and concessionaire employees). Nine of the sites are full hookups with water, electric, and sewer and 97 additional sites have electricity available at the site. There are 11 water spigots in Olive Grove and two bathrooms with showers. The primary bathroom also has laundry facilities available. There is also a dump station available at Olive Grove. A sanitary sewer system is in place (storage tanks, septic tanks, and seepage pits are outside of the FERC boundary) that provides enough capacity for current uses and development.

Overflow Camping Area is an unimproved dirt lot to the south of Reasoner Canyon Day Use Area that is used as overflow parking and camping during busy weekends. When Olive Grove, Lower Oaks, Oak Lane, and Group Camps I and II fill to capacity, UWCD opens the overflow area. When high visitor use is expected, UWCD prepares the area by painting a grid on the soil to temporarily designate campsites. There are no permanent improvements in the overflow

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Existing Recreation Inventory (Supply)

area. A portable toilet is placed on the dirt lot with a portable hand washing station and information/ directional signage is moved in place.

Lake levels greatly influence visitation as well as the operability and use of several recreation facilities at Lake Piru. UWCD has five boat ramps to provide water access for boaters (Table 3). The boat ramps are designed to operate at varying lake levels, with some overlap in serviceability, yet in low water, due to sediment accumulation there are a few stages where it gets very difficult to launch boats depending on the type of vessel.

**Table 3. Lake Piru Boat Ramps**

Boat Ramp	Designed Lowest Elevation Serviceable	Highest Elevation Serviceable	Physical Attributes	Notes
Juan Fernandez Boat Launch	983	1055	5 lanes	Loss ability to operate at 990 due to sediment accumulation; a USACE permit allows some maintenance dredging in this area.
High Water Boat Launch	1018	1055		Loss of ramp at approximately 1028 due to sediment accumulation; a USACE permit allows some maintenance dredging in this area.
Boat Launch #1 (Marina)	980	1018		Start losing serviceability of ramp at approximately 983.5 because ramp flattens out losing draft for boats to successfully launch
Boat Launch #2 (Marina)	973.5	983		Loss of ramp at 977 due to sediment accumulation
Old South Ramp	953 or 955	976		Loss of ramp at 960 due to sediment accumulation; a USACE permit allows some maintenance dredging in this area.

### 2.2.2 Dispersed Sites

There are few dispersed recreation areas at Lake Piru mostly due to difficult access to lakeshore areas given the steep shoreline topography, lack of accessible roads, and limited UWCD-owned lands above the immediate lakeshore. Dispersed recreation takes place along the 1.4 mile stretch of Piru Canyon Road prior to the gated fee area. The dispersed use areas require parking in limited informal pull outs along the County maintained road where recreationists can descend steep slopes that extend down to the shoreline of Lake Piru. These areas are mostly used by visitors wanting access to the water for swimming and fishing and other shoreline users. There is one area, known informally as Bobcat Canyon that includes a small cove that is the most easily accessible dispersed site. Bobcat Canyon has some user created trails to the water's edge and primitive parking on the roadside. There are also a few pullouts where wildlife photography and

## **LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **Existing Recreation Inventory (Supply)**

viewing is known to occur closer to the dam. Cyclists are allowed to enter the fee area without having to pay and can ride up the road to Juan Fernandez or beyond. Some wildlife observation takes place north of the Project developed recreation areas along Piru Canyon Road.

## **2.3 TRAIL AND WHITEWATER BOATING INITIATIVES**

As noted above in Section 1.2, FERC license articles 408-411 outlined required improvements and planning for trails and whitewater boating opportunities at the Project. Since 2008 considerable planning efforts have gone into developing a final trail plan and enhancing the opportunities for whitewater boating downstream of the Project, when suitable flows are available. Current plans for whitewater boating access are outlined in Section 1.2 and are based on the need to inform potential users of known conservation releases above 200 cfs and provide escorted access to Piru Creek below Lake Piru for boaters who contact UWCD in advance of those opportunities. As outlined in Section 1.2, UWCD will consider permanent facility improvements for whitewater boating if usage levels reach at least 120 persons annually for two consecutive years. The current trail planning under Article 411 UWCD has completed the CEQA analysis on its Pothole Trailhead Parking Area Project and construction is anticipated in Fall of 2019.

## 3.0 VISITOR USE ANALYSIS

UWCD has kept records of visitation at the Project over many years. However, differing methods of estimating and counting use along with changing offerings make comparisons of annual visitations somewhat challenging. Also, visitation records are not available for all years.

Recreation use at Lake Piru is greatly influenced by lake levels. The extremely low lake levels of the last 5 years have contributed to lower monthly and annual visitation as compared to past years when the lake was regularly at higher and stable water levels during the peak recreation season from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Additional factors influence visitation as outlined below.

### 3.1 VISITATION HISTORY AND TRENDS

Visitation records going back to 1980 exist. However, visitor records from the mid-2000s were not collected or recorded in manner suitable for analysis or comparison with later or earlier years. Form 80 recreation reports with estimates of visitation were filed with FERC for years 1996, 2001, 2010, and 2014 and provide some insight into past visitation levels. Additionally, as part of relicensing the Santa Felicia Project, on-site observational surveys, and individual recreation use surveys were undertaken in summer 2003. During the 2003 survey study period, researchers counted 15,717 people on their visits to 11 sites in the Project area over 27 days. Based on these surveys, the annual visitation was estimated to be 79,511 using conservative assumptions with about 71 percent of the use being day users, and 29 percent was overnight use (UWCD 2004).

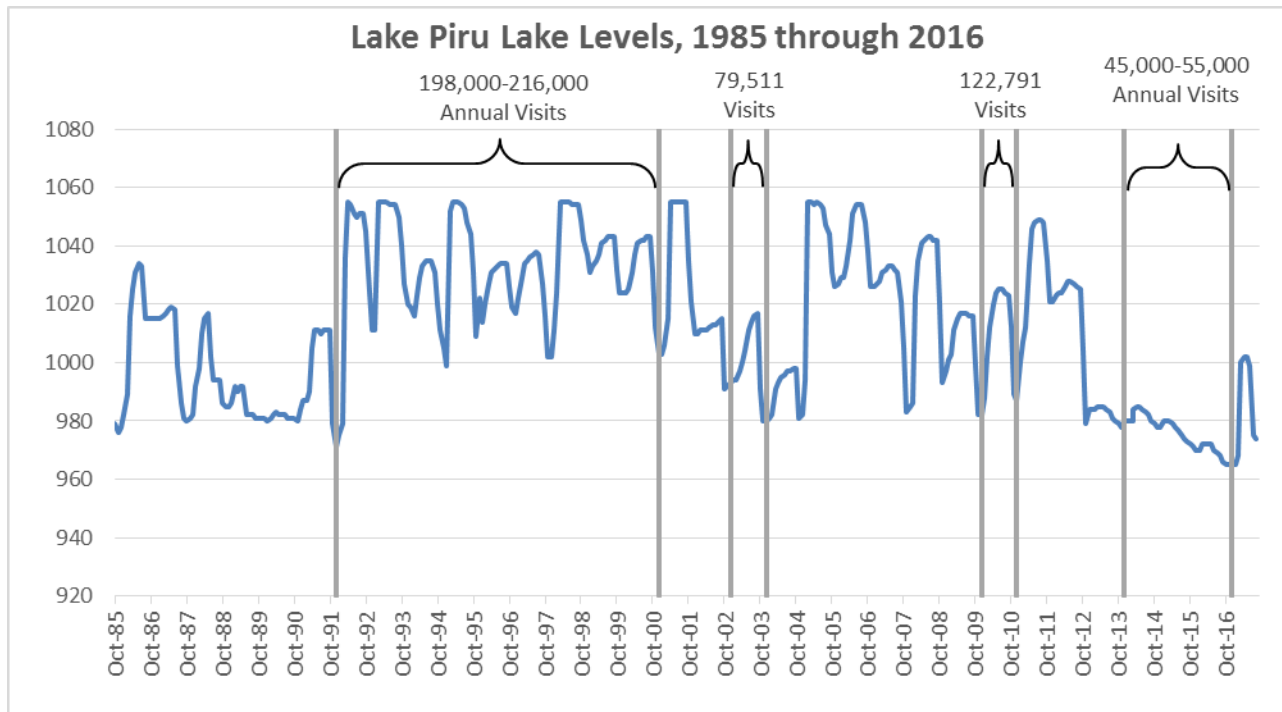
In the 1990's and 2000, annual visitation was reportedly much higher than today. Reported visitation was consistently over 150,000 a year. However, in the pre-2000 era, the recreation user groups included non-Project users going into the Los Padres National Forest for overnight and day use activities centered in and around the Blue Point Campground. This included the trail areas along middle Piru Creek and designated trails such as Pothole and Aqua Blanca. This also included some Wilderness users, other trail uses, and anglers as well as wildlife viewing frequenting areas north of the Project. At that time economic conditions were favorable for recreation use and lake levels were consistently high as the lake never went below 1,000 feet elevation.

As discussed previously, when lake levels are consistently at levels above 1,000 feet msl during the recreation season, the opportunities, recreation activities, and corresponding visitation all increase. Figure 3 shows a long term look at lake levels with respect to reported annual visitation to help depict this relationship.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

**Figure 3. Lake Piru Lake Levels with Reported Annual Visits**



The 2017 visitation records show a similar pattern to the previous three years with visitation levels being much less than in past years with higher lake levels. For 2017, all recreationists visiting the developed sites have been accommodated in the core facilities. In 2018 the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area has not been open or operable, similar to the last 6 years. Table 4 provides the 2017 aggregate visitor use numbers. Daily records kept by Parks Management Company in 2017 show that Holiday weekends can receive as much as ten times the use than on week days. During the Memorial Day weekend, the main campgrounds filled up and the Overflow Campground area had to be used. While water levels were higher in March through May 2017 than they had been in the 2012-2016 period, the number of boaters coming to Lake Piru did not increase greatly. After Memorial Day weekend in 2017, the lake level dropped back down to the minimum pool levels of the previous three years, and visitation patterns remained consistent with those previous years. The recreation facilities in the core area appear to be easily handling the usage on both weekends and weekdays, and Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area continues to remain closed due to lack of serviceability on the boat ramp and lack of demand for additional overflow parking or day use.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

**Table 4. Reported 2017 Lake Piru Visitation**

Month	# Campsite Nights	# People	# Vehicles	# Boating Vessels
January	203	1127	550	70
February	185	1205	582	96
March	950	4047	934	222
April	1093	6972	1289	241
May	1203	9695	1635	292
June	1533	5981	1325	273
July	1178	7587	1631	335
August	1490	6488	1355	380
September	973	5948	2508	277
October	534	2612	1079	120
November	694	2307	1166	43
December	479	1480	774	33
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,515</b>	<b>55449</b>	<b>14828</b>	<b>2382</b>

Visitor use varies due to many factors, including time of day, day of the week, season, and holiday or vacation times. Some additional factors that slightly influence visitation include wildfires, adding new recreation facilities or offerings, and changing concessionaries. In the future we can expect visitation to continue to be greatly affected by lake levels. However, economic conditions and changing management and offerings for recreationists in the region also influences use at Lake Piru. UWCD has received more visitors as a result of changing some of its management policies, such as allowing alcohol use in the recreation area as well as allowing personal water craft use on Lake Piru. Table 5 presents several of the more important factors over the last ten years that have affected visitation and participation levels in recreation activities at the Park beyond those attributed to lake levels.

**Table 5. Additional Factors Affecting Lake Piru Recreation Area Visitation**

Factor	Approximate Timing	Relative Effect	Notes
Not allowing alcohol to be brought into Lake Piru Recreation Area	January 2010 – April 2014	Decreased use in camping and day use areas	Allowing alcohol generally requires additional security and enforcement staffing to help enforce Park rules and policies
Allowing personal water craft on Lake Piru	Since June 2015	Some increase in boating activities as compared to prior periods	Previously boats under 12 feet were not allowed

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

Factor	Approximate Timing	Relative Effect	Notes
California Department of Fish and Wildlife stopped stocking Lake Piru with hatchery rainbow trout	Since February 2010	Decreased use as anglers seeking planted trout made up a sizable portion of visitation	Over 40,000 trout were planted and this led to an influx of anglers whom have been displaced
Confirmed infestation of quagga mussels in Lake Piru	Since December 2013	Probably some decreased use	Some boaters may try and avoid lakes with quaggas if they are planning to take their craft to lakes without quagga infestations in upcoming weeks. Other future lake control measures could affect recreation use for periods of time.
2008 mortgage crisis	After 2008 with gradually improving conditions through about 2012 for most	Decreased use as some middle class families lost boats or other recreational equipment and had less discretionary income	Combined effect led to worsened economic conditions in local area limiting recreation usage for many activities

## 3.2 RECREATION SURVEY RESULTS

Observation surveys and online/hardcopy surveys were conducted between May 26, 2017 and September 4, 2017 for the project. The following section summarizes and compares/contrasts the results of this survey work.

### 3.2.1 Observation Surveys

Four project area sites were identified to serve as places where observation surveys could be conducted by field researchers. These locations were selected based on consultation with UWCD Staff and evaluation of the 2003 observation survey locations (UWCD 2004). Below is a list of the selected sites:

- Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession
- Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area
- Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp
- Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area

Sites 1 and 2 are newly added observation sites, and Sites 3 and 4 were documented sites from the 2003 survey and selected as bench mark sites for analysis comparison. Recreation monitoring forms were developed to document recreation use at these identified sites. The data collected included site, time, number of people observed, activities observed, number of cars and boats observed, number of groups, average group size, and any additional notes.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

During the study period one random weekend, one random weekday and one holiday (Memorial Day) were surveyed:

- May 29 - Holiday
- Aug 11 (weekday)
- Aug 12 (weekend)

#### 3.2.1.1 Observations of People, Vehicles, Boats at One Time

Measures used as part of this assessment include People-At-One-Time (PAOT), Vehicles-At-One-Time (VAOT) and Boats-At-One-Time (BAOT).

The greatest number of PAOT was observed at Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 186 observed on August 12, 2017, followed by Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area with 106 on August 12, 2017, and Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use Area with 120 on August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. In comparison to the 2003 observation surveys the greatest number of PAOT was observed at the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area (now closed due to low lake levels) with 900 observed on Sept 4, 2003, followed by the Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area, with 650 on September 4, 2003.

The greatest number of VAOT was at Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 74 observed on August 12, 2017, followed by Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use Area with 72 on August 11, 2017, and Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use Area with 61 on August 12, 2017. In comparison to the 2003 observation surveys the greatest number of VAOT was observed at the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area (now closed due to low lake levels) with 220 observed on July 4, 2003 (a Holiday), followed by Olive Grove Campground, with 201 on August 16, 2003, and Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area with 187 on the holiday of July 4, 2003. However, it should be noted two of these 2003 peaks were Holidays and use would be expected to be dramatically higher.

The greatest number of BAOT was at Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 45 observed on Aug 12, 2017, followed by Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 28 on May 29, 2017, and Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 7 on August 11, 2017. In comparison to the 2003 observation surveys the greatest number of BAOT was observed at the Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp with 115 observed on July 20, 2003, followed by Olive Grove Campground, with 22 on Sept 14, 2003 and Olive Grove Overflow Campground, with 18 on July 4, 2003. It should be noted it was not until 2004 a boat ramp was installed at Juan Fernandez

In summary, overall people, vehicle and boat 2017 observations were significantly lower than the 2003 observation survey's, in part due to the very low water levels limiting shoreline opportunities and extent of lake area and causing several boat ramps to be closed. Compared to 2003, the 2017 season offered a more limited water based recreation experience for visitors.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

**Table 6. Observation Survey Summary**

Date	Observation Survey Summary				Total Daily Usage		
	Site	# People Observed	# Vehicles	# Boats Observed	# People	# Vehicles	# Boats
8/12/2017	Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession	27	13	0	100	71	8
	Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area	4	1	0			
	Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp	186	74	45			
	Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area	106	61	0			
8/11/2017	Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession	4	2	0	39	14	7
	Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area	0	0	0			
	Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp	21	6	7			
	Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area	120	72	0			
5/29/2017	Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession	51	12	1	579	181	31
	Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area	42	15	0			
	Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp	76	42	28			
	Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area	93	47	2			

\*Stats from Parks Management Company – Monthly Report of Operation

### 3.2.1.2 Activity Participation for Project Area Sites

Visitors to Lake Piru were involved in a range of activities including swimming, sunbathing, picnicking, fishing, camping, and boating. As part of the observation survey, activities were recorded in which visitors were involved. On observation dates in the study area swimming/sunbathing was the most popular activity, followed by picnicking and general recreation. In comparison to the 2003 survey camping was the most popular activity, followed by picnicking and then swimming ranked at 3<sup>rd</sup>. NOTE due to the limited scope of this current study the observation surveys completed did not include campground locations, limiting the documentation of the camping activity. However, detailed campground occupancy rates are documented by UWCD and numbers are available for reference which is sufficient for the purposes of this study.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

#### 3.2.1.3 Activities by Project Area Site

The below Table 7 details the activities observed by observation site.

Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession and Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area only observed people participating in picnicking. Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp had a variety of activities observed including boat launching, boating, swimming, sunbathing, picnic, fishing, soccer and pet play. Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area also had a variety of activities including picnicking, kids playing at the playground, group training session, soccer and Frisbee. In comparison to the 2003 observation surveys, the activities were similar at the Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area with picnicking as the most popular activity followed by general recreation. However, at the Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp site the 2003 survey found boating as the number one activity followed by picnicking and fishing, swimming was documented as only moderate. The change in activities for this site was expected due to the unusually low water levels. People have shifted their recreation use from boating as the primary activity to swimming/sunbathing. UWCD has adapted to this shift in use by installing a temporary sandy beach near the Lake Piru Marina boat launch to meet this demand for a swimming beach as historically used swimming beach areas are no longer viable with the low water levels.

**Table 7. Activities by Site**

Site	Activities Observed
Site 1: Condor Point Day Use Area/Concession	Picnicking
Site 2: Lake Piru Marina Picnic Area	Picnicking
Site 3: Lake Piru Marina Swim Beach/Boat Ramp	Boat launching, swimming, sunbathing, picnic, fishing, soccer, pet play
Site 4: Reasoner Canyon Day Use/Picnic Area	Picnic, playground, group training, soccer, Frisbee

#### 3.2.2 Online/Hardcopy Surveys

##### 3.2.2.1 Survey Design

A survey questionnaire was developed and deployed to collect information about recreation users visiting Lake Piru. A copy of the questionnaire used in this study is provided in Appendix A. Survey questions were developed based on feedback from UWCD and reviewing the 2003 study survey questionnaire. Some of the same or similar questions were used to form this questionnaire to allow benchmark comparison between the studies to help understand any shifts in visitor experience and desires for Lake Piru.

##### 3.2.2.2 Survey Data Collection

Hardcopy surveys were distributed by UWCD at the entrance kiosk to all Lake Piru visitors interested. Additionally, an online digital version of the survey was made available on the UWCD website and advertised through social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. Surveys were also distributed to key stakeholders for circulation to their user groups. The survey was

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

available to visitors between May 26, 2017 and September 4, 2017. In total 70 surveys were completed both online and in hardcopy.

#### 3.2.2.3 Survey Results

##### Group and Trip Characteristics

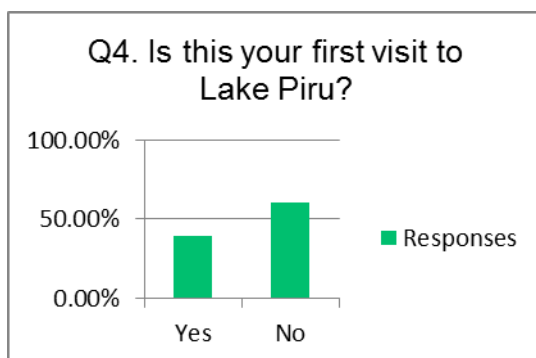
The first five survey questions asked visitors to provide information about the characteristics of their group and trip. Question 1 asked respondents: ***How many people were in your group today including yourself?*** (n=70 total responses). The greatest number of respondents indicated they were part of a group of 10 or more (19 responses) which was also the greatest number of responses in the 2003 survey. The second greatest number of responses was groups of two people (15 responses), and the third was groups of five people (9 responses).

Question 2 asked respondents: ***How many vehicles did your group use to come to Lake Piru?*** (n=70 total responses). The greatest number of respondents indicated they arrived in one vehicle (31 responses). In comparison, the 2003 survey found the greatest number of visitors arrived in two cars on average. The second greatest number of responses indicated they arrived in two vehicles (15 responses), and the third respondents indicated they arrived in 5 or more vehicles (12 responses).

Question 3 asked respondents: ***When did you arrive at Lake Piru?*** (n=64 total responses). The greatest number of respondents indicated they arrived in the afternoon (between 12:00pm - 6:00pm), followed by evening (between 6:00pm – 10pm) and finally morning (between 6:00am – 12:00pm) had the least responses.

Question 4 asked respondents: ***Is this your first visit to Lake Piru?*** (n=68 total responses). 40% of respondents stated that this was their first visit to Lake Piru. The greatest number of respondents (12) that have visited Lake Piru before stated they only visit once a year, this was followed by (4) respondents visiting two times per year and (3) respondents visiting three times per year was the third most popular response. In comparison, the 2003 survey had the same hierarchy of response rate for this question with the most popular response at one visit per year, followed by two times a year and three times a year.

Figure 4. Question 4 Responses



## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

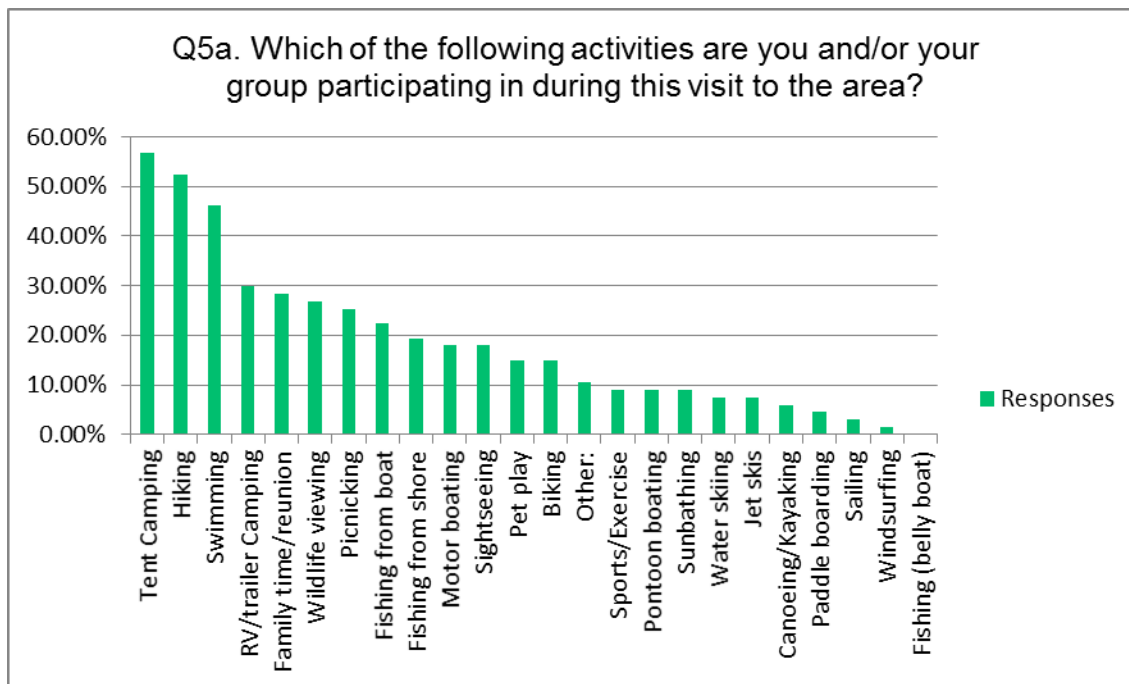
### Visitor Use Analysis

#### Recreation Activities

Several questionnaire items asked survey respondents to provide information about their recreation activities at Lake Piru. Specific items included all activity types and primary activities in which visitors participated in at Lake Piru.

Question 5a asked respondents “**Which of the following activities are you and/or your group participating in during this visit to the area?**” (n=67 total responses). Tent camping was identified as the most popular activity (57%) in comparison to “relaxing” (46%) for the 2003 survey. Hiking was the second most popular activity (52%) and in 2003 swimming (44%) was the most popular activity. Swimming was the third most popular activity (46%) in 2017 and in comparison, in 2003 motor boating (37%) was the third most popular activity.

**Figure 5. Question 5a Responses: Recreation Activities by Popularity**



The other category consisted of write in responses (11%) including:

- Play games
- Passing through to access private property
- Backpacking in the Los Padres National Forest
- Maintaining the Pothole Trail
- Backpacking
- Wakeboarding
- Rent a boat

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

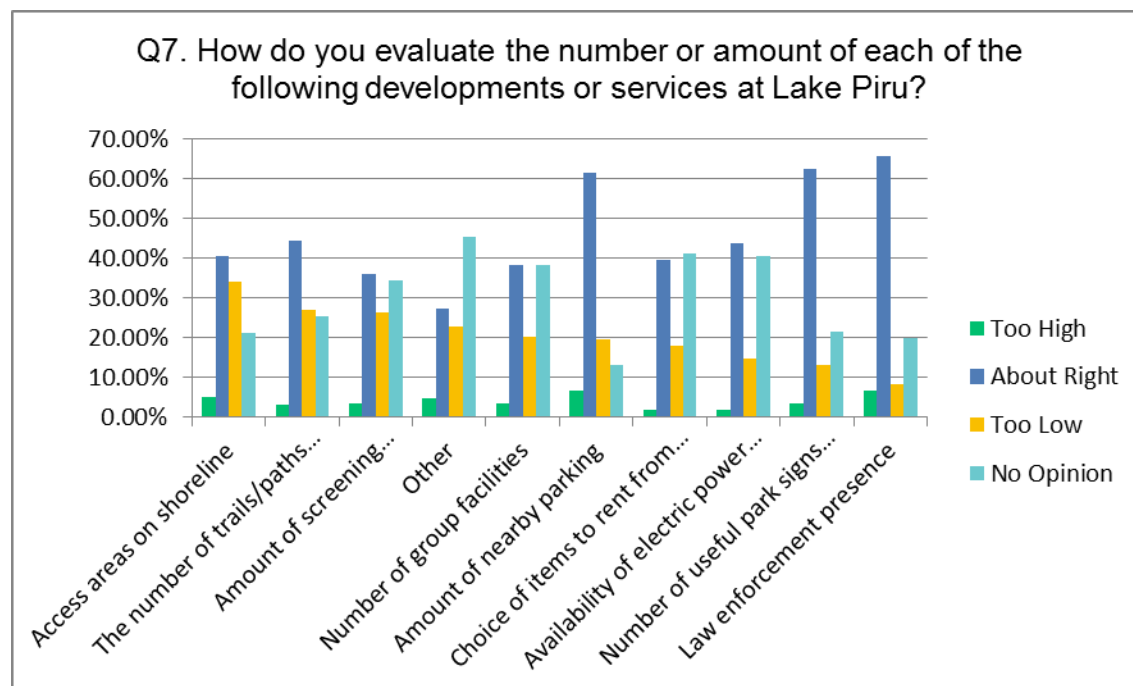
### Visitor Use Analysis

Question 5b asked respondents: ***What is the primary activity or amenity that draws you to this area?*** The most popular were both “camping” and “the lake” each with 11 responses, followed by boating with 6 responses and trailhead access to Los Padres National Forest with 4 responses to make the third most popular primary activity. In comparison, the 2003 survey had similar findings with camping being the number one primary activity, followed by motor boating. However, the third most popular activities were water skiing and fishing from boat differing from the 2017 findings of trailhead access.

Question 6 asked respondents: ***The following section lists things you might or might not have experienced at Lake Piru. Please rate the following amenities or conditions.*** The top three largest problems identified were facility fees (14%), condition of restrooms at Lake Piru area (9.23%) and noise or disturbances from other users (6.15%). In comparison, the 2003 survey also noted that the cost of campsites was too high and an issue.

Question 7 asked respondents: ***How do you evaluate the number or amount of each of the following developments or services at Lake Piru?*** The facilities/services that respondents felt were too low included: Access areas on shoreline (34%), the number of trails/paths between recreation sites (27%), and the amount of screening between campsites (26%).

**Figure 6. Question 7 Responses: Recreation Facility Satisfaction**



Question 8 asked respondents: ***What is the number one improvement project you would like to see at Lake Piru?*** The top improvements were “more water in the lake” (12 responses), “more and cleaner restrooms and showers” (11 responses) and “better access to Los Padres National Forest” (9 responses). This question was not asked in 2003, thus no comparison data is available.

Question 9 asked respondents: *“What if anything enhanced your recreation experience today?”* The top responses included “friendly staff” (7 responses) and “the lake and views” (6 responses). This question was not asked in 2003, thus no comparison data is available.

## 3.3 RECREATION PROVIDER AND STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW RESULTS

As part of the visitation analysis and recreation needs assessment for this Recreation Management Plan, discussions with recreation providers in the region were undertaken. Recreation providers sought out are those that provide or oversee recreation services and facilities in the region. Typically, they have current knowledge of recreation conditions and use patterns based on day to day administration of recreation resources in the region as well as periodic engagement with prospective recreators who contact them regarding the area’s offerings.

Documentation of the consultation with area recreation providers and authorities is provided in Appendix B.

### 3.3.1 UWCD Park Services Interview

UWCD managers and park staff were interviewed about recreation management and user trends. As managers at the site on a regular basis, they have extensive knowledge of recent, past, and present recreation use patterns and influencing factors. The following visitor use observations were made in discussions held August 11 and 15, 2017. Additional observations about facilities and needs are discussed in Section 4 and 5.

- Groups for day use and camping are more important than ever since overall use has been low due to the prolonged drought and corresponding very low lake levels. In the past they had more groups such as the YMCA and Viejitos Car Club.
- Having high reservoir levels is critical to attracting recreationists to the park and lake as the low lake levels of last five years has made boating and swimming opportunities very limited in extent, which is much less than optimal for what recreationists would like. Several other factors have contributed recreational use and those are summarized above in Table 5.
- UWCD lost all abilities to launch boats from June through September 2015, until the old south ramp was opened in October 2015.
- Currently and in the last several years the Oak Lane and Lower Oaks campgrounds are generally closed on weekdays, with Olive Grove Campground being the main campground open in all periods. Group camps can be opened whenever reservations come in.
- On average, park staff estimate that current boating use in the peak summer season is about 40 boats on a summer weekend day and about 10 boats on an average summer weekday.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

- There is no potable water at Juan Fernandez, but power is available. There are no utilities in group camps, but Group Camp 1 has a potable water spigot.

### 3.3.2 Castaic Lake State Recreation Area Interview

The Los Angeles County Department of Recreation and Parks manage the Castaic Lake SRA under a 50 year operating agreement with California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) that will expire in 2019. Castaic Lake, approximately 25 road miles from Lake Piru, has over 2,200 surface acres at full pool and includes extensive day use and some overnight use areas. Norm Phillips is the current superintendent for the facility and provided the following observations regarding visitor use trends:

- The 2017 attendance has gone up greatly since the Castaic lake levels are back at high levels, which has not been the case in the last several years.
- Castaic Lake serves many of the same recreationists who visit or potentially visit Lake Piru.
- There is a 500-boat daily limit with an additional limit of 150 personal water craft allowed on the lake. However, they have not had more than 250 boats at one time this year even though visitation has increased compared to the last several years.
- The Castaic Lagoon is a 200-acre impoundment below Castaic Dam that is open to non-motorized boating and swimming. The beach usage at Castaic Lagoon is up from last year when they typically get between 500 and 600 users on a weekend day. This year they had many days where roughly 2,000 visitors were using the swimming beach areas on weekends.
- Castaic Lake, unlike Lake Piru and Pyramid Lake, still benefit from annual planting of catchable trout, stocked by California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Competitive sporting events such as running races or skill testing competitions (i.e. Tough Mudder and the Spartan Race) are becoming more common and is a trend that helps keep visitation levels up and gets more of the public coming to Castaic Lake SRA.

### 3.3.3 Los Padres National Forest Recreation Discussion

There are no developed recreation facilities on Forest Service lands within the Project boundary. However, dispersed recreation uses including hiking and biking are undertaken just outside the Project boundary. The Piru Canyon Road beyond the Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area Overflow is currently closed to public vehicular use. When the Pothole Trailhead parking area is completed, vehicular access will be permitted to the new trailhead. Charlie Robinson from the Ojai Ranger District provided the following information related to visitation trends:

- Since the Piru Canyon Road has been closed to vehicular traffic from the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, visitor use has been restricted to those walking or bicycling. The USFS gates the road at this section. It has been closed to vehicular traffic since 2000 when the Blue Point Campground was closed to protect the endangered Arroyo Toad.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

- Use would be higher today if the road was opened beyond Juan Fernandez leading to the Pothole Trail in conjunction with the new trailhead and trail improvements USFS is planning. These actions should help restore some use to this area.
- The proposed trailhead would serve as the southern terminus of the proposed Condor Trail that would involve a connected series of trails extending 400 miles up the coast range into Monterey County.

### 3.3.4 Ventura County Parks Department Discussion

Ventura County operates community parks and helps administer and plan recreation amenities in Ventura County. Pam Gallo of Ventura County Parks Department provided the following observations related to recreation needs and user trends:

- Because Ventura County parks only charge \$4.00 a vehicle on weekends and holidays, Ventura County residents generally will frequent parks other than Lake Piru unless users are looking for boating opportunities. Pam noted that both Lake Piru and Lake Casitas offer similar boating opportunities. Pam feels most day and overnight use at Lake Piru is from Los Angeles County, rather than Ventura County.
- The large proposed new subdivision, Mission Hills in Los Angeles County near Highway 126 and Interstate 5, will add 4,000 housing units. Over time Lake Piru will likely see more use resulting from this development.
- Adding WiFi and improved electrical service, particularly for RVs is a growing need at campgrounds. Pam thought it would be worthwhile to offer 30 and 50 amp service choices in the campground and electrical outlets at all campgrounds for individuals to charge electronic devices.

### 3.3.5 California Department of Parks and Recreation Discussion

State Parks manages numerous recreation facilities in the region, including camping and day use facilities. Craig Sap of Angeles District, State Parks offered the following observations regarding recreation use at Lake Piru.

- In addition to bicyclists and walkers using the upper Piru Canyon Road north of the Lake Piru, some motorcycle use is occurring.
- Lake levels represent the most profound factor influencing visitation and attracting users. High lake levels attract more use at Lake Piru and other water based recreation facilities in the region.
- The lakes with the highest lake levels are attracting the boating public first. Other lakes are considered if the first choice lake reaches capacity or has other limitations.
- Lake Piru is a bit more isolated than many of the other regional recreation resources because Highway 126 is not a major thoroughfare, it limits some use as compared to other lakes with similar recreation offerings.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Visitor Use Analysis

- There is a continuous solid demand for camping in the region. State Parks campgrounds in the region fill up from advanced reservations as much as seven months in advance.
- Social media can greatly influence the choices of recreation destinations for today's user.
- Putting in sidewalks, paved trails, and structures for camping like Yurts or Huts is very costly as compared to the revenue it will generate. However, adding electrical upgrades or service can pay for itself more quickly than other improvements.
- Craig also noted it's important to keep improving the offerings for RV camping and ensuring group camp sites have potable water and basic electrical service.
- Craig emphasized the importance of viewing the recreation plan for Lake Piru in terms of the area's connectivity to the mountains beyond.

## 4.0 RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section discusses regional recreation needs based on regional recreation planning information and general demographic trends. For analysis of study area-specific recreation demand, it is important to understand anticipated population and demographic changes as well as regional recreation participation trends. Population and demographics tend to be the major determinants of recreation participation trends. In terms of recreation participation trends, in general, as a population increases, the number of people participating in outdoor recreation activities also increases. Both demographics and regional participation trends are discussed in more detail in this section.

Los Angeles County is one of the most populous and diverse counties in the nation. With just over 10.1 million residents, the County's population is expected to reach nearly 11 million by 2030 (DOF 2013). Despite the projected growth rate, segments of the population will grow at different rates. The greater Los Angeles metropolitan region is said to be home to more than 18 million residents (National Park Service 2015).

The Los Angeles and Ventura County areas surrounding Lake Piru are continuing to experience significant population growth. With that growth, there is an increased demand for recreation facilities.

As an example, the proposed Mission Village development that will be located within 20 road miles of Lake Piru is expected to add more than 4,000 housing units by 2021. While Mission Village will include community parks, there will be increased demand for destinations like Lake Piru for water based recreation activities and camping.

Santa Clarita, a neighboring city, has an estimated population of 216,350. However, population in the vicinity could increase by as much as 60,000 people with the new, nearby, future developments such as Mission Village.

### 4.1 CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING REPORTS

The California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes (SOPA) on Outdoor Recreation in California 2012 (CDPR 2014) provides fundamental information for developing the California Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP provides guidance for recreation providers including federal, State, local and special district agencies. The survey results in the SOPA help show "an understanding of the outdoor recreation demands, patterns, preferences, and behaviors of California residents is essential to develop policies, programs, services, access, and projections of future use."

As a component of the SCORP, The Survey on Public Opinions and Attitudes (SOPA) on Outdoor Recreation in California 2012 (CDPR 2014) continues a process that has been in place for over 25 years. This process utilizes applied research as a critical component of developing the SCORP. An understanding of the outdoor recreation demands, patterns, preferences, and behaviors of California residents is essential in the development of policies, programs, services, access, and projections of future use.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Needs Assessment

Findings from the 2012 adult surveys extracted from the SOPA directly included the following:

- “Nearly all respondents (91.6%) had visited a park within the past 12 months. The majority (71.5%) had visited a park within the past month.
- In the past 12 months a majority of respondents visited highly developed parks and recreation areas, developed nature-oriented parks and recreation areas, historic or cultural buildings, sites, or areas, and natural and undeveloped areas.
- About three quarters of Californians traveled to parks with family (52.5%) and friends (23.5%), while almost one-third went to parks with both family and friends.
- More than two-thirds of Californians reported spending the same (33.2%) or more time (35.2%) in outdoor recreation activities compared to five years ago.
- Californians who spend less time in outdoor activities than they did five years ago, do so because of time/work (25.7%), age (22.7%), and health/disability (16.4%).
- The majority of respondents participated in moderate (40.6%) to light levels (37.8%) of physical activity during park visits and spent less than 3 hours of time (46.1%) physically active in parks.
- During the past 12 months Californians mostly participated in picnicking (70.4%) walking (63.8%), beach activities (52.8%), shopping at farmers’ market (49.5%), and swimming in a pool (48.2%).
- The respondents would like to participate more often in picnicking (55.1%), walking (37.4%), camping (35.1%), and beach activities (34.6%).
- Park companions under the age of 18 mostly play (54.8%) and participate in sports (27.7%) when at parks.
- More than half of respondents utilized community facilities/buildings (65.4%), unpaved multiuse trails (60.2%), and picnic table/pavilion (56.6%) during their last park visit.
- Over a third (34.7%) of respondents reported utilizing an unpaved trail for hiking, biking, or horseback riding at least once or twice a month or more during the last 12 months. At the same time, 31% of respondents reported never using an unpaved trail.
- The most prevalent reasons the respondents participate in their favorite outdoor recreation activities include to have fun, relax, view scenic beauty, be with family and friends, and keep fit and healthy.” (CDPR 2014).

In California State Park’s 2005 report, “Park and Recreation Trends in California,” developed camping was listed as an activity likely to increase along with walking, picnicking, swimming, and sightseeing. While developed camping continues to be a popular activity in California, it is noted by California State Parks that traditional tent camping or open air camping is declining in popularity and that alternative camping (i.e., staying in overnight tent cabins, cabins, cottages, and yurts, etc.) is an option that is growing in popularity in California (CDPR 2011).

## 4.2 VENTURA AND LOS ANGELES COUNTY RECREATION PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This Project is located in Ventura County and the recreation facilities operate under a conditional use permit (CUP-2949). The Ventura County General Plan has a Piru Area Plan that was last updated in 2008. The plan governs the distribution and general location and extent of uses of private land in the area. As part of the goals, policies, and programs for this area, recreation resources are addressed. For recreation in the Piru area the plan's emphasis is to provide a range of recreational opportunities and programs easily accessible to local residents, encourage new residential developments to provide recreation facilities for the population, and encourage the cooperation of the school district in providing facilities for recreation purposes. One of the specific policies for recreation addresses development at Lake Piru Recreation Area. Policy No. 1 states "limited expansion of recreation facilities at Lake Piru is encouraged, provided it is consistent with the open space character of the area" (Ventura County Planning Division, 2011).

The Ventura General Plan's Parks and Recreation analysis notes the importance of a recreation facilities "attraction capability". The plan points out that the facilities most likely to draw day use from outside the county are the lakes, mainly Lake Casitas and Lake Piru, as well as the beaches and harbors. The county plan finds that up to 50 percent of visitors live an hour or more from these water-based facilities. Most are from the greater Los Angeles area. Out of approximately 70 regional recreation facilities within Ventura County, only Lake Piru and Lake Casitas offer water sports and a marina (Ventura County Planning Division 2008). Lake Piru is the only facility in the eastern reaches of the county to allow swimming in open water.

The greater Los Angeles metropolitan region is home to more than 18 million residents. The population growth in the greater Los Angeles area has outpaced the State average, and in many areas the growth rate has been greatest among Hispanic and Latino Americans. Population growth among racial and ethnic minorities is expected to continue (USFS 2008). The findings related to population growth and demographic changes in the Los Angeles area suggest that recreation providers need to evaluate the extent to which recreation programs, resource protection, and interpretation/signage amenities meet the shifting demands of users.

In the 2009 City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department Community-Wide Needs Assessment, the City found that the white population participates in a wide range of activities, including both team and individual sports on land and water. The report also noted that the white population has more of an affinity for outdoor non-traditional forms of recreation. The needs assessment report notes that Hispanic and Latino Americans place more emphasis on the extended family, often desiring to gather in large recreational groups with multiple activities available so all age segments of the group can participate. There is a preference for large group pavilions with picnicking amenities and multi-purpose fields, often used for soccer games. These are all integral to the communal pastime shared by many Hispanics (City of Los Angeles 2009).

## 4.3 USFS RECREATION DEMAND AND USER INFORMATION

Recreation use, trends, and user preferences for the National Forests lands can help inform an understanding of demand related to supply of day use and camping facilities.

The Los Padres National Forest has a total of 111 developed recreation sites with 67 sites being family campgrounds. Of the 1.5 million visitors per year, approximately 17 percent were engaged in camping.

Visitation estimates, visit descriptive information, and satisfaction information are compiled through the National Visitor Use Monitoring program. The latest report for Los Padres National Forest was published in February 2016 and contains data collected through fiscal year 2014.

The Los Padres National Forest visitor use data provides insight into user trends and needs. The monitoring results indicate that users are spread across several age cohorts with ages 20 through 39 making up 40 percent of all users. Over 50 percent of all visits are within 25 miles of visitors' homes. The average duration of an overnight visit was about a day and half with camping listed as the main activity of 5.6 percent of users. In contrast, hiking and walking was listed as the most frequent reported primary activity at 41 percent, followed by bicycling at 13 percent. Approximately 85.5 percent of survey respondents reported overall satisfaction with Los Padres National Forest developed sites (day use and overnight, combined). In terms of rating crowds and crowding, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the area was perceived as overcrowded, the average rating for overnight use at developed sites was 5.4. No respondents indicated a particular site was overcrowded (a 10 score) (USFS 2016).

Recreation in southern California is a complex social activity constantly changing and posing increased challenges for agency managers. Some unique factors that affect the environmental sustainability of recreation management within the southern California national forests are as follows (USFS 2005d):

- There is no off-season in southern California. Use is year-round, often spontaneous (for example, snow play after major winter storms). Daily site turnover rate is often high at some facilities.
- There is a lack of room to expand recreation facilities at some popular areas due to steep topography and limiting land boundaries.
- Rapid urban development is occurring adjacent to and within national forest boundaries, leading to use pressures (such as "social" trails) and resource impacts. Urban social problems are migrating to this nearby open space, leading to public safety concerns.
- Demographics are rapidly changing. Complex public information strategies are needed, based on urban orientations and many languages, cultures and class diversities.
- Visitor expectations are higher in some parts of the country. More users are continuing to expect better services, including recreational vehicle utility hook-ups, flush toilets, and hot showers.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Needs Assessment

- Many new recreation activities originate or become popular in southern California and are sometimes first practiced in the national forests. They include mountain biking, hang-gliding, geocaching, and competitive recreation group events. Development of these new activities often changes or increases visitors' ability to access and use the national forests.
- There are increased opportunities for recreation and conservation education partnerships between USFS and non-profit organizations, volunteers, and businesses.
- Recreation facilities, areas, and programs on national forests influence local economies by prompting tourism, business and residential sectors.

## 5.0 RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN PROPOSED MEASURES AND DISCUSSION

This recreation management plan was developed in 2017 and 2018 for UWCD to provide an overall recreation plan for the Project to meet its FERC requirements in providing recreation opportunities for the public. The RMP (considered a "Recreation Plan" by FERC) can help guide future management and facility needs. Because the demands and conditions for recreation have been changing, Lake Piru needs a Recreation Management Plan to guide future development with the intent that this plan can be updated as conditions and circumstances change.

### 5.1 PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION RESOURCE POTENTIAL

Public access opportunities to Lake Piru are limited by the area's unique physical attributes, amount of lands available for public use, and facility provisions. The Lake Piru area is only accessible by Piru Canyon Road, a dead-end road leading up Piru Creek valley from the town of Piru, California. The lack of road access along the shoreline combined with steep topography surrounding the lake greatly limits public shoreline access (Figure 7). Much of the land around the lake above the Project boundary which generally follows the elevation 1078.3 feet contour, is private land not available for public access. Additionally, the dam and immediate areas are closed to public access due to security needs at the Project. As noted previously, the lake levels have a great influence on visitation and access to shorelines. At full pool, Lake Piru has just over 1,200 surface acres for recreationists with several cove areas offering different recreation experiences for boaters. However, at the normal minimum pool elevation (980 feet) the coves disappear, and the lake has only about 500 surface acres for recreation uses.

Given the recent drought, Lake Piru has experienced lower than normal lake levels which have shrunk the shoreline area and impeded shoreline access. This in turn has led to decreased visitor use, particularly boating and recreationists looking for flatwater recreation opportunities including swimming. Because utilization of existing facilities is at low levels, corresponding to the continuing low lake levels experienced over the past 5 years (2013-2017), it is not generally viable or reasonable to expand or pursue significant improvements at this time particularly since existing facilities are providing the capacity and diversity of opportunities for users seeking developed recreation opportunities.

Lake Piru itself is the primary attraction of the area for recreation users. At maximum pool, elevation 1,055 feet msl, or lake levels above 1,025 feet elevation, the coves in the lake become of size and depth adequate for boating. Figure 8 shows the spatial extend of the lake at elevation 1,053 feet, with all the coves and shoreline areas at an optimum recreation use level.

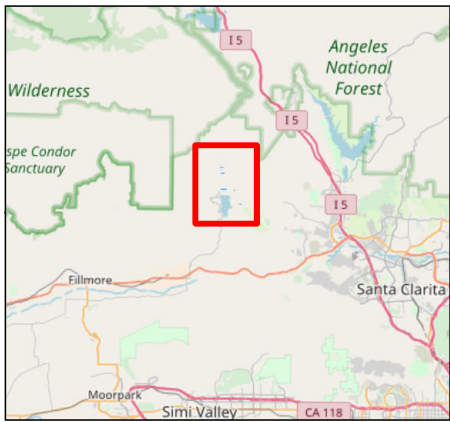
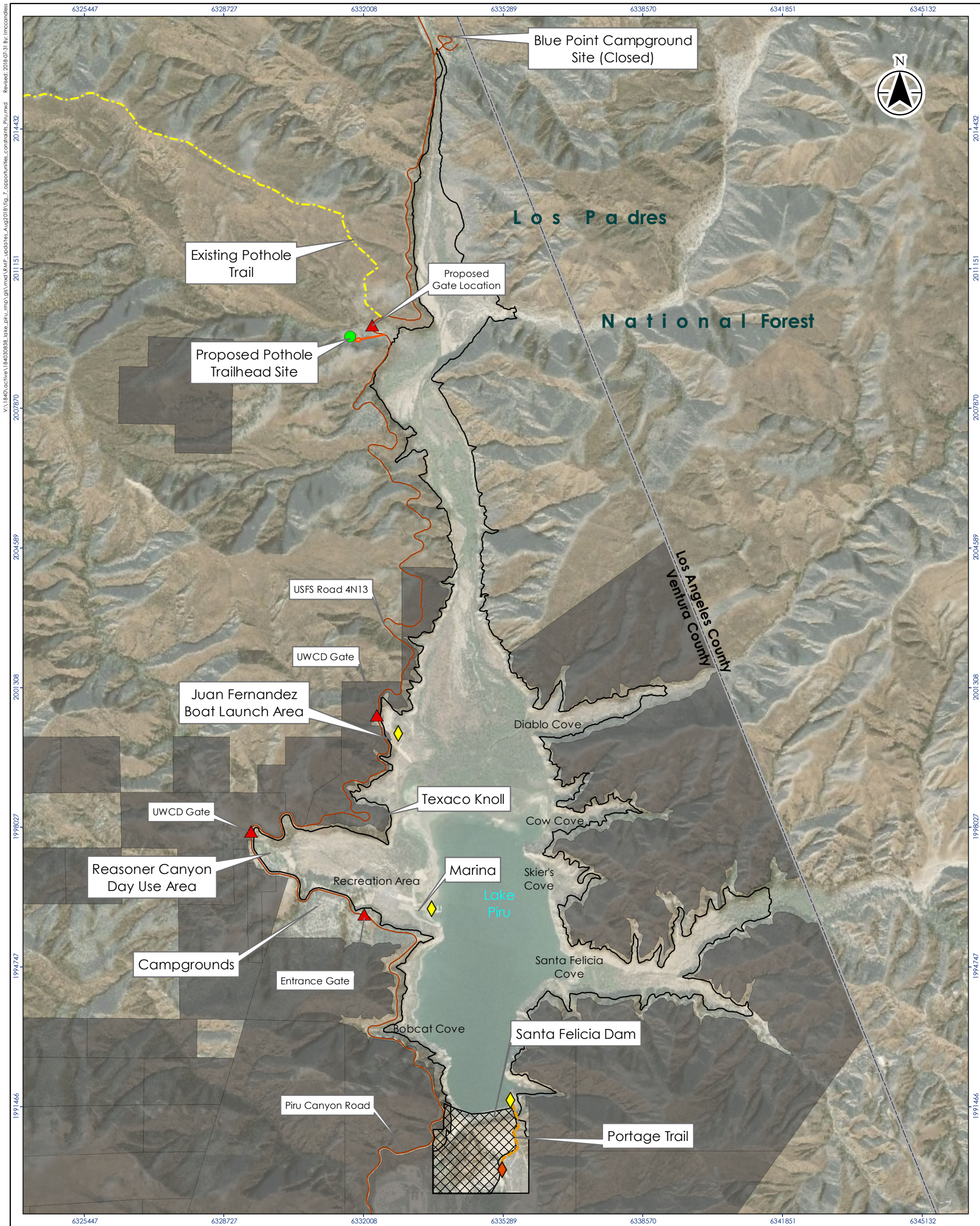
Based on interviews and analysis of visitation trends, the highest utilization of existing recreation facilities and best recreation conditions occur when the lake is above about 1,000 feet in elevation. However, as can be seen in Figure 9 below, the lake has not been at that level since the summer recreation season in 2012, other than three months in spring of 2017.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Management Plan Proposed Measures and Discussion

The developable areas at Lake Piru for recreation facilities are mostly built out, and the facilities in place are generally meeting the needs of the recreating public. However, the type and setting of the individual site components, including parking, camping and picnic unit spacing and amenities offered influence access and can limit utilization or be less favored by some users. When the facilities are at or near capacity on certain holiday weekends, the overflow areas for camping are used, and all picnic areas are opened and used.

If lake levels get above 1,000 feet for an extended length of time, the Juan Fernandez area could be opened to meet the excess demand. However, if the lake levels stay low as they have been for the past 5 years, the existing day use facilities in the core area can and will meet the demands of most weekends, including holiday weekends and Lake Piru waters will be too shallow and too far distance from the Juan Fernandez Boat Launch facilities to be able to open them for public use. Additionally, the improvements outlined in Article 412 for Juan Fernandez Day-Use Area will not be practical or appropriate due to the continuing low lake levels as a result of long term drought conditions.



- Legend**
- Proposed Pothole Trailhead Site
  - Whitewater Boating Put-In
  - Whitewater Boating Take-Out
  - Gate
  - Portage Trail
  - Pothole Trail
  - Piru Canyon Road
  - Trailhead Spur Road
  - Dam Secure Area (escorted access only)
  - Private Property around Lake Piru (No Access)
  - P-2153-012 FERC Boundary
  - County Boundary

0 0.5 1 Miles  
1:28,067 (At Original document size of 11x17)



Project Location  
Lake Piru  
Ventura County, CA

184030838  
Updated by L. McCandless on 2018-07-30  
Technical Review by K. Gilbert on 2018-08-01  
Independent Review by K. Gross Gray on 2018-08-03

Client/Project  
United Water Conservation District  
Project Vicinity  
Lake Piru Recreation Management Plan

Figure No.

7

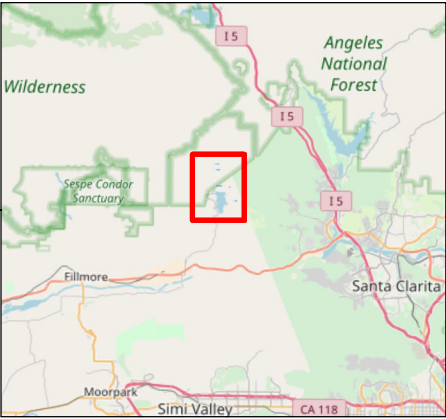
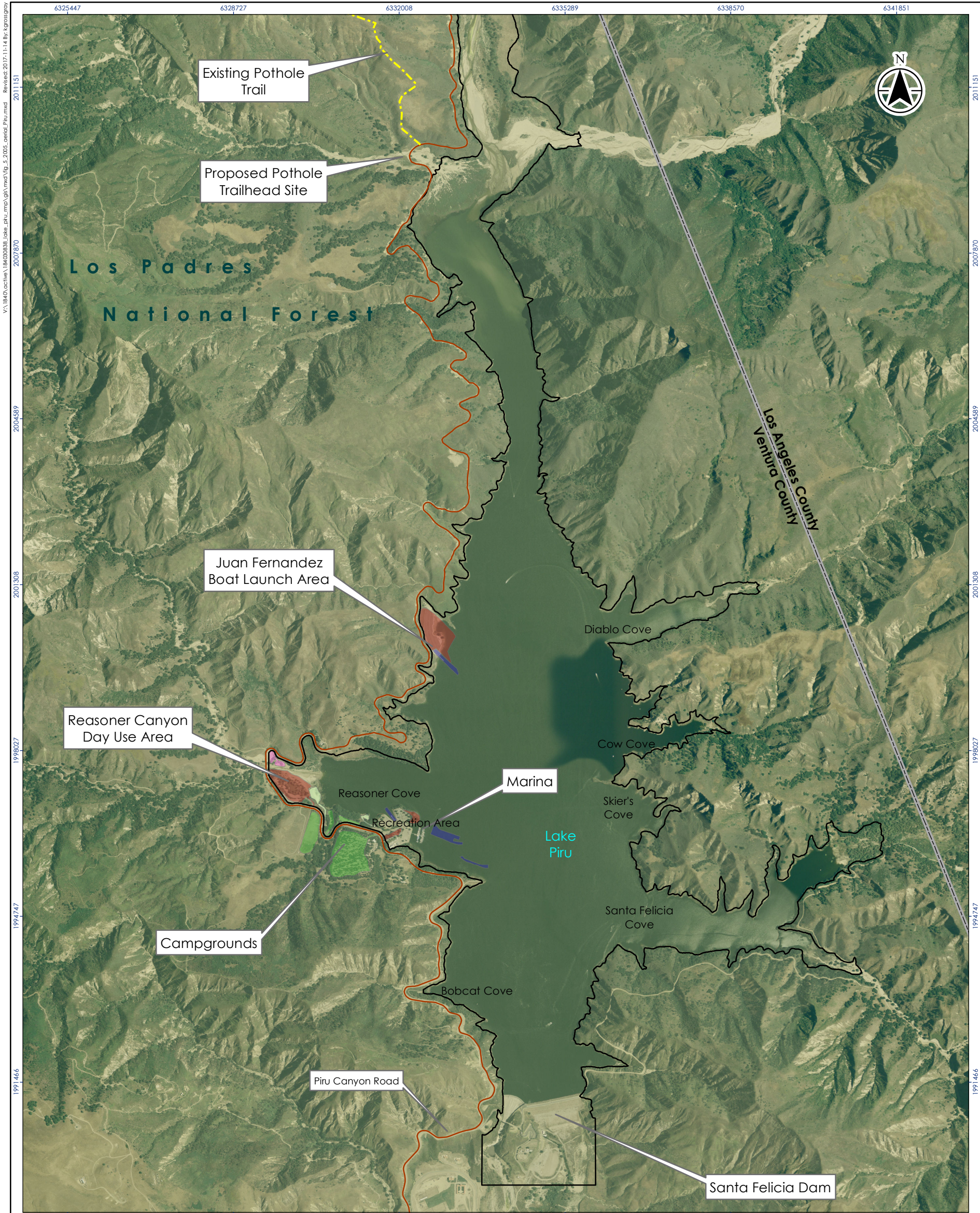
Title

**Public Access Constraints and Opportunities**

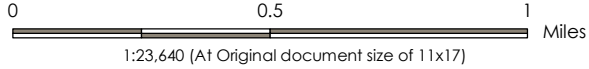
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0405 Ft US

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- Legend**
- Pothole Trail
  - Piru Canyon Road
  - P-2153-012 FERC Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Facility Type
    - Boat Ramp
    - Day Use
    - Campground
    - Group Camp
    - Dog Park



Project Location  
Lake Piru  
Ventura County, CA

184030838  
Prepared by L. McCandless on 2017-08-30  
Technical Review by K. Gilbert on 2017-09-01  
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Client/Project  
United Water Conservation District  
Project Vicinity  
Lake Piru Recreation Management Plan

Figure No.  
**8**  
Title

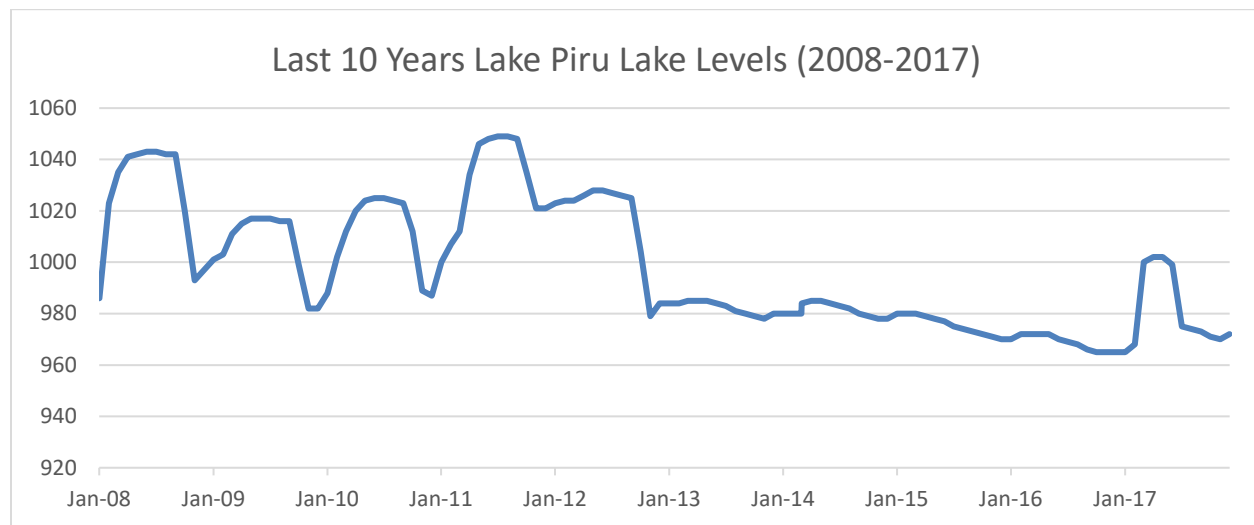
**Lake Piru at Optimum Recreation Level - June 2005**

1. Coordinate System: NAD 1983 2011 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Ft US

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**Figure 9. Lake Piru Lake Levels of Last 10 Years**



## 5.2 PROPOSED EXISTING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

As part of its commitments under the Project FERC license, UWCD is finalizing plans and design for Pothole Trailhead Parking Area Project off Piru Canyon Road. The new trailhead facility is planned for a location near the existing U.S. Forest Service Pothole Trail on UWCD property about 4.5 miles north of the core area facilities at Lake Piru Recreation Area. The trailhead project will provide approximately one acre fenced parking area with space for pull-through trailer parking, hitching posts for equestrian uses, a vault toilet restroom facility, trash receptacles, and informational signage as outlined in FERC's January 6, 2017 order approving UWCD's recreation trail plan. Successful operation of the trailhead facility will require the U.S. Forest Service to repair and maintain Piru Canyon Road from Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area to the new trailhead.

Since improvements at Juan Fernandez are infeasible because of consistently low lake levels, UWCD is proposing FERC alter the requirements under Article 412 to remove the references to improving the Juan Fernandez Day Use areas and instead describe similar improvements needed for the more consistently used Condor Point Picnic Area. UWCD proposes to add day use facilities at the existing Condor Point Picnic Area and rehabilitate and formalize swim beach areas below Condor Point Picnic Area within three years of recreation plan approval (by fall 2021 if FERC approves the recreation plan and Article 412 amendment in fall 2018). This modification to Article 412 essentially changes the location of providing additional day use facility improvements to the more reliably used, Condor Point Picnic Area. This will provide visitors a much better recreation experience now and into the future at all lake level conditions. The project would include reconfiguring, expanding, and adding amenities to five to six of the existing Condor Point Picnic Area sites to accommodate small groups of between 10-12 people. This would include installing ADA-accessible paths and pads for at least one of the rehabilitated picnic sites, adding shade ramadas to six of the picnic sites and also developing and configuring new flat-surfaced pads and pathways for picnic table, barbeque and shade ramada amenities, planting additional trees and providing an all new approximately 15 foot-

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Management Plan Proposed Measures and Discussion

long covered interpretive signage kiosk that can provide visitor safety and use information as well as information regarding natural and local history of the area.

The new modifications and additional recreation service improvements also include some regrading and clearing of brush from the shoreline area just below the ordinary high water mark to create a smoother substrate for swimming and wading as well as adding sand and gravel as needed to help smooth out the roughness. Table 8 provides a summary of the improvements slated for the Condor Point Picnic Area.

**Table 8. Summary of Improvements for the Condor Point Picnic Area**

Recreation Amenity	Activity
Picnic Sites	Reconfigure sites to provide flat paved surfaces; and add shade ramadas, new barbeques and tables at 5 or 6 of the existing sites. Enlarge sites to accommodate up to 10-12 persons at one time.
ADA Accessibly Improvements	Install ADA accessible paths and picnic pads and facilities for at least one of the rehabilitated picnic sites.
Interpretive Display	Develop approximately 15 foot long covered interpretive signage kiosk to provide visitor safety and natural and local history information of the area.
Swim beach	Regrade and clear brush from the shoreline area. Create a smoother substrate for swimming and wading. Add sand and gravel as needed to smooth out roughness.
Landscaping	Plant additional trees

In addition, and to take advantage of mobilization and construction equipment and labor, the improvements slated for the next three years include the adding of two new shade ramadas and picnic facilities to the existing Juan Fernandez Boat Launch picnic area in the currently developed area. By undertaking this improvement now, the existing Juan Fernandez Boat Launch day use facility will provide better quality of experience and service to recreationists when facility can be re-opened to the public.

### 5.3 POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

A key objective of this analysis is to characterize existing recreation demand and facility needs at Lake Piru. The analysis indicates that at this time, development of new recreation facilities apart from the existing facilities is not warranted or practical. If the hydrologic patterns change in the future and water levels rise for more consistent periods during the primary recreation season, visitation may increase close to previous levels, and expansion could be warranted. Therefore, the improvements planned for formalizing previously used informal day-use areas on the lakefront between Juan Fernandez and Texaco Knoll are not warranted under current conditions but should be considered in a future period when lake levels are higher and visitation increases to the pre-2012 levels for a period of five or more consecutive years. The improvements slated for this area could involve additional parking, picnic sites and an additional restroom. Such improvements could be evaluated in the future but these lands are not currently within the FERC project boundary for the Project. However, only if or when demand and corresponding

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Management Plan Proposed Measures and Discussion

visitation levels increase to the previous, pre-2012 levels (exceeding approximately 75,000 visitors a year) and the sites can be designed to minimize and avoid environmental impacts including clearing protected species of trees.

Additionally, based on this analysis including interviews with recreation providers, the development of the Pothole trailhead parking area and opening up the upper Piru Canyon Road to provide improved access to the Los Padres National Forest beyond Lake Piru recreation area is a high priority. As noted above, the trailhead and trail planning activities are well underway by UWCD and the Los Padres National Forest. Once the trailhead improvements are complete and the U.S. Forest Service makes repairs to Piru Canyon Road, the new vehicular access should greatly improve opportunities for recreationists in the area. It is important that the efforts include opening the Piru Canyon Road with signage to allow users to make informed decisions on facilities and recreation offerings in the upper Lake Piru area.

Based on survey results and observations within the recreation area at Lake Piru, formalizing and signing the informal, undesignated natural surface trails that users have created between existing camping and day use facilities could create better connections and would improve access and circulation to the primary use areas. Users could get around easier and enjoy more of the Lake Piru offerings during day or overnight visits. A comprehensive signing and marking of trails with associated trail improvements would greatly help the quality of visit and circulation between developed sites.

For the non-FERC licensed recreation facilities there are also some potential future improvements that could be undertaken to better serve future visitor needs. Currently only 35 amp electrical service is provided at Olive Grove Campground and no electricity is available in the group camp areas. Based on interviews and regional need assessments it would be highly useful to upgrade some of the Olive Grove units to 50 amp service to be able to attract and handle the modern RV and camping trailers and their electrical needs. Additionally, adding some limited electrical hook up or service at the group camps could greatly enhance the site attractiveness to groups who often have electrical appliances or other needs such as charging electronic devices. A feasibility study is recommended to determine how these types of improvements can best be accommodated in the next few years. However, this facility is not part of the FERC licensed facilities and measures and plans for future use and improvements are separate from FERC license recreation facility measures.

Other potential improvements including updating the content and information placed on signs at the various recreation facilities to provide information on area offerings and amenities including trails and a map showing the location of all recreation facilities in the area. Interpretive and safety aspects can be developed into display panels that would be affixed to existing signage.

Based on the findings in this plan, the recommended future plan improvements and provisions are as follows:

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Management Plan Proposed Measures and Discussion

Improvements for recreation FERC licensed recreation facilities:

- 1) As part of the Pothole Trailhead Parking Area Project under Article 411, UWCD shall continue to work with the USFS on a road operation/management plan for the single lane, paved and chip sealed Piru Canyon Road between Juan Fernandez Boat Launch Area and the new trailhead facility on Lisk Ranch. This road segment serves as an important corridor for trail users as well as others accessing the Los Padres National Forest lands and needs directional and informational signage, potential turn outs or turn around areas initial and periodic maintenance. UWCD in conjunction with the Los Padres National Forest shall address and communicate to the public (including signage) the allowed uses in the newly opened area. This includes identifying restrictions for off-road vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles, eBikes and other power assisted bicycles on the upper Piru Canyon Road (including portions above the proposed trailhead parking area and off-road areas such as trails and shorelines).
- 2) Between camping and day use areas in the core area, improve informal natural surface trails with signage and trail surface improvements within five years of recreation plan approval to provide better pedestrian connectivity between recreation facilities, particularly those connections between overnight camping areas and day use areas. Connect the Shoreline Trail (see Figure 2) to a system of signed trail routes linking Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area with Condor Point Store and picnic area as well as the marina and adjoining day use facilities.
- 3) Within 7 years of recreation plan approval, upgrade existing restroom and shower facilities to meet regional campground standards and as supported by visitor survey feedback.

Improvements for recreation facilities that are not part of the FERC-licensed Project:

- 1) Within 5 years undertake feasibility and planning for electrical upgrades in Olive Grove Campground and provision of electric service at Group Camp areas. Where possible, reconfigure camp sites to accommodate larger RV equipment and additional parking for accompanying vehicles.

## 5.4 OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

UWCD continues to operate, maintain, and repair recreation facilities at a level that provides for public recreation to occur in a safe and enjoyable manner. UWCD will continue to ensure the operation and maintenance of recreation facilities described in this management plan and associated with the FERC License for the Santa Felicia Project. Administration, operation, and maintenance activities will include, but are not limited to, maintaining parking areas, lawns, restrooms, lights, water, power, sewer, playground equipment, shelters, and playfields. Table 9 provides a general description of the type of O&M activities anticipated to occur at each of the recreation facilities.

Presently, UWCD contracts to Parks Management Company for the necessary personnel, equipment, and/or materials in order to help achieve the O&M standards.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Recreation Management Plan Proposed Measures and Discussion

**Table 9. General Maintenance Activities at Recreation Facilities Managed by UWCD at the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project**

Resource	Maintenance Activity
Water supply	Maintain and repair as needed, all facilities and equipment associated with potable and non-potable (irrigation) water systems.
Wastewater services	Maintain and repair as needed, all facilities and equipment associated with wastewater collection and treatment in compliance with California Regional Water Quality Control Board National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits.
Electrical system	Maintain and repair as needed, all equipment associated with Lake Piru Recreation Area electrical distribution system.
Road system	Maintain and repair as needed all roadways in the core area from the entrance kiosk to Reasoner Canyon Picnic Area Overflow Dog Park including bridges, parking lots, drainage systems including channels, swales, inlets and culverts in the main core area of Lake Piru Recreation Area. Repair and add asphalt overlay to roadways and parking areas at Lake Piru Recreation Area. Additionally maintain the Potholes Trailhead parking area and spur road connecting the trailhead to the existing Piru Canyon Road.
Buildings and grounds	Maintain and repair as needed, all Lake Piru Recreation Area buildings and structures to allow public recreation to occur in a safe and enjoyable manner. Picnic tables, camp sites, fire rings, grills and barbeque stands are regularly inspected and cleaned. Trash receptacles and waste disposal services are provided as needed.
Boat launching and mooring facilities	Maintain and repair as necessary boat launching and mooring facilities, marina docks, and floating restrooms (including pumping vaults when 75 percent capacity is reached).
Swimming beaches	Maintain an operable visitor swimming-wading beach at different locations based on lake level, including keeping areas free of weeds and graded evenly. Where possible and practical, provide imported sand near water's edge for use during the peak visitor season, Memorial Day through Labor Day.
Navigation and safety buoys	Maintain and repair as necessary navigational and safety buoys and anchors on the lake including those near the dam and intake structures, water treatment plant.
Landscaping	Maintain and provide routine maintenance such as pruning, mowing, removal of hazardous trees, and planting of replacement trees. Maintain and repair irrigation systems as necessary.

## **5.5 PROPOSED RECREATION USE MONITORING**

Recreation use monitoring will be an important component in determining when changes are required at Project recreation facilities to ensure adequate recreation access during the license term. Similar to the last three years, UWCD will collect recreation data in a standardized fashion as needed to evaluate use in regards to finalizing plans for improvements or expansion of facilities and offerings. Currently, for the fee areas, data is collected daily regarding number of visitors, number of visitor nights (camping), number of vehicles and number of boating vessels. Maintaining consistent recreation data collection is important in order to identify trends, manage use, and plan for future improvements. UWCD plans to continue this monitoring system and periodically determine whether the recreation management plans are continuing to meet the recreation needs within the Project boundary. Any changes to the recreation management plan would be based upon documented changes in use patterns, visitor needs, or new mandates or regulations that are relevant to recreation in the Project area during the license term.

## 6.0 AGENCY REVIEW OF 2017 DRAFT PLAN

UWCD prepared the initial recreation management plan in 2017 in consultation with the Forest Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation as required in Article 412. Additional input was obtained from Ventura and Los Angeles County recreation departments. Consultation with the Forest Service and State Parks on the development of the draft plan is described in Section 3.3. A complete draft of the recreation management plan was submitted to the Forest Service and California Department of Parks and Recreation on October 3, 2017 for a 30-day review. The review for the draft plan was arranged in advance with Charlie Robinson of the Ojai Ranger District, Los Padres National Forest and Craig Sap, District Superintendent of the Angeles District of California Department of Parks and Recreation.

Subsequent to the 30 day review period, UWCD's consultant, Stantec, attempted to contact both Charlie Robinson and Craig Sap to solicit review comments and further input to the draft plan. On November 6, 2017, a telephone conversation was undertaken with Craig Sap of State Parks to obtain and discuss comments on the draft plan. Charlie Robinson could not be reached and no comments on the draft plan were forthcoming from the Forest Service. However, Charlie did provide useful input in pre-draft consultation through an August 14, 2017 telephone conference call.

Additionally, as part of Article 411 consultation, the U.S. Forest Service provided comments on the April 2018 CEQA documentation for the Pothole Trailhead Parking Area. Those comments are being used to finalize plans and designs for the trailhead facility planned to be constructed in Fall of 2019.

The following table summarizes Craig Sap's comments on the draft plan and UWCD responses to his comments.

**Table 10. Agency Comments**

Agency	Agency Comment	UWCD Responses and Actions
State Parks	Comment #1: When asked, Craig agreed that expanding or improving day use areas at or near Juan Fernandez Boat Launch would not be a high priority at this time since the visitation to Lake Piru has been very low and agreed that upgrading or rehabilitation of existing facilities in the core area made more sense than expanding facilities in areas that may not be open or well used when lake levels are low.	Comment noted, improvements to Juan Fernandez Boat Launch day use sites are part of the recreation management plan, but only at such time when lake levels are higher and corresponding visitation is consistently higher than current levels in order to support such improvements.

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Agency Review of 2017 Draft Plan

Agency	Agency Comment	UWCD Responses and Actions
State Parks	Comment #2: Craig noted that in the Draft Plan, Section 3.3.2 that Castaic Lake SRA is actually run by Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation, not the City of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department.	Section 3.3.2 has been updated to note that the operation of Castaic Lake SRA is by the County, not City of Los Angeles.
State Parks	Comment #3: Craig noted that the use of eBikes and other power assisted bicycles is becoming increasingly popular and thought it would be good to identify, agree upon and provide signage for the allowed uses that the USFS and UWCD determine is proper for the roads, trails, and off-road areas associated with the planned opening of the Piru Canyon Road above Juan Fernandez Boat Launch.	Comment noted and Section 5.3 has been updated to reflect the need to address the need to determine with the USFS the proper uses and signing of any restrictions on such equipment in the upper Lake Piru area.
State Parks	Comment #4: Craig noted that there is a resurgence in the popularity of RVs and RVs are getting bigger so when upgrading RV sites in particular more space should be provided, where possible to accommodate larger vehicles and accompanying cars. At individual camping sites, State Parks is seeing more needs for additional parking of up to 2-3 vehicles per site.	Comment noted, Section 5.3 has been updated to reconfigure sites to accommodate larger RV equipment and additional parking in conjunction with improvements to electrical service upgrades at Non-FERC Project, Olive Grove Campgrounds.
State Parks	Comment #5: Based on State Parks recent experiences, many of the traditional single family picnic sites are being used increasingly by multiple families and when planning upgrades or retrofits it would be prudent to reconfigure some individual sites to accommodate between 10-12 people in day use areas.	Comment noted, Section 5.3 has been revised to include such a recommendation in conjunction with the swim beach improvements recommended for Condor Point.

The recreation plan is now being updated to be filed as an amendment to the FERC license for the Santa Felicia Project and to serve as the guiding recreation plan for the term of the license.

## 7.0 REFERENCES

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## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### References

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**APPENDIX A**  
**LAKE PIRU RECREATION SURVEY 2017**

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## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Appendix A – Lake Piru Recreation Survey 2017

## Appendix A LAKE PIRU RECREATION SURVEY 2017

United Water Conservation District (United) is interested in hearing about your recreation visit to Lake Piru. Your participation is important to us and will help us to provide quality recreation for everyone. Please fill out the following survey and drop it in the box marked "Recreation Surveys" at the entrance station or hand it to any Park employee. **All responses from this survey will remain anonymous.**

### Regarding you and your group (if applicable) ...

1. How many people were in your group today including yourself? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many vehicles did your group use to come to Lake Piru? \_\_\_\_\_
3. When did you arrive at Lake Piru? Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ a.m. ☐ p.m.
4. Is this your first visit to Lake Piru? YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_  
If not, how often do you visit Lake Piru? \_\_\_\_\_

### Regarding your recreation activities...

- 5a. Which of the following activities are you and/or your group participating in during this visit to the area?

<input type="checkbox"/>	RV/trailer Camping	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water skiing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunbathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jet skis
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tent Camping	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windsurfing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Picnicking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family time/ reunion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fishing from shore	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sailing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sightseeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paddle Boarding
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fishing from boat	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sports/Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wildlife viewing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Swimming
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fishing (belly boat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Canoeing/ Kayaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hiking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Biking
<input type="checkbox"/>	Motor boating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pontoon boating	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pet play	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other _____

- 5b. What is the primary activity or amenity that draws you to this area?

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE TURN OVER – MORE ON BACK**

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Appendix A – Lake Piru Recreation Survey 2017

6. The following section lists things you might or might not have experienced at Lake Piru. Please rate the following amenities or conditions.

	A big problem	A moderate problem	A slight problem	Not A problem	No Opinion
Easy access to the shore	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of trash receptacles at Lake Piru area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Condition of Restrooms at Lake Piru area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facility fees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of picnic sites/ tables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of good campsites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Numbers of watercraft on the lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise or disturbances from other users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wait times to launch a boat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflicts between on water users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Site crowding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of getting around between recreation areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of fishing at Lake Piru	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choice of food/supplies at concession area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## LAKE PIRU RECREATION AREA RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Appendix A – Lake Piru Recreation Survey 2017

7. How do you evaluate the number or amount of each of the following developments or services at Lake Piru? Write the name of the specific location if you would like to direct your evaluation toward a specific site.

	Too High	About Right	Too Low	No Opinion	Specific Location (if applicable)
Availability of electric power sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Amount of nearby parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Law enforcement presence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
The number of trails/paths between recreation sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Number of group facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Access areas on shoreline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Amount of screening between campsites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Number of useful park signs and information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Choice of items to rent from concession area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

8. What is the number one improvement project you would like to see at Lake Piru?

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9. What if anything enhanced your recreation experience today?

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***Thank you for your time and input!***

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**APPENDIX B**  
**RECREATION PROVIDER INTERVIEW**  
**SUMMARIES**

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# UWCD MEETING SUMMARY

## Recreation Needs and Visitor Preferences

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### Meeting Details

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**Date:** 11 & 15 August 2017

**Time:** 10:30am (11<sup>th</sup>)

**Location:** Lake Piru Recreation Area (plus 8/15 follow up by telephone)

**Objectives:** Current and Past Recreation Management and Use

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### Attendees

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Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Kurt White, Jim Grisham, Jefferson Barstad (Clayton Strahan by phone on follow up 8/15)

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### Summary

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UWCD staff were interviewed about recreation management and user trends. As managers implementing and complying with FERC license conditions for the Santa Felicia Hydroelectric Project they have extensive knowledge of recreation use patterns and influencing factors relating to the Project over time. The following points summarize recreation resource management and use considerations for Lake Piru:

- Jim noted some groups come regularly and groups are important for both day use and camping overnight use. Jim mentioned a group from Downey, CA that comes every year for overnight use and boating. A group from Santa Monica was onsite on the day of the interview (August 11, 2017) and available for an interview in the Reasoner Day Use group picnic area. Clayton also noted another regular group called Happy Campers would be good to contact and provide a survey for input from long-time visitors. Conversely they have lost other groups in recent years like the Viejitos Car Club and YMCA Indian Princess groups.
- In looking at visitor trends (aside from lake level influences) it is important to consider the impacts to visitation resulting from 1) not allowing alcohol in the park (January 2010-April 2014); 2) allowing personal watercraft (PWC) on Lake Piru (started allowing them in June 2015); 3) when California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) stopped planting trout (2010); 4) first identification of quagga mussel infestation (December 2013). Other indirect effects that dampened use

include the 2008 mortgage crisis (people sold their boats and spent less money on recreation). Gas prices rose significantly during that time period also which discouraged travel and consequently visitation to Lake Piru since many visitors come from Los Angeles.

- Prior to 2010 CDFW planted trout in Lake Piru. Visitation was higher than currently as a result (especially boat launching use). More than 40,000 trout were planted each year and fishermen came out in large numbers to catch them.
- Jim and Kurt noted that they lost all ability to launch boats from June through October 2015 after the lake level kept falling. A project was undertaken to uncover the old South boat ramp which opened in October 2015.
- There is no potable water at Juan Fernandez, but power is available.
- There are no utilities in group camps, but Group Camp 1 has a water spigot
- Oak Lane and Lower Oaks campgrounds are generally closed on weekdays, but Group camp sites can be open by reservation. Oak Lane and Lower Oaks are generally closed in low season from October through April.
- Oak Lane campground bathrooms were closed for 4 years until 2015 when Parks Management rehabilitated them including installation of coin operated showers similar to the bath facilities in Olive Grove Campground.
- Power outages can be a problem in the canyon and Edison can be slow to restore power (small load in their area).
- This year (2017) when Pyramid Lake had closure due to a toxic blue-green algae outbreak, and media attention about a fatality that was a result of the algae, boaters went to nearby Castaic and to Lake Piru. Jim and Kurt thought some of the increased visitation this summer (2017) was turn-aways for the quagga mussel or even “overflow” from Castaic.
- Jim and Kurt verified that the 30amp electrical service they have for hook ups in Olive Grove Campground is hardly adequate for the loads the newer RVs require. An upgrade could allow them to offer better electrical hook up services.
- The sewer treatment limitations imposed by the regional board presents an obstacle to any future expansion as they are close to their 20,000 gallon per day limitation on total discharge.
- On average Jefferson and Kurt estimate current boating use is about 40 boats on a weekend day and about 10 boats average on a weekday. The retired Coast Guard Auxiliary group has stopped coming to Lake Piru this year (the group is probably disbanding).

- Several movie and film crews have been on site the last several years and the HBO show Westworld and other shows provide some further business and activity at Lake Piru Recreation Area. Filming events help the revenues for the Park.
- Big winter storms are often pushing sediment deeper into the Lake and cutting new channels below the ordinary high water mark.



# CASTAIC LAKE SRA MEETING SUMMARY

## Recreation Needs and Visitor Preferences

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### Meeting Details

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**Date:** 11 August 2017

**Time:** 1:30pm

**Location:** Castaic Lake Boating Instruction and Safety Center

**Objectives:** Gather information on regional recreation management and visitor use and needs to help understand demand and use at Lake Piru

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### Attendees

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Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Norm Phillips, Castaic Lake Recreation Area, Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation.

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### Summary

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Norm is the new superintendent for Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department which is the agency that maintains and operates Castaic Lake State Recreation Area (Castaic Lake SRA). He took over last fall for Lori Bennett, who had been in charge since 2006. The SRA consists of Castaic Lake with two boat launching ramps and a personal watercraft (PWC) area along the west shore, a lagoon to the south of Castaic Lake that serves as a no-motor recreation area and recharge basin. There is overnight camping, sandy beaches, and picnic areas at the lagoon area. Norm provided the following observations regarding recreation use and trends at Castaic Lake SRA applicable to the region.

- One of the most important trends at Castaic has been that the lake level came up this last winter and is still high and attendance since that time has “sky rocketed”.
- Another factor that has resulted in increased visitation at Castaic this year (2017) are the recent water quality concerns at Pyramid Lake and associated press coverage about these problems (including a fatality of a toddler at Pyramid Lake

due to ingestion of toxic blue-green algae). Many more boaters and other users are coming to Castaic Lake this year as compared to the last few years.

- There is a 500 boat daily limit on Castaic Lake with accommodation for 250 boat launches at each the East and West boat launches. However, the East Ramp is all that has been used thus far this year and is the only boat ramp open until they reach capacity. Additionally, up to 150 PWCs are allowed in the designated area near the west ramp, and as such these water craft do not interact with the other motor boats on the lake. Fly-boarding is not allowed as it is on Pyramid Lake.
- Quagga mussels were found late last year in the discharge tunnel at Pyramid Lake. Quaggas have not been found in Castaic Lake. Castaic Lake has strict inspection protocols to try to avoid other vectors of contamination to be sure boats are not able to bring them in from known infested lakes.
- Many of the incoming boats are failing the quagga mussel inspection at Castaic and Norm mentioned up to 35 percent have failed recently. Norm thought some of those displaced users go to Pyramid Lake or Lake Piru. Unless boaters have been away from the known, quagga-infested lakes for more than 8 days, they are not allowed into Castaic Lake. Castaic Lake SRA will take boats from Silverwood Lake but not boats that recently visited Lake Piru or Pyramid Lake.
- There are 57 campsites at Castaic Lake SRA, but none have electrical or water hookups.
- In 2019 the 50 year operating agreement between State Parks and Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department will expire and need to be renewed. Prior to that there might be some uncertainty on making any more capital improvements. In the recent past they have been able to upgrade restroom facilities in the park.
- In previous years, the picnic areas had several tables on each concrete pad with shade pavilions but the pavilions have rotted and after a lawsuit associated with one falling down they have taken them all down. Consequently they have less picnic capacity since there is now only one table per pad and little shade is offered for the hot summer season.
- Other recent improvement projects involved re-paving roads using a grant from State Park's Division of Boating and Waterways. Also, further improvements to the Lagoon docks and gangways were undertaken.
- Rocky Mountain Recreation serves as a concessionaire and operates the concession stand and rents boats.
- DWR tests Castaic Lake for toxic blue-green algae on Tuesdays. The lake can be at a caution level until the lab results from Tuesday samples are received on Friday. The levels have not been high enough to set any cautionary warnings yet this year (2017).

- The Los Angeles County Sheriff Department patrols the lake but recently they have indicated they are no longer going to be towing stranded boats and another provider for that service will be needed in the future.
- The Castaic Lagoon beach areas close for the season when school is back in session. The beach usage at the Lagoon was up from last year (2016: 500-600 users each weekend). This year (2017) they received roughly 2,000 day-use visitors each weekend.
- Norm stated that Castaic Lake SRA receives most of its annual use between Memorial and Labor Day. In the fall they rent the lagoon area out for sporting and competition events like the Santa Clarita Color Run, the Spartan Race, and Rugged Maniac races and consistently have events scheduled for most weekends. He thought that this type of use was a growing trend and helpful to the park revenues and to increase off-season use of the park. Additionally, some movie sets frequent the area and recently the Fear Factor film crew did some filming at the park. Stand up paddle board clinics on weekends also are popular into the fall season.
- Castaic Lake fishing opportunities benefit from annual trout stocking by CDFW. They benefit because more from this now than in the past since Lake Piru and Pyramid Lake are no longer stocked with trout by CDFW. They do get some bass fishing tournaments also.
- Norm noted that the upper lake receives a different type of user and demographic group than the Lagoon typically. The upper lake is active with boaters coming from a slightly higher income group who pay more for their use and do not always stay all day. In contrast, the Lagoon area can attract lower income groups as a single car (no limit on people) can enter for \$11 per day and enjoy the park for the entire day if desired.



# USFS MEETING SUMMARY

## Recreation Needs and Visitor Preferences

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### Meeting Details

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**Date:** August 14, 2017

**Time:** 2:30pm

**Location:** Conference Call

**Objectives:** Gather information on recreation management and visitor use and needs at Lake Piru

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### Attendees

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Lisa McCandless, Stantec; Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Charlie Robinson, Los Padres National Forest

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### Summary

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Charlie is the District Recreation Officer for the Ojai Ranger District of the Los Padres National Forest (805-646-4348 x319 or [cfrobinson@fs.fed.us](mailto:cfrobinson@fs.fed.us)). Charlie is knowledgeable about the Lake Piru area and was familiar with the USFS activities in the Middle Piru Creek area above the Project. Charlie offered the following observations:

- In terms of the USFS reviewing the draft Recreation Management Plan, Charlie thought he would be the right contact and took note of the date we discussed in terms of getting it to him for a 30-day review (October 2<sup>nd</sup>).
- Charlie had been in Piru Canyon last Friday (8/11) and took note of the odometer readings from the gate on Piru Canyon Road to the proposed trail head on UWCD's Lisk Ranch property (2.7 miles) and from there another 1.3 miles to the closed Blue Point Campground site.
- Charlie noted that the gate on Piru Canyon Road, located just past the entrance road leading to Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, is a USFS gate and it has been in place since 2000 when Blue Point Campground was closed due to the presence of endangered Arroyo Toads. From that time on, use has thus been restricted to

those walking or bicycling. The road from that point north into Middle Piru Creek is a single lane, chip-sealed road that is rough.

- Charlie noted that for about 3 years, from 1996 through about 1998, UWCD ran the Blue Point Campground. The USFS is currently doing NEPA to permanently decommission the campground. The campground had 40 camping units, offering a primitive camping experience. Charlie indicated there is likely still demand for primitive type camping in that area and asked if UWCD or PMC had heard of any users inquiring at the entrance kiosk.
- Charlie noted that Piru Canyon Road 4N13 is a USFS road and that the section from Juan Fernandez Boat Launch to the north will need to be maintained better once the new Pothole Trailhead is opened. The current agreement between USFS and UWCD is that the gate at Juan Fernandez will be relocated to the new trailhead location.
- The USFS is looking at some improvements and possible relocations to the lower portions of the Potholes Trail. Once the trailhead is open, trail users could use the road and access Pothole Trail (18W04) which connects to Agua Blanca Trail (19W10) making a loop route possible from the new trailhead by using portions of both trails.
- Charlie mentioned the new trailhead would likely be a part of the new proposed 400-mile long Condor Trail: a recreational through-hiking route designed to connect the northern and southern portions of the Los Padres National Forest by a single hiking trail. Piru Canyon serves as the southern terminus of the Condor Trail Association's proposed National Recreation Trail. The northern terminus is at Botchers Gap Campground within Monterey County.
- Once the road is opened past Juan Fernandez Boat Launch, the USFS has asked UWCD to consider construction of a turn-around just past Juan Fernandez Boat Launch in case vehicles with boat trailers inadvertently go north past the boat launch as the road is a narrow single lane road with no pullouts.
- Charlie indicated that with the opening of the trailhead and corresponding opening of the road to vehicular traffic there will be more opportunities for mountain biking recreation use along the Piru Canyon Road.



# VENTURA COUNTY PARKS MEETING SUMMARY

## Recreation Needs and Visitor Preferences

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### Meeting Details

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**Date:** August 22, 2017

**Time:** 2:30pm

**Location:** Telephone Conversation

**Objectives:** Gather information and insight on recreation trends and needs in Ventura County as related to Lake Piru Recreation opportunities.

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### Attendees

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Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Pam Gallo, Ventura County Parks Department

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### Summary

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Pam is the Park Operations Supervisor for Ventura County and oversees several Parks and operations and maintenance needs for the county. Pam was familiar Lake Piru and its recreation facilities and offered several observations regarding recreation uses and trends in the county.

- Pam noted that cost is important in terms of park visitation in the county. Parks outside the City limits charge \$4.00 per vehicle for weekends and holidays and \$2.00 per vehicle for weekdays. Lake Piru, on the other hand, is charging slightly more but does offer a different experience for day users. Because of its uniqueness and higher cost she believes that Lake Piru attracts many of its visitors from the greater Los Angeles area, rather than Ventura County (as compared to other Ventura county parks—aside from beaches). This is due to the unique offering at Lake Piru (watersports and camping). Because of higher costs local residents in Ventura County might frequent one of their parks before choosing Lake Piru for day use.
- Pam noted that a large development called Mission Hills, which is part of the Newhall Ranch development, is planned for the area just east of Piru around the

Highway 126 and I-5 areas. This development will add about 4,000 housing units which will likely bring more visitation to Lake Piru.

- Many parks in southern California are looking at improvements like adding zip lines and even water park features such as a “lazy river”, which can provide offerings that are more desirable to multi-generational families. She characterized many of today’s day users as having short attention spans.
- Adding WiFi and improved electrical service, particularly for RVs is a growing need at campgrounds. Pam thought it would be worthwhile to offer 30 and 50 amp service choices in the campground and at least some type of electrical outlet at all campgrounds for individuals to charge electronic devices.



# CALIF. PARKS MEETING SUMMARY

## Recreation Needs and Visitor Preferences

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### Meeting Details

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**Date:** August 23, 2017

**Time:** 2:30pm

**Location:** Telephone Conversation

**Objectives:** Gather information and insight on recreation trends and needs in greater Los Angeles area as related to Lake Piru Recreation opportunities.

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### Attendees

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Kirby Gilbert, Stantec; Chris Sap, California Department of Parks and Recreation, District Superintendent, Angeles District

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### Summary

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Lake Piru is within the Channel Coast District of California Department of Parks and Recreation. Craig noted the sphere of influence for recreation opportunities and use at Lake Piru is more aligned and connected to the recreation environment of the Los Angeles District where he works. Craig is familiar with Lake Piru and has hiked many of the trails in the area including informal trails up the length of middle Piru Creek above the Project. Craig offered the following observations:

- In terms of having State Parks review a draft Recreation Management Plan, Craig thought he would be the right person to lead that and would coordinate with any other Parks internal review needs. We discussed the schedule for getting the draft plan to him for a 30-day review starting October 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Craig noted there was some interest in using Piru Canyon Road for motorcycle use, although he noted the USFS does not designate these off-road areas as being suitable for off highway vehicle use in the Piru Canyon area.
- Lake levels are critical and probably the most fundamental factor in terms of visitation and attracting users. He noted a strong interrelationship between the

other lakes in the region. The lake with the highest lake levels are often where users will try to go first and most users (particularly boaters) tend to keep their destination options open and compare and contrast recent conditions at lakes such as Pyramid, Castaic, Casitas, and Piru to make their final choice.

- Craig noted that Lake Piru is more isolated than the other regional lakes but is also in a canyon that is a portal to the mountains. This canyon serves as a gateway of sorts to potential mountain biking, trail and hiking uses in and beyond the area. He noted that Highway 126 is not a major thoroughfare and that probably limits some use as compared to other lakes with similar recreation offerings.
- He noted that he does see demand for a variety of special uses including competitive events. State Parks also accepts television and movie filming at their regional parks which is often driven by the need for producers to stay within a 60 mile radius of the film studios to avoid the need to overnight crews.
- Social media can greatly influence the choices of recreation destinations among users in today's world.
- There have not been any new campgrounds in the area in 20 years and they see a solid demand for camping sites, particularly between Memorial and Labor Day. The reservation system for the camping they offer often fills sites 7 months in advance. Group camping is a particularly important growth area.
- Putting in sidewalks, paved trails and structures for camping like Yurts or Huts is very costly as compared to the revenue it will generate. However adding electrical upgrades or service can pay for itself easier than most improvements.
- Craig also noted it's important to keep improving the offerings for RV camping and ensuring group camp sites have potable water and at some basic electrical service.
- Craig emphasized the importance of viewing a recreation plan for Lake Piru in terms of the area's connectivity to the mountains beyond.