

McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Public Comment Meeting for Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report

Division of Water Rights
Presented by Savannah Downey



May 6, 2026

Presentation Overview



- Meeting Logistics and Ground Rules
- Presentation
 - Background on State Water Resources Control Board and Water Quality Certifications
 - California Environmental Quality Act
 - McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Overview
 - Proposed Project Overview
- Public Comment Portion
- Review Written Comment Instructions and Email List Subscription
- Adjourn
 - Meeting will adjourn early if there are no more comments

Pit River below Pit 5 Dam
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

Meeting Logistics and Ground Rules



All microphones are muted



Meeting is being recorded and transcribed



Presentation and meeting transcript will be available on the McCloud-Pit Project webpage



Save all questions and comments until the end of the presentation



If you would like to speak, raise your hand to indicate you would like to be unmuted



State and spell your name before you speak (for the court reporter)



Each speaker will be allotted 3-5 minutes to speak



Respect all speakers and their points of view



People demonstrating unprofessional language will be removed from the meeting

State Water Resources Control Board

- The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) protects California's waters and has authority over water rights and water quality, including:
 - Protect and enforce many water uses including the needs of industry, agriculture, municipal districts, and the environment
 - Establish conditions for federally licensed projects via issuance of water quality certifications (section 401 of Clean Water Act)

Mission Statement:

To preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of California's water resources and drinking water for the protection of the environment, public health, and all beneficial uses, and to ensure proper water resource allocation and efficient use, for the benefit of present and future generations.

State Water Resources Control Board

Water Quality Certifications



Hawkins Landing Boat Ramp
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

- Section 401 of Clean Water Act
- If a water quality certification (certification) is issued, it becomes a mandatory part of the license issued by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
- Certifications ensure that a project will comply with the applicable water quality control plans (basin plans) and policies
- State Water Board must comply with California Environmental Quality Act when acting on a request for certification

California Environmental Quality Act

- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) informs State Water Board and public about a proposed project's potentially significant environmental effects and ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate those impacts
- State Water Board is lead agency for CEQA as PG&E is not a public agency

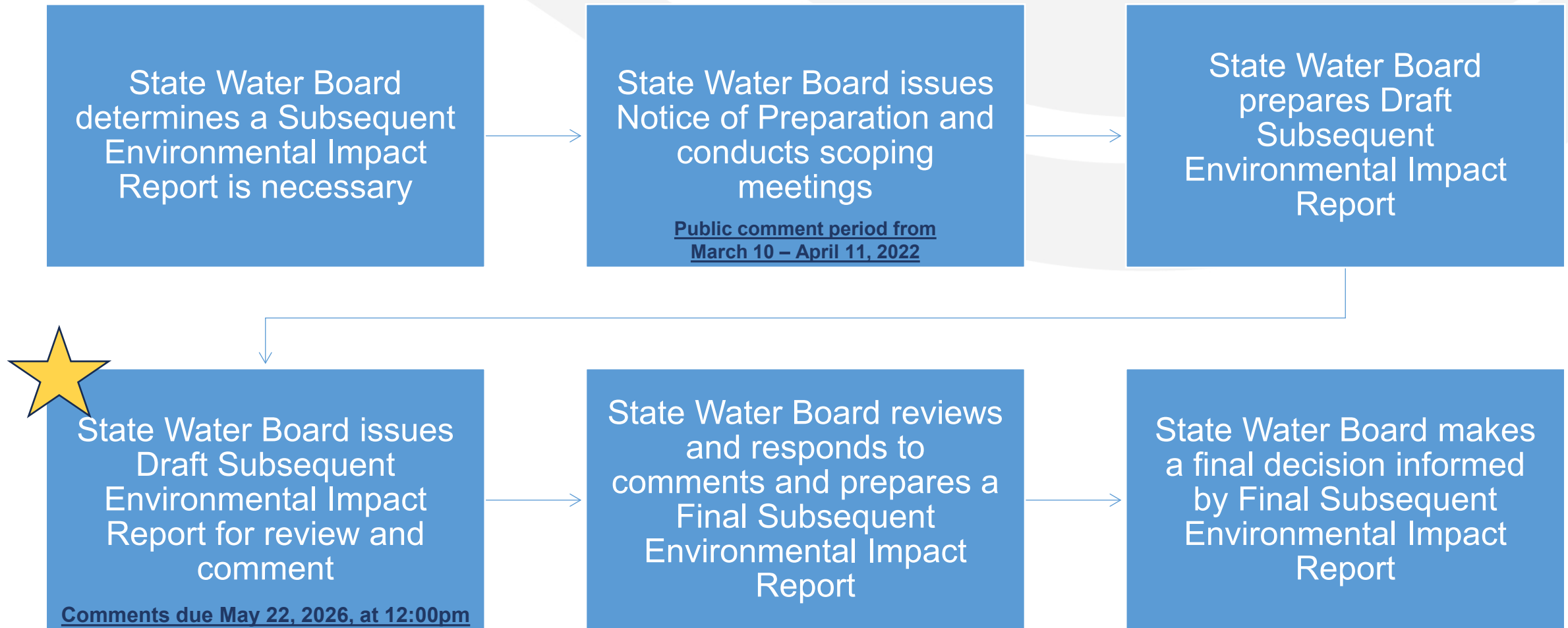


McCloud Spillway Pool
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

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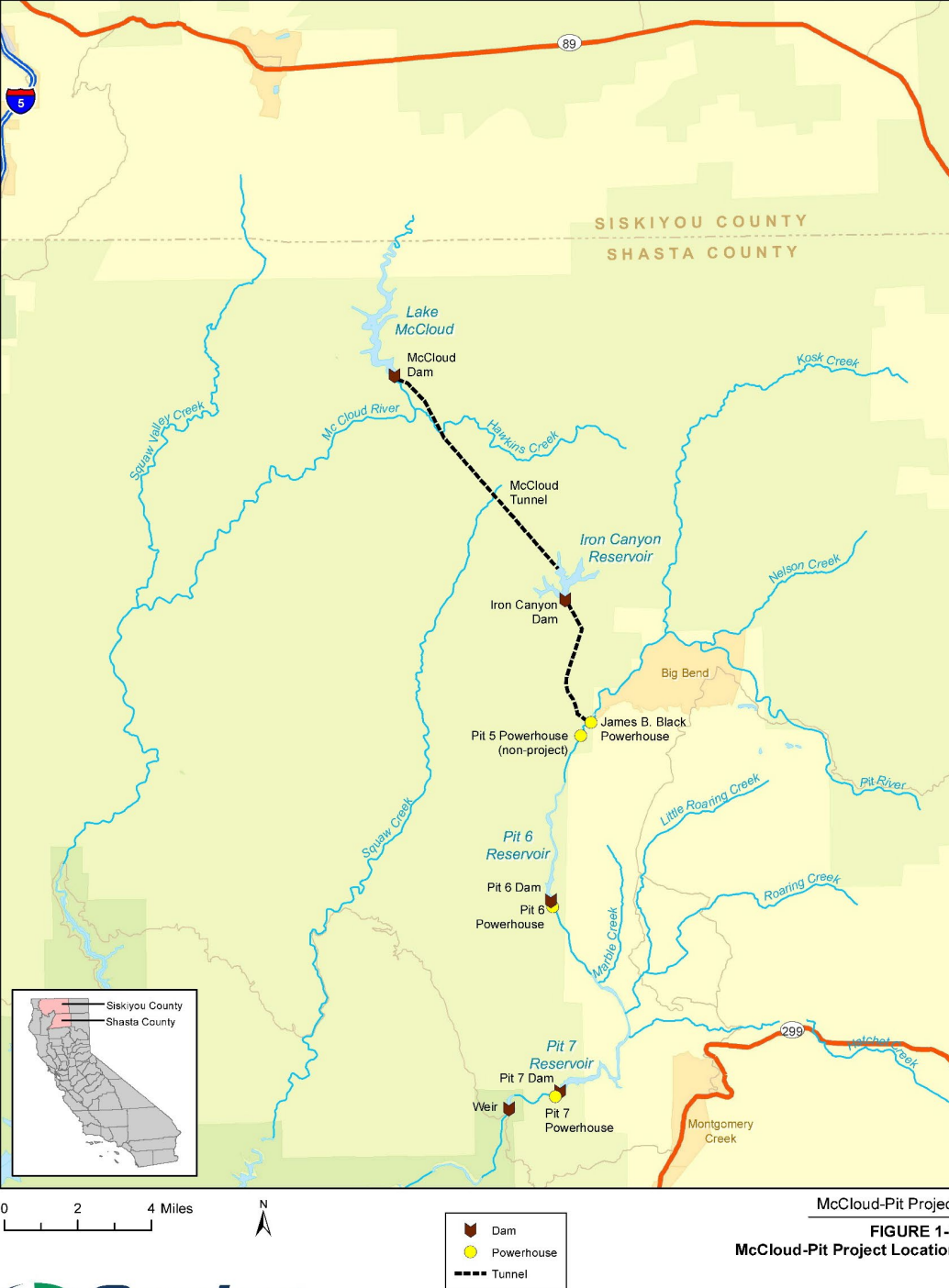
California Environmental Quality Act

State Water Board's CEQA Process



McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Overview

- Owned and operated by Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)
- Located in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties
- Three hydroelectric developments:
 - James B. Black Development
 - Pit 6 Development
 - Pit 7 Development



McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Overview

FERC Process



Iron Canyon Reservoir
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

- 1961: FERC licenses original Hydroelectric Project
- July 2009: PG&E applies for a new FERC license (initiates relicensing)
- January 2010: PG&E applies for certification from State Water Board
- February 2011: FERC issues the final environmental impact statement for National Environmental Policy Act compliance
- November 2019: State Water Board Executive Director issues final certification

McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Overview

CEQA Process

- October 2012: State Water Board staff conduct informal consultation with responsible and trustee agencies, California Native American tribes, and public
- May 2019: State Water Board releases draft Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS/ND) for public comment
- November 2019: State Water Board's Executive Director adopts final certification and IS/ND
- December 2019: State Water Board receives petitions for reconsideration of certification and related litigation
- December 2020: Executive Director issues Order WQ 2020-0041-EXEC directing staff to conduct AB 52 consultation with California Native American Tribes
- January 2021: State Water Board staff initiate AB 52 consultation with the Winnemem Wintu Tribe
- March 2022: State Water Board issues Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Subsequent Environmental Impact Report
- April 2026: Board issues Draft Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Relicensing (Draft SEIR)

McCloud-Pit Hydroelectric Project Overview

CEQA Process

- State Water Board staff determined, in light of new information learned during tribal consultation, that there may be significant impacts to tribal cultural resources due to Proposed Project activities
- A lead agency prepares a subsequent environmental impact report if it determines that “new information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the...negative declaration was adopted,” shows that the project may cause significant impacts that were not previously identified. (14 CCR § 15162.)
- The Draft SEIR only analyzes impacts relative to the new information

Proposed Project



- The Proposed Project analyzed in the Draft SEIR includes continued operations of the Hydroelectric Project with the following changes:
 - Revised minimum instream flows
 - Recreation facility construction and improvements
 - Implementation of new environmental management plans

Pit 6 Dam
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

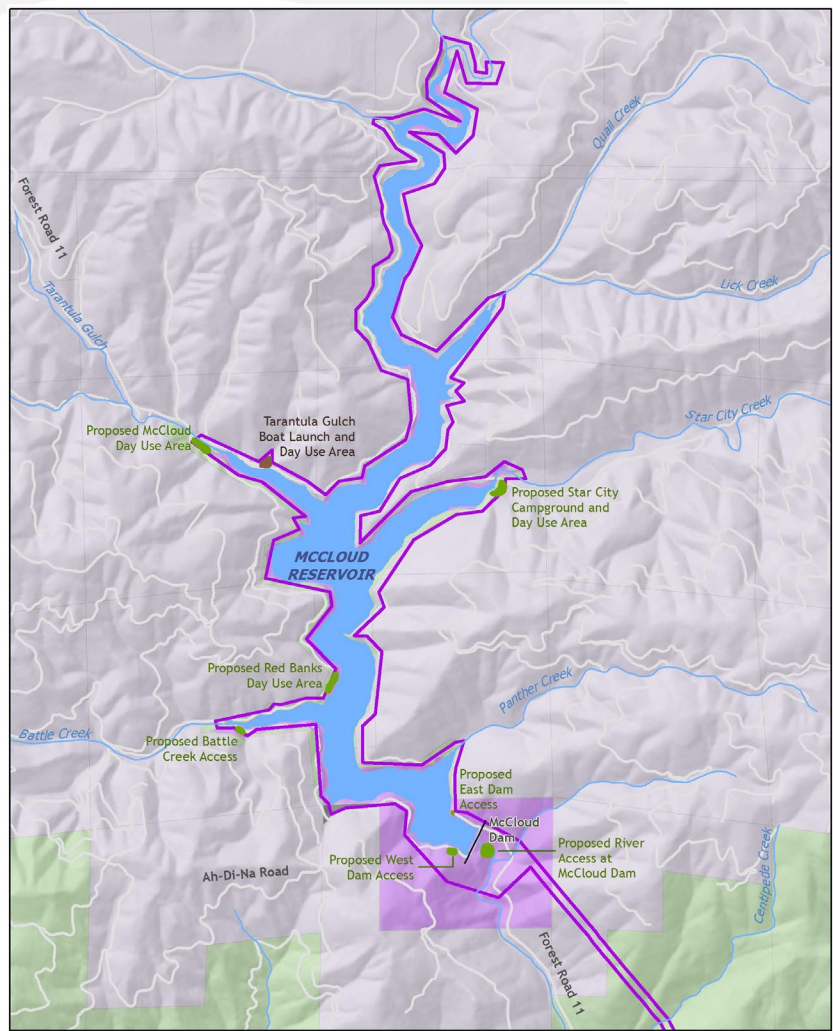


FIGURE 2-2
Recreation Facilities in the Vicinity of McCloud Reservoir

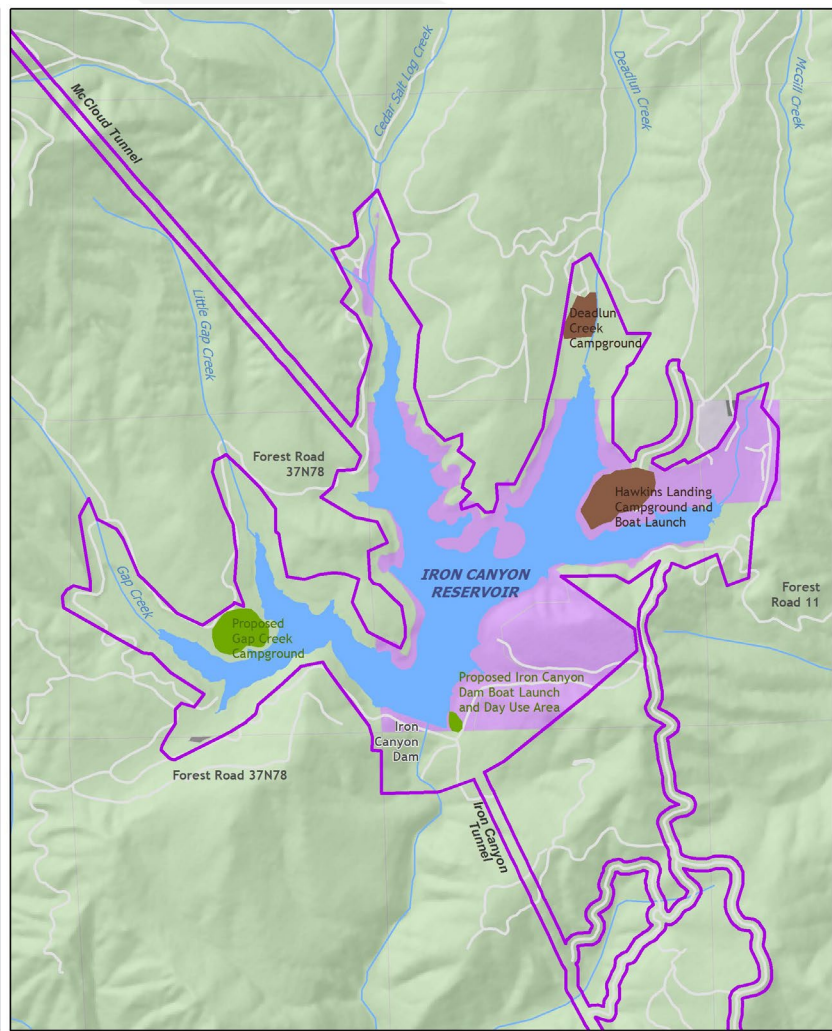


FIGURE 2-3
Recreation Facilities in the Vicinity of Iron Canyon Reservoir

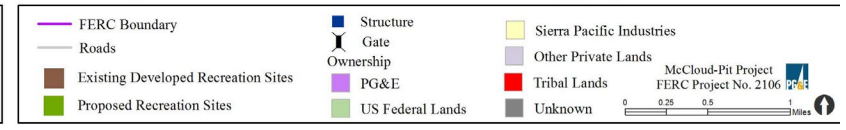
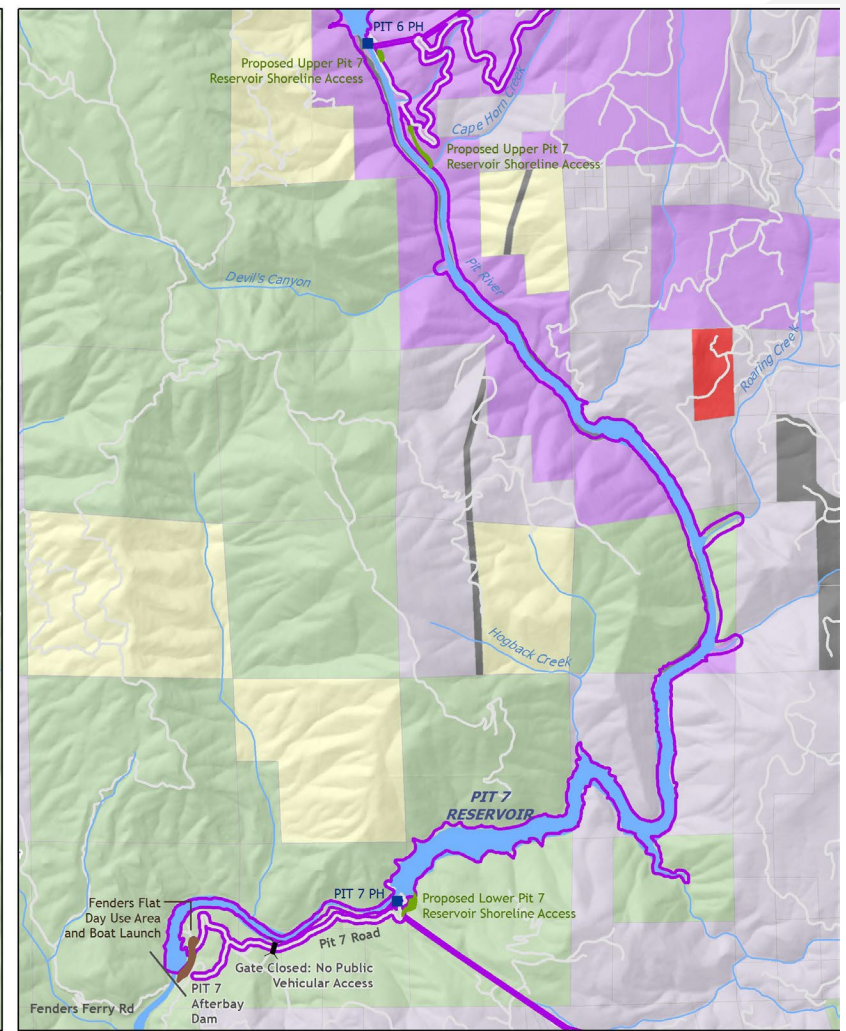


FIGURE 2-4
Recreation Facilities in the Vicinity of Pit 7 Reservoir

Proposed Project

- Aquatic Biological Monitoring Plan
- Coarse Sediment Management Plan
- Historic Properties Management Plan
- Erosion and Sediment Control Management Plan
- Fire and Fuels Management Plan
- Large Woody Debris Plan
- Recreation Development and Management Plan
- Road and Transportation Facility Management Plan
- Sign and Interpretive/Education Plan
- Terrestrial Biological Management Plan
- Vegetation and Invasive Weed Management Plan
- Visual Quality Management Plan
- Water Quality and Water Temperature Monitoring Plan



McCloud Dam and Spillway
Photo courtesy of Stillwater Sciences

Proposed Project CEQA Baseline



- The CEQA baseline is the point or span in time or the set of conditions against which expected future environmental conditions associated with a proposed project are compared
 - Typically, the existing environmental conditions when the NOP is released for a proposed project
- However, a lead agency has the discretion to select a baseline other than the time of the NOP if warranted by the circumstances and supported by substantial evidence
- After the NOP for the SEIR was issued (March 2022), agency partners and the Winnemem Wintu Tribe collaborated to reintroduce winter-run Chinook salmon (via egg incubation) into the McCloud River
- Accordingly, the CEQA baseline used in the Draft SEIR is the environmental conditions as of 2024, which includes winter-run Chinook salmon eggs and fry in McCloud River below McCloud Dam

Agency staff and Winnemem Wintu Tribe members with fertilized winter-run Chinook salmon eggs in hatch trays
Photo courtesy of NMFS staff

Proposed Project CEQA Alternatives

Double Drop Falls, a rapid on McCloud River
Photo courtesy of American Whitewater



No Project Alternative

- Hydroelectric Project operations continue as conditioned by the original FERC license (i.e., business as usual)

Alternative 1 – Whitewater Boater Flows

- Same as the Proposed Project with increased flows below McCloud Dam to support whitewater recreation

Alternative 2 – Salmon Flows below McCloud Dam

- Same as the Proposed Project with increased flows below McCloud Dam from July through September to support salmon spawning

Winnemem Wintu children putting winter-run Chinook salmon eggs into a remote-site incubator
Photo courtesy of USFWS staff (Brandon Honig)



Potentially Significant Impacts

Potentially significant, reduced to less than significant with mitigation

Biological Resources

Hydrology and Water Quality

Tribal Cultural Resources

Significant and unavoidable

Tribal Cultural Resources

Cumulative Impacts – Tribal Cultural Resources



Indian rhubarb (*Darmer peltata*) on McCloud River
Photo courtesy of Schmiebel (Wikimedia Commons)

Public Comment Period Reminders

- Please raise your hand if you would like to provide a comment (you will be called on and unmuted)
- When called upon, please state and spell your name for the court reporter
 - Speak slowly and clearly
- Complete your comments within the timeframe allotted (3-5 minutes)
 - Depending on the number of commenters you may be able to provide additional comments once all parties have been provided an opportunity to speak



McCloud Reservoir
Photo courtesy of Schmiebel (Wikimedia Commons)

Submittal of Written Comments

**Deadline for written comments is
12:00 pm on Friday, May 22, 2026**

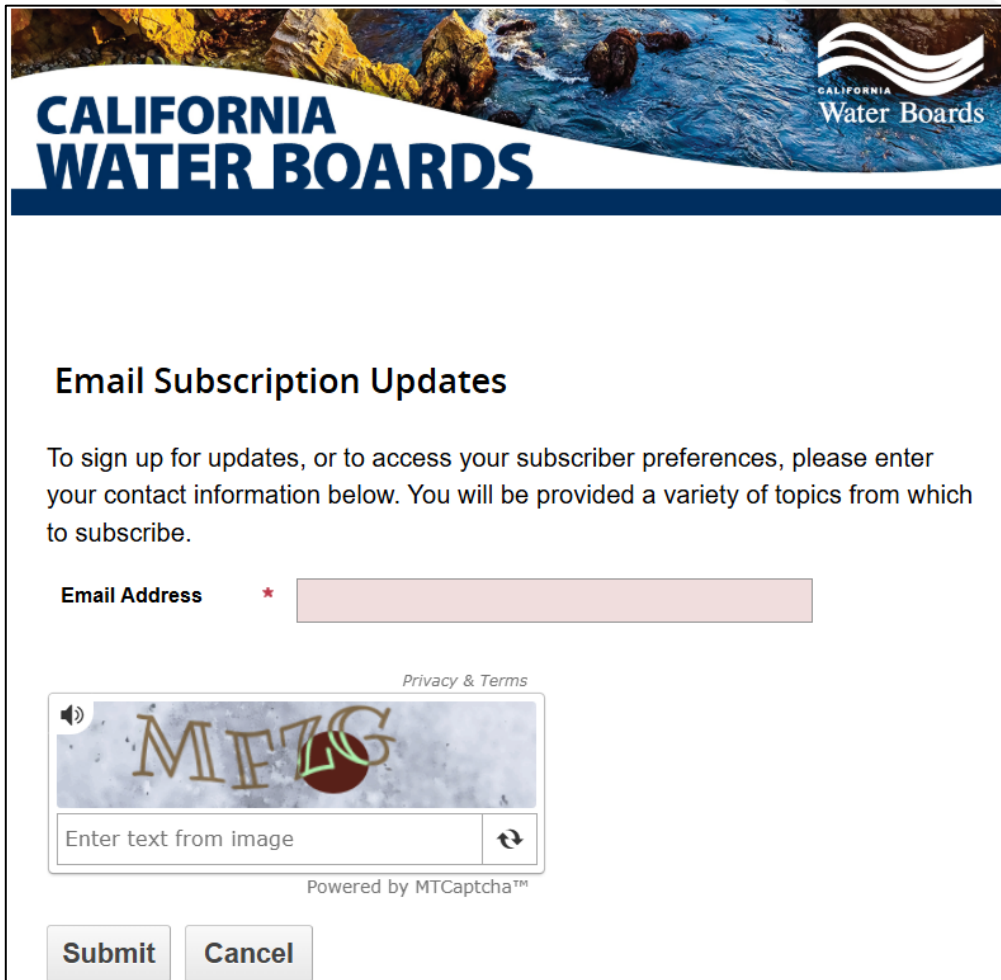
• **Email:**
WR401Program@waterboards.ca.gov

• **Mail:**
Ms. Savannah Downey
State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights – Water Quality
Certification Program
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000



Burney Falls
Photo courtesy of State Water Board staff

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