

PHILBROOK RESERVOIR PLANNING UNIT

Feather River Watershed

Existing Conditions & Uses

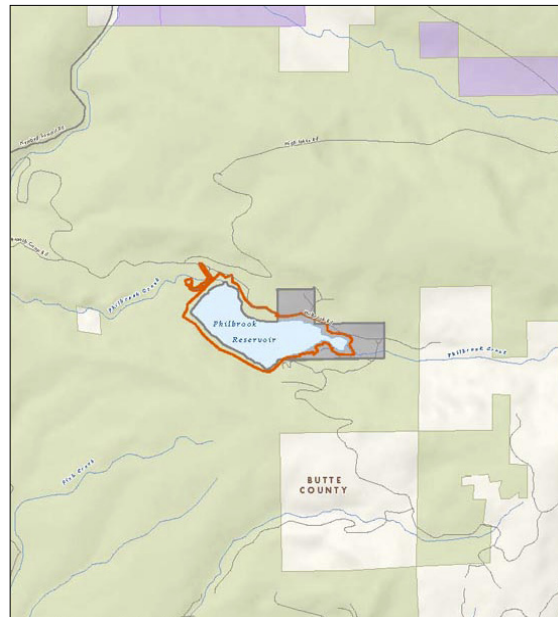
Overview

- Small reservoir in a scenic forested setting with rustic summer cabins and recreation facilities
- 276 acres in Butte County; 94 acres outside and 182 acres inside the FERC boundary (including the reservoir)
- Part of the DeSabra-Centerville Project (FERC #803), currently in relicensing process; License expires in October 2009

Philbrook Reservoir is a small, remote reservoir with camping, day use and angling recreation opportunities. It is located at about 5,600 feet elevation in an area of mixed conifer forest. The planning unit includes the 173-acre reservoir and over 100 acres of adjacent land surrounding the eastern third of the reservoir (see Figure FR-9). Philbrook Reservoir is located about 47 miles northeast of Chico. Driving to the area requires several miles of travel on unpaved roads. Access becomes more difficult in winter, as roads are closed due to deep snow from fall to late spring. However, visitors may reach the area by snowmobile or on foot. Most of the surrounding lands, including the shoreline lands around the



Drawdown area at eastern end of reservoir



Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit
Butte County

western two-thirds of the reservoir, are part of the Lassen National Forest.

The Philbrook Reservoir is one of two storage reservoirs that provide water for the DeSabra-Centerville Hydroelectric Project (FERC #803), filling with snowmelt run-off in the spring and early summer. Drawdown of the reservoir begins in mid-summer and continues at a steady rate through the remainder of the summer recreation season, with the eastern third of the reservoir generally dewatered by late summer. PG&E is currently engaged in a collaborative process for the FERC relicensing of the project, with the participation of USFS, other Federal and State agencies, Native American tribes, and numerous other stakeholders. Following a scoping process through which many issues related to the operation of the project were identified, study plans to address the issues were approved by FERC. More than 40 biological, recreation, and cultural resource studies are in progress, and will provide extensive information about resources and uses at Philbrook Reservoir.

Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit Existing Conditions

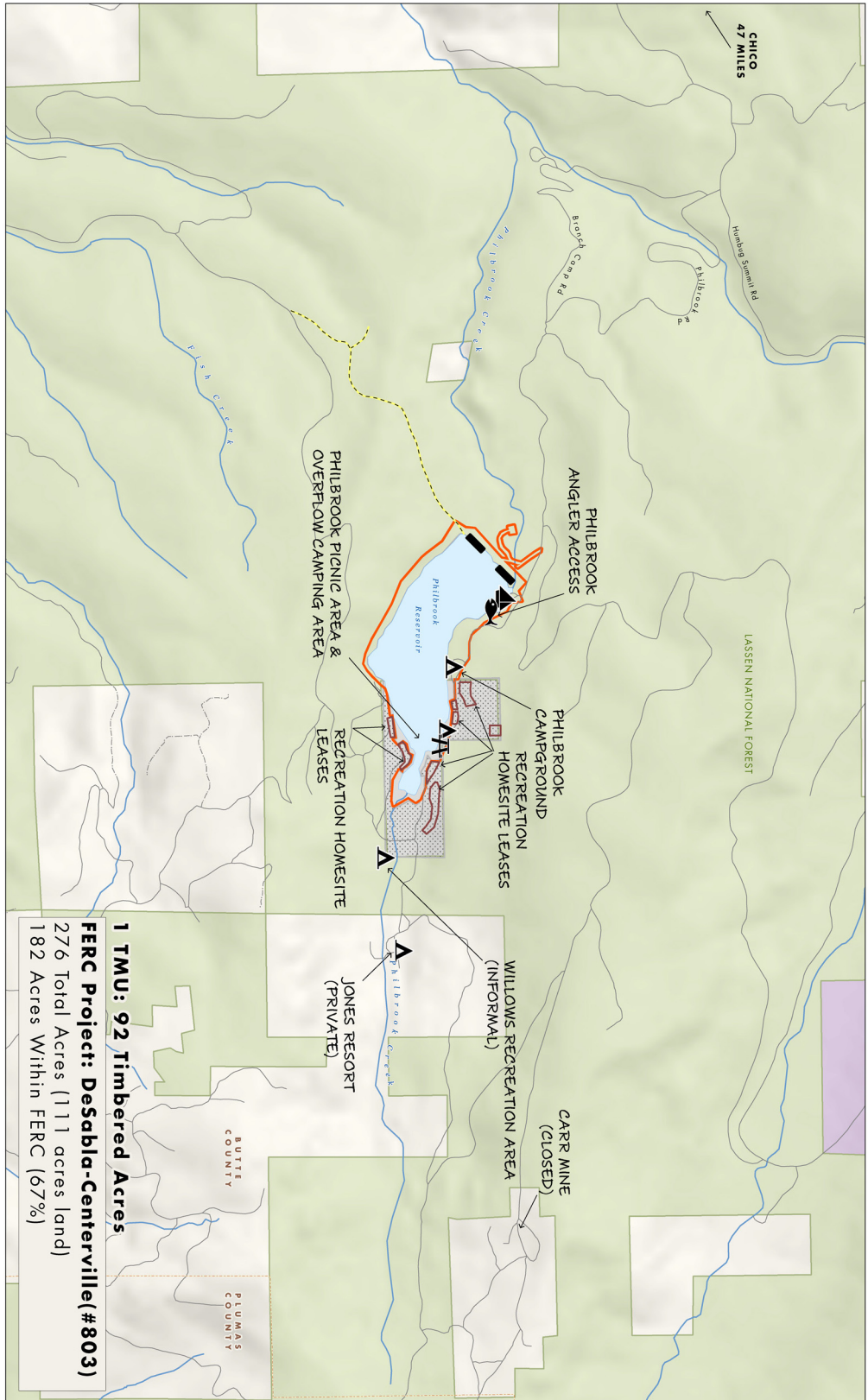
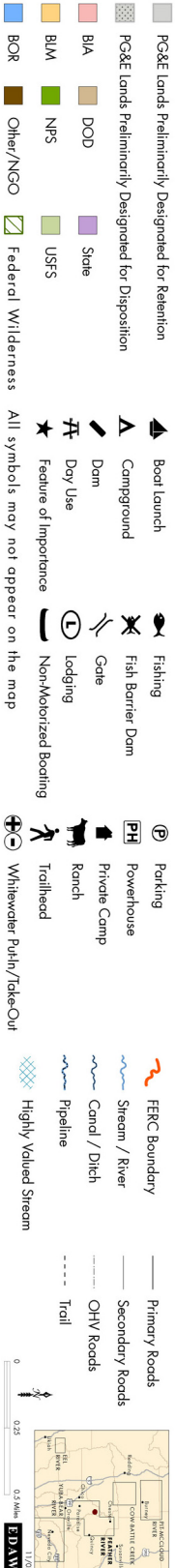


Figure FR-9

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Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

The primary vegetation type around Philbrook Reservoir is Sierran mixed conifer forest, with ponderosa and sugar pine, Douglas-fir, white fir, and incense-cedar the most common tree species. Willow riparian areas are also found on the planning unit, particularly along Philbrook Creek upstream of the reservoir. These vegetation types support a range of wildlife, including various special status species. Even though few special status species have been recorded within the planning unit, USFS and other studies have documented numerous species within a larger area, including: bald eagle, California spotted owl, pine marten, and osprey. Two sensitive plant species, Constance's rock cress and closed-throated beard's tongue, have been reported in the vicinity of the reservoir.

There is concern among some stakeholders regarding the effects of the now-closed Carr Mine, a placer gold mine located two miles northeast of Philbrook Reservoir, and other past mining activities on water quality at the downstream Philbrook Reservoir. A FERC relicensing study will evaluate water quality in the reservoir.

Open Space

Seasonal road access and the remote character of the area have helped maintain the open space value of the reservoir and surrounding forests. The natural viewsheds surrounding Philbrook Reservoir are an important component of the recreation setting enjoyed by visitors to the area.

Outdoor Recreation

Recreation is one of the primary uses of the Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit, providing angling, camping, boating, swimming, and picnicking opportunities. As shown in Figure FR-9, the three developed public recreation facilities — a boat ramp, campground, and day use area — are all located on the north side of

the reservoir. The Philbrook Dam Angler Access provides a small cement and gravel boat ramp, about 20 parking spaces, and a vault toilet. The Philbrook Lake Campground has 20 campsites and averages 65-70% occupancy during summer weekends and holidays. The Philbrook Picnic Area provides picnicking facilities as well as shoreline access for fishing and swimming. The site is heavily used, and PG&E has recently added additional informal parking. The picnic sites also serve as overflow campsites during peak periods. Though all three developed recreation facilities are PG&E-owned and operated, with day-to-day site management performed by a concessionaire, most of the fishing access and the campground are on USFS land. Additional recreation resources in the area include the "Willows," located on National Forest lands just east of the reservoir alongside Philbrook Creek, an unimproved area used for dispersed camping, mostly by OHV users; and the former Jones Resort, one-half mile east of the reservoir, a private campground with showers, cabins, and a store.¹

Much of the PG&E-owned portion of the shoreline and upland is occupied by private summer cabins on 44 recreational homesite leases. Many of these structures date back to the 1950s, when PG&E granted leases for



Creative directional signs to family cabins

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OHVs at Philbrook Campground

recreational homesites, continuing an historic tradition of settlers and miners building cabins in the area. They have been occupied by the same families for generations and are highly valued by the leaseholders. The cabins are not connected to electric or water services and occupants are required to maintain their property and avoid impacts on the natural environment, as well as participate in fuels management, road maintenance, and garbage removal. Most cabins situated on the shoreline are outfitted with fixed wooden docks, some with floating docks or swim platforms attached, providing direct access to the reservoir when the water level is high. PG&E has issued 20 dock permits. The general public is permitted to use all shoreline areas.

The reservoir supports large and smallmouth bass, channel catfish, and brown, rainbow, and eastern brook trout species. DFG stocks trout annually. With the large summer drawdown of the reservoir, the shoreline of the remaining pool becomes distant from the fishing access, campground, and picnic area. Some lower portions of the exposed lakebed are muddy, but upper portions, particularly on the upstream third of the lake, develop some grass cover while exposed and remain attractive for recreation use. Boat-access is dependent on water levels and associated access via the boat ramp.²

OHV use is popular in the area and many campers bring their OHVs to Philbrook Reservoir. Some stakeholders have reported conflicts with OHV users riding too fast on area

roads. The sound of the vehicles also carries very well across the small reservoir, creating additional potential for conflicts between OHV users and other visitors. During a site visit, trails created by OHVs and signs of unauthorized riding in closed areas and in the Philbrook Creek channel on the planning unit and adjacent USFS lands were observed, as were impacts such as vegetation loss, soil compaction, and severe dust.

Recreation use at Philbrook Reservoir is expected to increase considerably when Butte County completes paving of Skyway Road from Inskip to Butte Meadows, which is scheduled to be completed during the next 2-3 years. The road improvement will reduce, by about half, the number of unpaved road miles that most visitors would need to travel to get to Philbrook Reservoir.

Forest Resources

Forest management within the planning unit and on surrounding Federal lands is mostly focused on the aesthetic viewshed value of the timberland, and on protecting developed areas from fire. Nearly 90 acres of timbered land in the planning unit is included in a PG&E Timber Management Unit (TMU) managed under a Salvage/Stand Improvement prescription under which the lands are primarily managed to reduce fuel loads and improve public safety and forest aesthetics. The risk of wildfire is recognized as an important issue at Philbrook Reservoir due to the presence of the cabins and public recreation facilities.

Agricultural Uses

Grazing has been practiced seasonally in the area, though grazing does not currently occur within the planning unit. There are USFS grazing allotments north and east of the reservoir, but these allotments do not include lands adjacent to the planning unit.

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Historic Resources

There are no well-documented cultural resource sites at Philbrook Reservoir or in its vicinity. However, only a small percentage of the DeSabra-Centerville FERC Project area has been surveyed. Local Native American groups have indicated that there may be traditional plant gathering locations in the vicinity of the project. Relicensing studies will address cultural resources, including Traditional Cultural Properties.



Exposed drawdown zone & dry boat dock

Stewardship Council Recommendations

The Stewardship Council recommends that the land and land uses at the Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit be preserved and enhanced by focusing on its habitat values, natural setting, and recreation opportunities. In presenting the Recommended Concept provided here, our objective is to preserve the habitat resources and recreation setting provided by the lake and surrounding forest, while accommodating an increase in recreation demand, where appropriate. We recommend this effort to be conducted in close coordination with the USFS, PG&E, cabin owners, and FERC relicensing efforts for the area.

Objective: Preserve biological and cultural resources, while enhancing public access and recreation opportunities.

As shown on Table FR-5, the Stewardship Council has identified a number of preservation and/or enhancement measures that may contribute to the conservation management program for the Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit. Additional detail and background regarding these potential measures can be found in the Supporting Analysis for Recommendations, provided under separate cover. These measures are intended to be illustrative in nature, not prescriptive, and will be amended, deleted, or augmented over time in coordination with future land owners and managers to best meet the objective for this planning unit.



Willow riparian area & drawdown area

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Objective: Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.

Philbrook Reservoir is surrounded by forest and riparian vegetation, potentially providing habitat for rare plants and special status species such as the bald eagle, California spotted owl, pine marten, and osprey. In order to preserve and enhance the habitat and resources found here, as well as the recreational experience that is interconnected with this natural environment,

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the Stewardship Council recommends that baseline studies and plans be developed to gain a clear understanding of the resources (particularly outside the relicensing study area where little information is currently available or will be provided by relicensing studies) and ensure their protection. The Stewardship Council also recommends closing unauthorized OHV trails and revegetating affected areas, where necessary. Closure and revegetation efforts should be coordinated with the USFS, as OHV trails cross both PG&E and National Forest lands, and with relicensing efforts.

Open Space

Objective: Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, viewsheds, and the recreation setting.

This concept would preserve open space by limiting new construction to minor additions of recreation facilities, as well as through permanent conservation easements. Conservation easements would describe all prohibited uses to maintain open space values, including the level of uses allowed and the requirement to maintain scenic qualities.



Philbrook Dam Angler Access boat ramp

Outdoor Recreation

Objective: Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional education and recreation opportunities.

Philbrook Reservoir is an increasingly popular seasonal destination providing camping, day use, boating, and angling recreation opportunities. As shown in Figure FR-10, the Stewardship Council looks to enhance these opportunities by recommending a few small recreation enhancements to increase public enjoyment of the Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit. We recommend enhancements focused on providing enhanced angler and boating access, and interpretive materials which would provide visitors with a greater sense of the natural and cultural resource values of the reservoir area. Coordination of these enhancements with relicensing efforts is recommended.

More substantial recreation facility enhancements may be desired in the future to respond to the expected large increase in recreation activity in the area following the paving of the upper Skyway Road. However, an assessment is needed of how and to what degree this demand can be accommodated at Philbrook Reservoir. The small size of the reservoir, the large summer drawdown, the presence of private summer cabins in several areas, and the lack of road access and steep terrain on the south shore all limit the capacity of Philbrook Reservoir to support additional recreation use.³ Relicensing studies are expected to provide needed information and propose appropriate enhancements to meet increased demand.

Sustainable Forestry

Objective: Develop and implement forestry practices in order to contribute to a sustainable forest, preserve and enhance habitat, as well as to ensure appropriate fuel load and fire management.

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Due to the presence of recreation and cabin developments at Philbrook Reservoir, fuels and fire management are important. The Stewardship Council recommends that future care and management of the land include developing a long-term vision for fuels management, and management and response to fires. The fuels management and fire management and response plans should be developed in conjunction with any forthcoming plans developed as part of FERC relicensing. We expect that all of these plans would be developed in coordination with adjacent landowners, cabin owners, and USFS management and practices as appropriate.



Trails created by unauthorized OHV use

Preservation of Historic Values

Objective: Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.

Cultural resources are not well documented in this planning unit, even though the area has a settlement and mining history and may have cultural sites of traditional value to Native Americans. The Stewardship Council aims to support an increased understanding of these resources and ensure they are appropriately protected. To meet this objective, we recommend that cultural resource studies be conducted to understand the resources found at Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit (particularly outside the FERC cultural resource study area where less information is available or will be provided by

relicensing studies), that appropriate management measures be developed and implemented, and that opportunities to support public education regarding cultural resources be considered. Throughout this effort, the Stewardship Council recommends close coordination with Native American entities. Development of the cultural resource protection measures should be consistent with any relevant plans developed as part of FERC relicensing.

Endnotes

- ¹ The private resort was recently sold; plans for future operation are not known.
- ² The gravel portion of the boat ramp at the fishing access extends only through the upper part of the drawdown zone; therefore, boats are launched from a lower dirt portion of the ramp or the exposed lake bottom at lower pool levels.
- ³ The planning unit lands in particular appear to offer few opportunities for additional recreation development. Nevertheless, opportunities to meet expected increased recreation demand may exist at currently developed sites or adjacent lands near the north shore. Recreation studies currently being conducted for FERC relicensing, such as the Recreation Demand and Recreation Carrying Capacity and Suitability studies, are expected to provide the information needed. The Recreation Needs Assessment study is expected to propose appropriate recreation enhancements to meet the increased demand.



PG&E DeSabra-Centerville project signage

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Table FR-5 Objectives to Preserve and/or Enhance – Recommended Concept

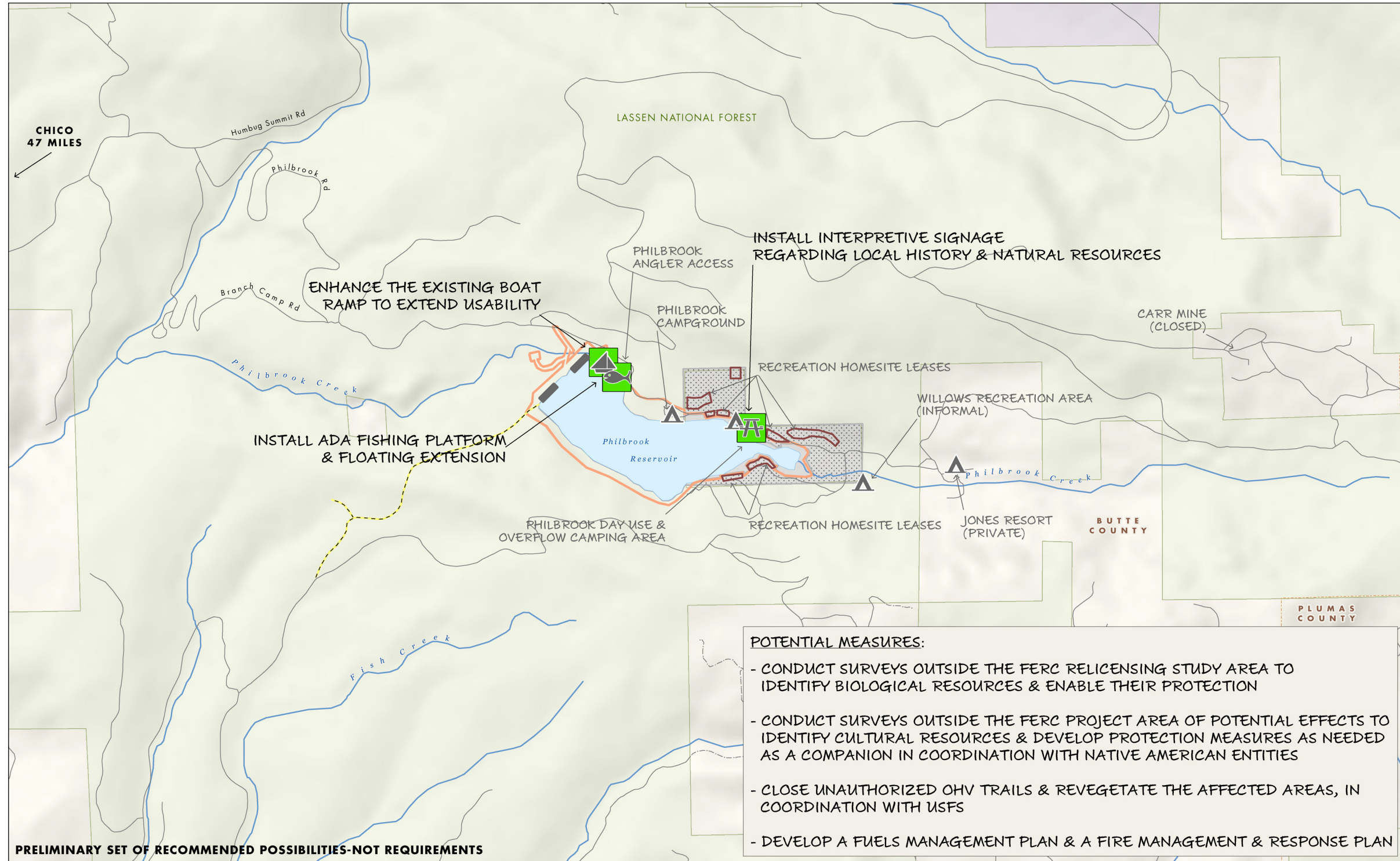
Planning Unit Objective: Preserve biological and cultural resources, while enhancing public access and recreation opportunities.		
Beneficial Public Value	Objective	Potential Measures to Preserve and/or Enhance BPVs – Not Requirements*
Protection of the Natural Habitat of Fish, Wildlife, and Plants	Preserve and enhance habitat in order to protect special biological resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys outside the FERC relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection. • Close unauthorized OHV trails and revegetate affected areas, in coordination with the USFS where necessary.
Preservation of Open Space	Preserve open space in order to protect natural and cultural resources, viewsheds, and the recreation setting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.
Outdoor Recreation by the General Public	Enhance recreational facilities in order to provide additional education and recreation opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install an ADA fishing platform and floating extension to Philbrook Angler Access in coordination with the USFS.** • Enhance the existing boat ramp to extend usability.** • Install interpretive signage regarding local history and natural resources.**
Sustainable Forestry	Develop and implement forestry practices in order to contribute to a sustainable forest, preserve and enhance habitat, as well as to ensure appropriate fuel load and fire management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit in coordination with adjacent landowners to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard. • Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit in coordination with adjacent landowners to ensure fire preparedness.
Agricultural Uses		None proposed.
Preservation of Historic Values	Identify and manage cultural resources in order to ensure their protection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys outside the FERC Project APE to identify cultural resources and develop protection measures as needed as a companion any future FERC-required final HPMP in coordination with Native American entities.

* This is a set of recommended possibilities for the preservation and enhancement of BPV's, and is not intended to be a set of requirements for future land management.

** Denotes site specific measure.

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Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit
Recommended Concept



- POTENTIAL MEASURES:**
- CONDUCT SURVEYS OUTSIDE THE FERC RELICENSING STUDY AREA TO IDENTIFY BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES & ENABLE THEIR PROTECTION
 - CONDUCT SURVEYS OUTSIDE THE FERC PROJECT AREA OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS TO IDENTIFY CULTURAL RESOURCES & DEVELOP PROTECTION MEASURES AS NEEDED AS A COMPANION IN COORDINATION WITH NATIVE AMERICAN ENTITIES
 - CLOSE UNAUTHORIZED OHV TRAILS & REVEGETATE THE AFFECTED AREAS, IN COORDINATION WITH USFS
 - DEVELOP A FUELS MANAGEMENT PLAN & A FIRE MANAGEMENT & RESPONSE PLAN

PRELIMINARY SET OF RECOMMENDED POSSIBILITIES-NOT REQUIREMENTS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Retention PG&E Lands Preliminarily Designated for Disposition BIA BLM BOR DOD NPS Other/NGO State USFS Federal Wilderness 	<p>Concept Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify Existing Feature New Feature Trail 	<p>Existing Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat Launch Campground Dam Day Use Feature of Importance Fishing Fish Barrier Dam Gate Lodging Non-Motorized Boating Parking Powerhouse Private Camp Ranch Trailhead Whitewater Put-In/Take-Out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FERC Boundary Stream / River Canal / Ditch Pipeline Highly Valued Stream Primary Roads Secondary Roads OHV Roads Trail
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All symbols may not appear on the map



Figure FR-10

Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit

Recommended measures would be coordinated with the current relicensing effort to ensure consistency with ongoing studies and subsequent actions to avoid a duplication of efforts. Surveys are intended to augment the geographic reach of the studies being performed as part of the relicensing process. Revisions to the recommended measures should be conducted consistent with future findings of the relicensing studies and in compliance with the New FERC License Order.

Fish, Plant, and Wildlife Habitat

Potential Measure:

- *Conduct surveys outside the FERC relicensing study area to identify biological resources and enable their protection.*

Although some occurrences of special status species have been documented, the Stewardship Council recommends conducting surveys of biological resources on planning unit lands outside the relicensing study area to determine the locations and distribution of these important species. This measure would complement the study planned for the relicensing process, which will survey the FERC Project area and within a 200-foot buffer. Additionally, an assessment of noxious weeds would be conducted on planning unit lands outside the relicensing study area to identify and map noxious weed populations. If necessary, control measures and a management plan would be developed to promote habitat values and limit noxious weed populations.

Potential Measure:

- *Close unauthorized OHV trails and revegetate affected areas, in coordination with the USFS where necessary.*

To minimize resource impacts and to foster consistency with adjacent USFS management of OHV routes on their lands, it is recommended that unauthorized OHV trails be closed within the planning unit. Vehicles would be restricted to established roads, and damaged areas would be revegetated. Unauthorized OHV use has been a minor issue in the planning unit, and measures would be taken to further control unauthorized uses through the use of gates, boulders, or other barriers. These closure and revegetation efforts would be coordinated with the USFS as OHV trails cross both PG&E and National Forest lands.

Outdoor Recreation

Potential Measure:

- *Install an ADA fishing platform and floating extension to Philbrook Angler Access in coordination with the USFS.*

Only a few small recreation enhancements are recommended to increase public enjoyment of the Philbrook Reservoir Planning Unit. Two of these are recommended for the Philbrook Fishing Access. First is the addition of an ADA fishing platform that would provide improved angling opportunities. At present, visitors without a boat are limited to shoreline fishing, which is not accessible to disabled visitors and is diminished for all visitors by the muddy shoreline when the reservoir is drawn down. Although the reservoir drawdown would make such a platform unusable at lower pool elevations, a sufficiently long floating dock extension to the platform

would permit it to be functional for a substantial portion of the summer season. The floating dock would most likely not meet ADA accessibility standards due to the steepness of the shoreline and the ramp that would be required to join the platform and dock.

This addition would require coordination with the USFS since a portion of the structure would be on the shore above the high water line, on USFS land. Alternatively, the platform and floating dock could be installed in the campground area or the Philbrook Picnic Area. However, the shoreline at those sites appears to be affected more severely by reservoir drawdown than at the fishing access, and the exposed shoreline appears to be less muddy.

Potential Measures:

- *Enhance the existing boat ramp to extend usability.*
- *Install interpretive signage regarding local history and natural resources.*

The second recommended recreation enhancement is an extension of the existing boat ramp, with gravel or cement, to extend the usability of the ramp to later in the summer drawdown period and reduce the need for boaters to launch from the unimproved lake bottom below the existing gravel portion of the ramp. The third recommended addition is installation of interpretive signage, little of which exists at present, at the Philbrook Picnic Area to provide visitors with a greater sense of the purpose of the reservoir, and the cultural and natural resource values of the Philbrook Reservoir area. It may be necessary to provide a protective covering for the signage during the off-season (fall through spring) to protect the signs from vandalism, which is known to occur during that period.

More substantial recreation enhancements may be desired in the future to respond to the expected large increase in recreation activity in the area following the paving of the upper Skyway Road. However, an assessment is needed of how and to what degree this demand can be accommodated at Philbrook Reservoir. The small size of the reservoir, the large summer drawdown, the presence of private summer cabins in several areas, and the lack of road access and steep terrain on the south shore all limit the capacity of Philbrook Reservoir to support additional recreation use. The planning unit lands in particular appear to offer few opportunities for additional recreation development. Nevertheless, opportunities to meet expected increased recreation demand may exist at currently developed sites or adjacent lands near the north shore. Recreation studies currently being conducted for FERC relicensing, such as the Recreation Demand and Recreation Carrying Capacity and Suitability studies, are expected to provide the information needed. The Recreation Needs Assessment study is expected to propose appropriate recreation enhancements to meet the increased demand.

Stakeholders have proposed a trail around the south shore of the reservoir, which would help distribute use and expand access to that portion of the reservoir shore. However, the lands above the high water line in that area are USFS lands outside the planning unit, and therefore actions on those lands cannot be recommended by the Stewardship Council. However, such enhancements may be developed through the FERC relicensing process, which the Lassen National Forest is a participant, along with PG&E and other stakeholders.

Preservation of Historic Values

Potential Measure:

- *Conduct surveys outside the FERC Project APE to identify cultural resources and develop protection measures as needed as a companion any future FERC-required final HPMP in coordination with Native American entities.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends a survey of cultural resources (historic, prehistoric, and ethnographic) on lands outside the FERC Area of Potential Effects (APE). These surveys would complement the surveys conducted for relicensing, which did not include all areas of the planning unit. These surveys would identify cultural resources in the area and aid in the determination of appropriate locations for recreation activities. Measures to protect any cultural resources found on the planning unit outside the APE would be developed as a companion any future FERC license required final historic properties management plan (HPMP). As mentioned above, interpretive signage would be installed to inform recreationists of the rich history of the area, as well as natural resource values. Documentation of cultural resources and development of cultural resource protection measures and interpretive signage should be coordinated with Native American entities.

Sustainable Forestry

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fuels management plan for the planning unit in coordination with adjacent landowners to ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard.*

The Stewardship Council also recommends developing a fuels management plan. The fuels management plan would ensure long-term forest health and reduce fuel loading and fire hazard throughout the planning unit, a particularly important need due to the large number of recreation homesites in the planning unit area. A fuels management plan would aid in the prevention of high intensity fires, promote natural forest structure and composition, as well as foster natural regeneration in these forests. Additionally, snags and downed woody debris would be maintained in the planning unit for wildlife habitat and forest regeneration when not deemed a safety, fire, or disease hazard. Coordination with USFS management and adjacent landowners would foster a holistic approach to management of forest, habitat, and recreation resources in this area. The fuels management plan should be consistent with any relevant future FERC license required plan.

Potential Measure:

- *Develop a fire management and response plan for the planning unit in coordination with adjacent landowners to ensure fire preparedness.*

In addition to a fuels management plan, a fire management and response plan would be developed to ensure fire preparedness in the planning unit. The fire management and response plan would include fire prevention measures designed to promote public awareness about fire danger and provide the provisions and staff for an appropriate response to fire. This plan would be developed in coordination any relevant FERC license required plan.

Open Space

Potential Measure:

- *Apply permanent conservation easements to ensure a higher level of open space protection.*

Additionally, the Stewardship Council recommends preserving open space values through permanent conservation easements. Conservation easements would describe all prohibited uses to maintain open space values, including the level of uses allowed. Recommendations include only minor recreation development and are therefore not expected to decrease the scenic quality of the viewsheds.

Agricultural Uses

None recommended.