



AESTHETIC RESOURCES SUMMARY

**Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage Power Project
(FERC No. 2685)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUMMARY	1
Project Visibility from NYSDEC Policy Aesthetic Resource Locations	2
Project Visibility from Additional Public Access Areas	3
Figure 1. Aesthetic Resources within a 5-mile Radius of Blenheim-Gilboa Project Boundary	4
Figure 2. Project Photo Point Reference Map	5
APPENDIX A	6
Photo 1: Upper Reservoir from Leonard Hill State Forest	7
Photo 2: View of Lower Reservoir and Dam from Mine Kill State Park boat ramp	7
Photo 3: View of NYPA operations’ buildings from Mine Kill State Park boat ramp	8
Photo 4: Lower Reservoir from Mine Kill State Park “yellow” trail	8
Photo 5: Lower Reservoir from Long Path (west shore	9
Photo 6: Lower Reservoir from Mine Kill State Park mid-level observation area	9
Photo 7: Lower Reservoir from intersection of Rt. 43 and Burnt Hill Rd	10
Photo 9: Lower Reservoir from Visitors Center overlook	11
Photo 10: Below Lower Dam, west bank by angler parking area	11
Photo 11: Below Lower Dam, upstream view from end of angler access road	12
Photo 12: Below Lower Dam, view of east bank from end of angler access road	12
Photo 13: Below Lower Dam, downstream view from end of angler access road	13
Photo 14: View north from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road	13
Photo 15: View west from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road	14
Photo 16: View east from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road	14
Photo 17: View west across Upper Reservoir from boat access site	15
Photo 18: Upper Dike from Mower Road	15

AESTHETIC RESOURCES SUMMARY

SUMMARY

TRC conducted an aesthetic resources field assessment in conjunction with recreation resources and land management field analyses of the Blenheim-Gilboa (B-G) Project (Project) from June 1 to June 4, 2012. This field work and previous data collection was conducted in order to develop adequate resource-specific data for a Pre-Application Document (PAD) to support the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing efforts for the B-G Project. The purpose of the PAD is to provide detailed information about a project at the beginning of the relicensing process to help focus participants on key issues.

Prior to the field visit, Project-related information was reviewed; however, information found was dated and/or not specific to the Project. An internet search for other sources also yielded very little information regarding the aesthetic resources of the Project area.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (NYSDEC) "Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts" Program Policy (7-31-00) and the U. S. Forest Service's "Landscape Aesthetic, A Handbook for Scenery Management" (Agriculture Handbook Number 701, December 1995) were reviewed for guidance in assessing the Project's resources. The NYSDEC policy contains a generic listing of all aesthetic resources of statewide significance and serves as a template for the assessment of aesthetic issues of state concern. The policy also recommends an "impact area" with a five-mile radius be used in analyzing resource impacts. Although the policy focuses on providing guidance for evaluating visual and aesthetic impacts generated from proposed new projects, TRC adopted the policy's defined aesthetic resources of statewide significance and the five-mile radius area for its resource assessment for the B-G Project.

The NYSDEC policy list of aesthetic resources of statewide significance includes:

1. Properties on or eligible for inclusion in the National or State Register of Historic Places;
2. State Parks;
3. Urban Cultural Parks;
4. State Forest Preserves;
5. National Wildlife Refuges;
6. National Natural Landmarks;
7. National Park System, Recreation Areas, Seashores, Forests;
8. Rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational;
9. Sites, areas, lakes, reservoirs, or highways designated or eligible for designation as scenic;
10. Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance;
11. State or federally-designated trails, or trails proposed for designation;
12. Adirondack Park Scenic Vistas;
13. State Nature and Historic Preserve Areas;
14. Palisades Park; and
15. Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptional Scenic Beauty or Open Space category.

TRC generated a Project-area map with a five-mile radius demarcated around the FERC Project Boundary ([Figure 1](#)). Research was done for each of the above-listed aesthetic resources to

AESTHETIC RESOURCES SUMMARY

determine if any were within 5 miles of the Project. The following NYSDEC policy aesthetic resources were found to be within a five-mile radius of the Project:

- National or State Register of Historic Places
- Forks in the Road Schoolhouse
 - South Gilboa Railroad Station
 - North Blenheim Historic District
 - Blenheim Covered Bridge¹
 - Lansing Manor
- State Parks
 - Mine Kill State Park
- State Forest Preserves
 - Several State Forests
- State-designated trail
 - Catskill Scenic Trail

Each resource was visited to determine whether any Project land, waters or features could be viewed from the resource.

Project Visibility from NYSDEC Policy Aesthetic Resource Locations

Lansing Manor, a 19th-century country home that was restored by the Power Authority, is located on Project lands and provides views of the Project. Views from the Manor include the Visitors Center and grounds, Brown Mountain, and limited views of the Lower Reservoir. There are no views of the Project from any of the other Historic Places or the Catskill Scenic Trail due to the distance of the resource from the Project, intervening terrain, and/or vegetation. Five State Forests (Burnt Rossman Hills SF, Blenheim Hill SF, Keyserkill SF, Leonard Hill SF, and a small unit (name unknown) on the west side of the Project) were examined by driving the public roads and reasonably accessible management roads that extended through the State Forests. Only one unit, the Leonard Hill SF located approximately 2.6 miles east of the Upper Reservoir, provided a limited distant view of a portion of the reservoir (Photo 1).

Mine Kill State Park, is a Project recreation facility, within the Project Boundary and owned by NYPA. It is operated under agreement with New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) as a state park. It is located on the west shore of the Lower Reservoir and within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project boundary, provides several views of the Project's facilities. Views of the Lower Reservoir, dam, powerhouse, substation, and transmission lines can be seen from various locations within the Park including from the boat ramp (Photos 2 - 3), several shoreline trails and access points (Photo 4), the Long Path (Photo 5), and from the Park's "mid-level" observation area (Photo 6). The height of land, Brown Mountain, where the Upper Reservoir is located can also be seen from some of these points. The Project powerhouse area is very visible from these viewpoints due to the close proximity (1/4 mile or less) of the developed area, the relative openness of the west shoreline, and the nature of the developed area.

¹ Blenheim Covered Bridge was destroyed by flooding from Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011, but is still listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

AESTHETIC RESOURCES SUMMARY

Project Visibility from Additional Public Access Areas

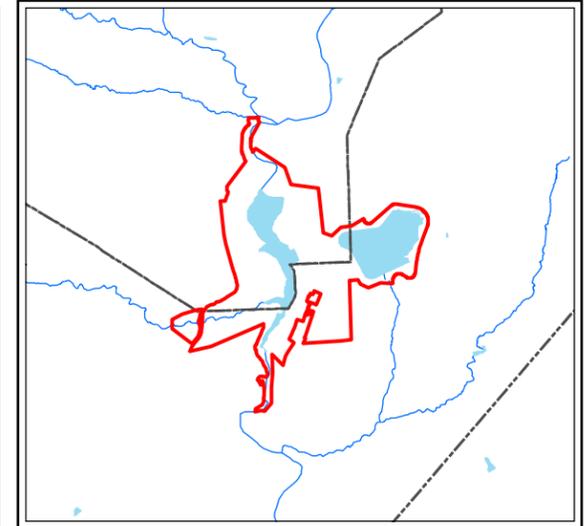
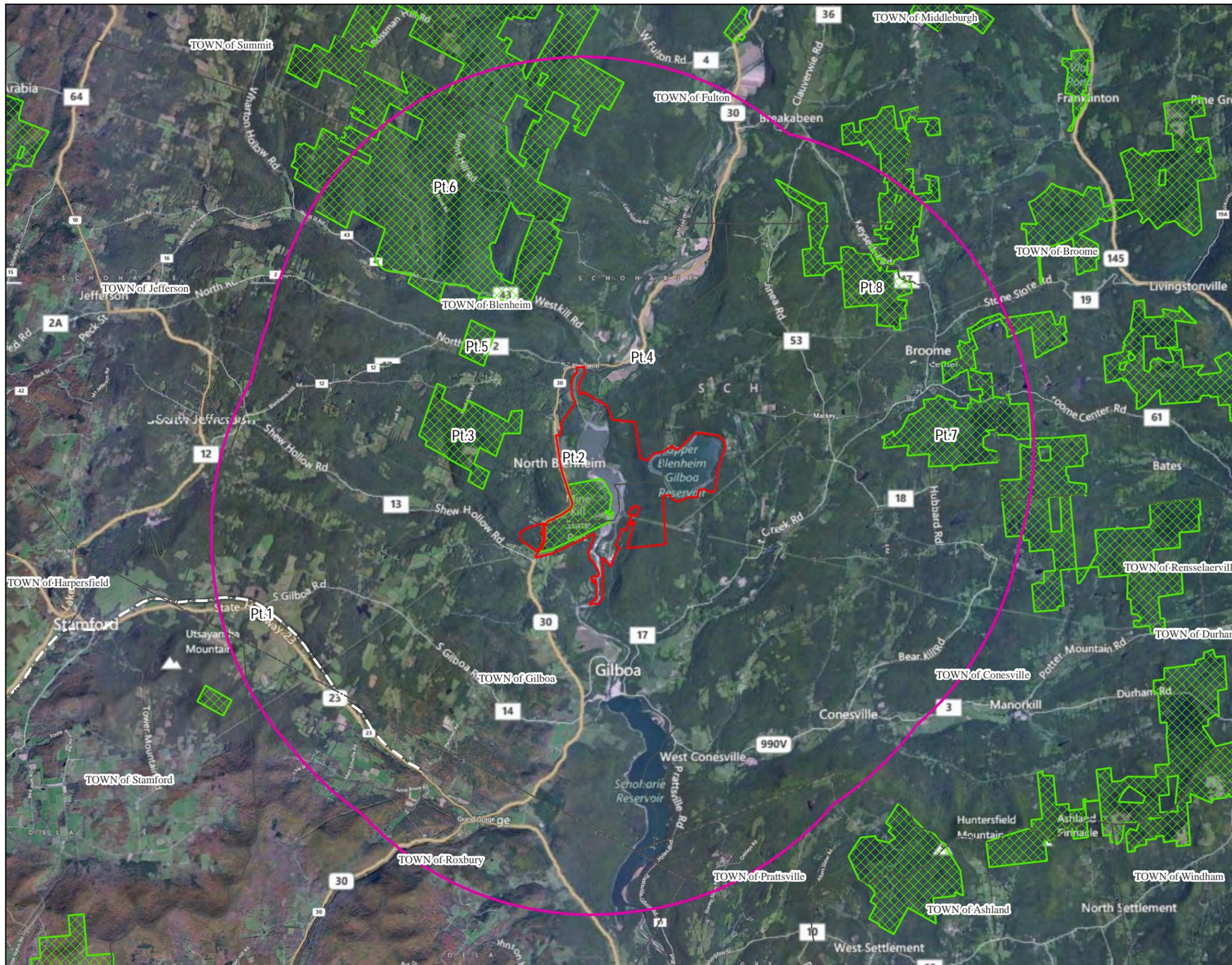
Other public access areas and points were also field checked to assess potential viewshed and impacts. These included views from public roads and other access points to the Project.

Views of the Lower Reservoir exist from public roads on the west side of the Project from Route 30 near the Visitors Center and Route 43 near the intersection of Burnt Hill Road (Photo 7). Both views are very limited in scope due to a narrow viewshed, travel speed along the road (Route 30) and distance from the Project (Route 43 – approximately 1.3 miles). Views from public roads on the west shore occur at two points on Valenti Road: one near the plant’s south entrance (view of maintenance and office buildings) and a limited view of the impoundment where the road crosses a transmission line corridor south (Photo 8) of the Project substation.

Various portions of the Project can also be viewed from many of the Project recreational facilities and access points, in addition to Mine Kill State Park. The Visitors Center and Lansing Manor, located on the west side of the Lower Reservoir, include a large lawn/open area with a limited view of the northerly portion of the reservoir (Photo 9). The New York Power Authority provides a parking area and angler access downstream on the west shore and within view of the Lower Dam. The access road to this site extends approximately 0.35 mile from the Power Plant Access Road and roughly parallels Schoharie Creek with limited views of the creek (Photos 10 – 13). This section of shoreline can be easily walked and viewed, depending on flows from the dam.

Three Project recreation sites off Mower Road provide public access and viewing of the Upper Reservoir. Two of these are foot-access sites that utilize the maintenance road along the top of the reservoir berm for angler access (Photos 14 – 16). Views of the Lower Reservoir can be had from the westerly side of the maintenance road. A small boat launch area located between the two foot access sites also provides access and views of the Upper Reservoir (Photo 17). In addition, a view of the Upper Reservoir berm exists from Mower Road on the north side of the impoundment (Photo 18).

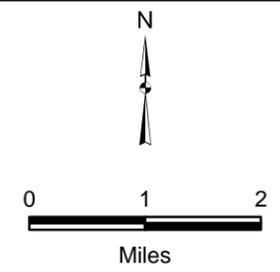
Appendix A includes photos referenced in the above text. The photos are of the Project taken from various public access points ([Figure 2](#)).



Legend

- City/Town
- B-G FERC Project Boundary
- 5 Mile Project Buffer
- Catskill Scenic Trail
- State Forest

Pt. 1 Forks in the Road Schoolhouse & South Gilboa Railroad Station
 Pt. 2 Lansing Manor
 Pt. 3 Blenheim Hill State Forest
 Pt. 4 North Blenheim Historic District & Blenheim Covered Bridge
 Pt. 5 Unnamed State Forest
 Pt. 6 Burnt Rossman Hills State Forest
 Pt. 7 Leonard Hill State Forest
 Pt. 8 Keyserkill State Forest

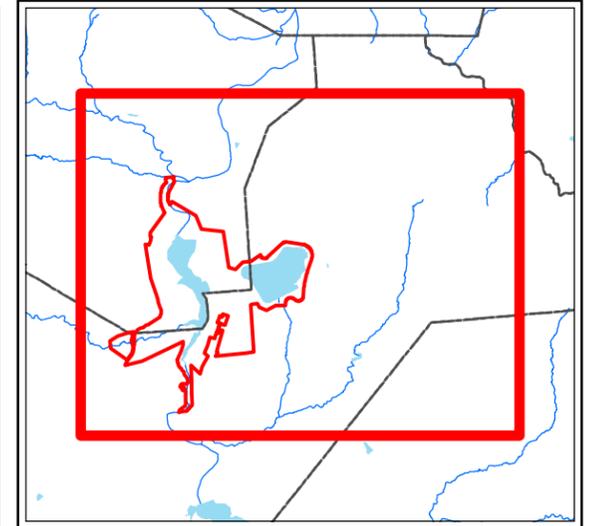


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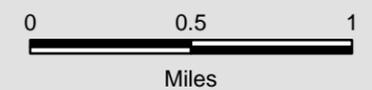
FIGURE 1
Aesthetic Resources within a 5-mile Radius of Blenheim-Gilboa Project Boundary

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LEGEND

- B-G FERC Project Boundary
- State Forest
- City/Town
- Photo Points



Blenheim-Gilboa Pumped Storage
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FIGURE 2
Project Photo Point Reference Map

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APPENDIX A

Photo 1: Upper Reservoir from Leonard Hill State Forest



Photo 2: View of Lower Reservoir and Dam from Mine Kill State Park boat ramp



Photo 3: View of NYPA operations' buildings from Mine Kill State Park boat ramp



Photo 4: Lower Reservoir from Mine Kill State Park "yellow" trail



Photo 5: Lower Reservoir from Long Path (west shore)



Photo 6: Lower Reservoir from Mine Kill State Park mid-level observation area



Photo 7: Lower Reservoir from intersection of Rt. 43 and Burnt Hill Road



Photo 8: Lower Reservoir from Valenti Road (east shore)



Photo 9: Lower Reservoir from Visitors Center overlook



Photo 10: Below Lower Dam, west bank by angler parking area



Photo 11: Below Lower Dam, upstream view from end of angler access road



Photo 12: Below Lower Dam, view of east bank from end of angler access road



Photo 13: Below Lower Dam, downstream view from end of angler access road



Photo 14: View north from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road



Photo 15: View west from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road



Photo 16: View east from north side of Upper Reservoir maintenance road



Photo 17: View west across Upper Reservoir from boat access site



Photo 18: Upper Dike from Mower Road

