

# Lake McClure Flying Site Guide

December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## Introduction

The Mother Lode Sky Riders Association (MLSRA) is a 501(c) non-profit organization dedicated to supporting foot-launched free flying in and around the Lake McClure, California area.

## Site Overview

The McClure flying site is a challenging and highly rewarding mountain thermal soaring and XC departure site. Conditions range from glassy smooth ridge lift to smooth or turbulent (bullet) thermals. Flying is consistent and fun year-round. Flying is possible (and sometimes surprisingly sweet) in a wide range of weather and winds. On many days you can fly all around the valley and across the lake. Local pilots routinely achieve flights of several hours. Altitude gains of 2000' – 6000' are typical. Cross country flights of 122 miles have been made from the site. The main launch area ridge is about a mile long, but it's a springboard to many ridges in the surrounding area.

## Launches

The private road to launch is a graded dirt road; sections of which are steep, rutted and rocky. A high-clearance 4x4 vehicle with low-range gearing is required on the upper sections of the dirt road to minimize wheel spin, skidding, and road damage. Please do not drive on the upper sections of the dirt launch road when it is wet and/or slick / slippery as your vehicle could easily slide off the road into the rocks/trees below. Both the launch and landing areas are free of direct aerial obstructions.

A North launch, suitable for paragliders (PG), is currently in development. Using this launch will help separate wing setup areas, reducing congestion at the main launch. When both wing types are using the same launch, please keep the launch area clear until fully ready to launch so as not to obstruct it for another pilot. In addition, for PG launches, please keep space immediately behind the wing clear for wing resets, forward launches, and aborted launches.

## Primary Launch

The primary launch is a sloping mountaintop, facing west, elevation 2240' MSL, 1200' above the landing area 1000' MSL. The launch is improved, built up from rock and dirt. Pilots are encouraged to stage and launch from the right (North) side of the primary launch area. This position provides greater clearance from the trees on the South side, which helps reduce potential mechanical turbulence and keeps the main area clear. Launch is

possible in winds from the WNW, W, or WSW (230-280 degrees). Launch GPS Coordinates: 37.712450° -120.234300°. Glide ratio from the primary launch to the LZ is 2.8.

Recommended primary launch use parameters:

Wing Type	Min Rating	Min	Ideal	Max	Gust
HG	H2	0 mph	8 mph	18 mph	5 mph
PG	P3+	0 mph	5 mph	15 mph	5 mph

	Wind Direction (Degrees)	
	Left	Right
Ideal	230	280
OK	220	290

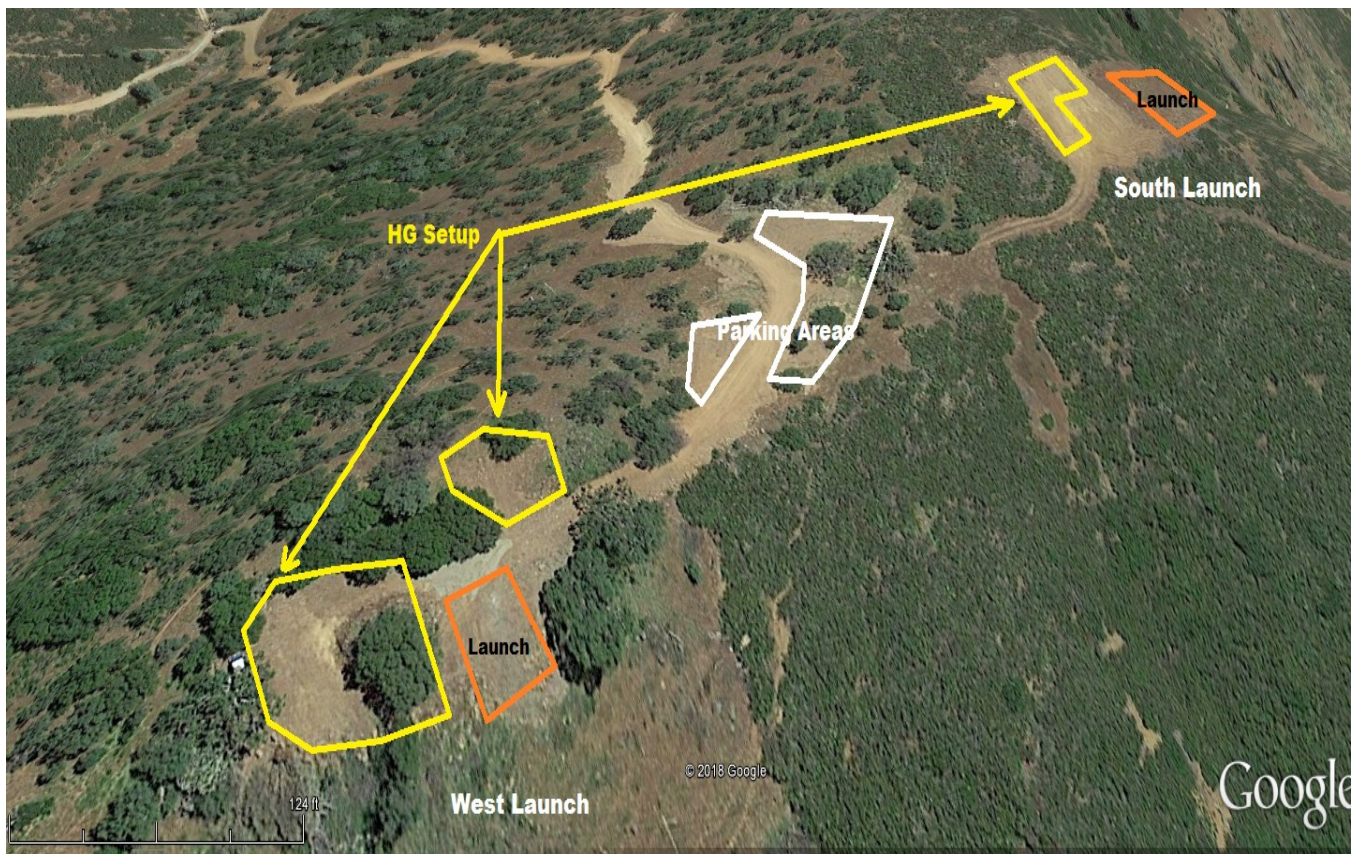
## South Launch

There is a less-used South facing launch site nearby used in SSE-SSW (140-200) winds. Launch GPS Coordinates: 37.710768339° -120.2334186°. Glide ratio from the south launch to the LZ is 2.7.

Recommended south launch use parameters:

Wing Type	Min Rating	Min	Ideal	Max	Gust
HG	H4	0 mph	8 mph	20 mph	5 mph

	Wind Direction (Degrees)	
	Left	Right
Ideal	140	200
OK	120	210



## Landing Zones

The MLSRA operates the main LZ under a special use permit from the MID; all MID and MLSRA rules must be followed. MID day use fees or annual parking pass are required for vehicle access to the LZs. Overnight Camping/vehicle parking at night within the LZ areas are not allowed by MID. Flying below 500' AGL over the adjacent camp grounds is prohibited.

No smoking or fires of any kind at LZ or launch areas. Leave all gates as you find them. Park vehicles inside of the LZ East side treeline; or, South and behind the LZ storage container along the side of the road. (See the LZ area map).

### Main LZ

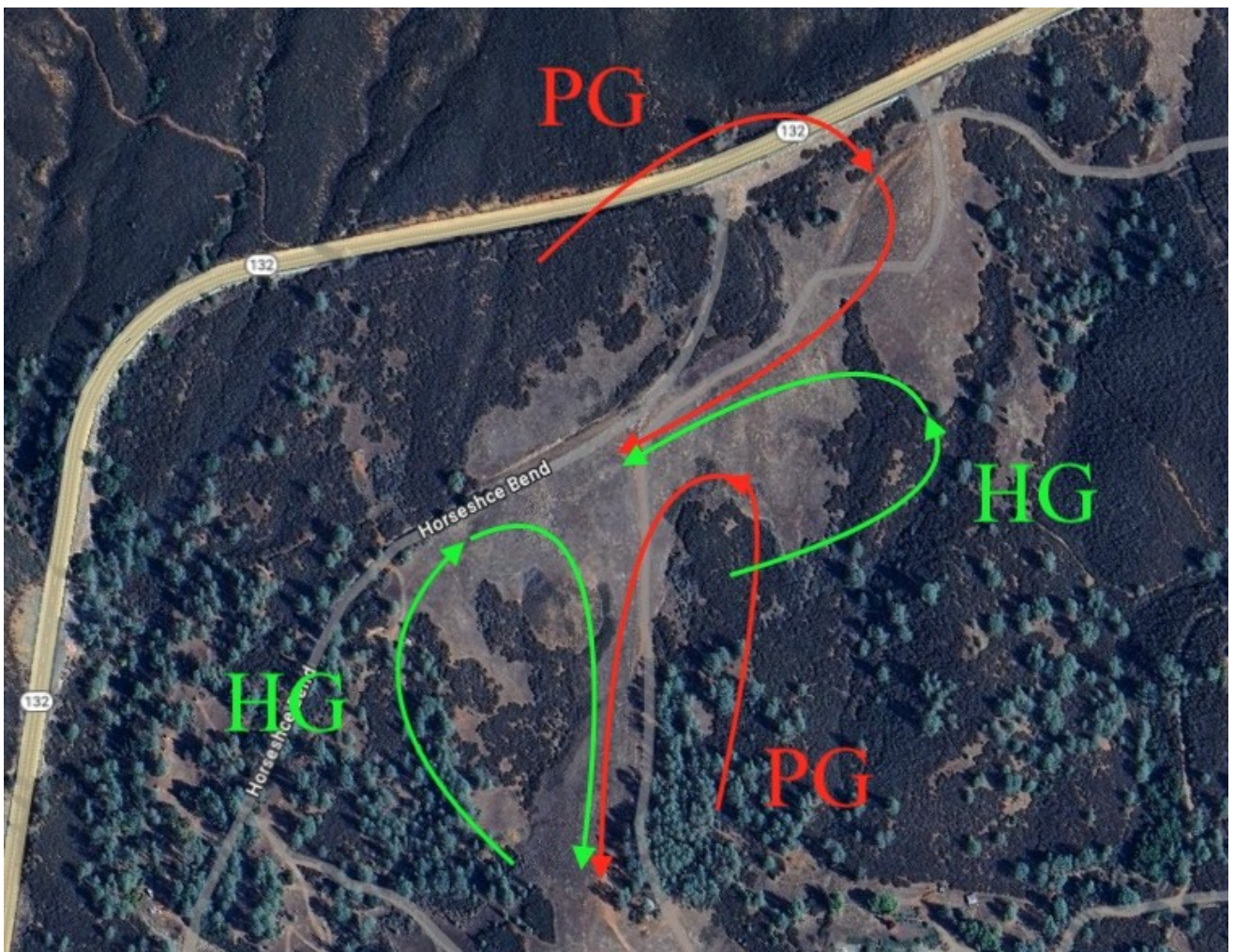
The main LZ is rolling grassy terrain with several emergency alternative areas. DBF approaches into the LZ are encouraged for HGs. Approach traffic depends on wind direction and/or crosswind component due to the tree line along the East side of the LZ. Glider de-rigging and packing should be done on the artificial turf. Please keep gliders as close to the East side treeline as possible. Tie off the nose of your hang glider to a tree with a rope if windy/thermic conditions are in the LZ.

When both types of gliders are landing at the same time, refer to the diagrams below for the appropriate approach for your specific glider type.











## Bailout LZ

This landing location is a bailout for pilots that may return from Horseshoe Bend peak or areas to the south with insufficient altitude to make it to the primary LZ. (37.69765, -120.2459)

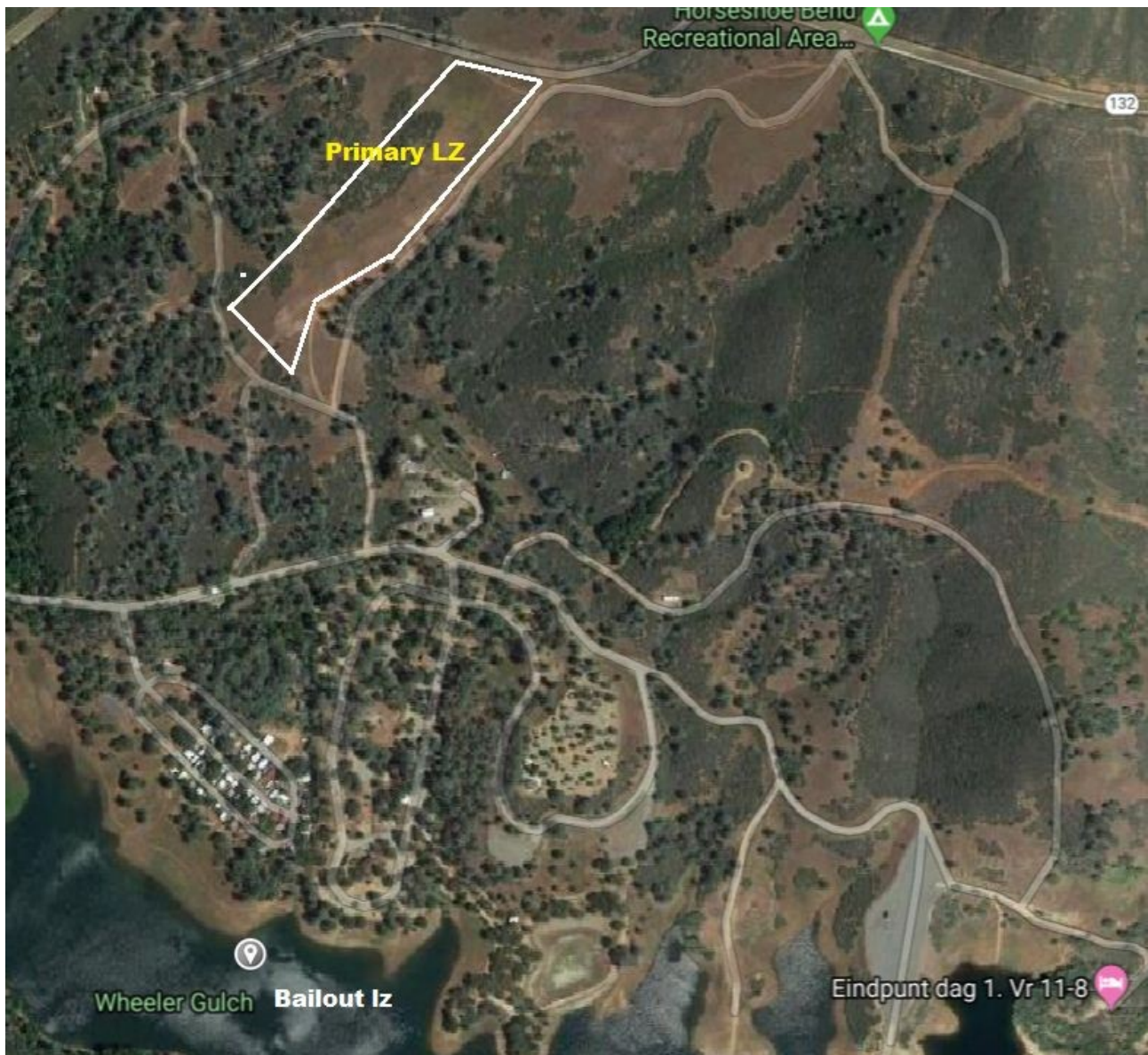
Landing in the Far NW fork of the lakebed is only suitable during the late summer and fall months when the lake arm is completely dry.

Due to narrow clearance created by tree lines on both sides, approaches into this area must be carefully coordinated to avoid obstructions. There is usually water running in the creek to the far south of this area even when the lake level leaves this arm of the lake empty. Avoid the creek and any water or 'green' areas as it is likely very deep mud and could be deep (dangerous) to land in the water. Do not fly over or near the camp ground areas. If there are people in the lakebed then leave a minimum of 100 feet of clearance for the approach, and landing areas.

Best wind direction for this bailout LZ is W to NNW, as the wind tends to blow straight down the slot formed by this arm of the lake. There are often wind streamers on short poles located in the lakebed during summer/fall months of the year.

After landing, immediately remove your glider from the lakebed up to the trees/treeline near the edge of the camp ground.

MLSRA does not have any formal MID permission or approvals in place for using the lakebed as a primary LZ. Pilots are encouraged to maintain a safe altitude at all times and return to the primary LZ for all landings at the McClure site.



## Environmental Factors and Skills

The site is mostly flown during the spring and fall months when appropriate thermic conditions are present. The site is seldom flown during the summer months due to the high daytime temperatures and typical summer inversions. Occasional early/late winter flights take place when conditions are appropriate.

Site is launch-able in no up-slope winds as the launches are steep with plenty of clearance out front. Winds over 20 mph and/or over 15 mph with gusts over 5 mph typically require waiting for 'lulls' and a wire crew. Wire crew are typically offered/used by the club with winds over 10 mph and during windy (thermic) conditions.

WSW winds at launch, if strong enough, may create a rotor from the ridge to the South of launch. Pilots are encouraged accordingly to wait for a lull before launching in these conditions.

Nose wire crew must carefully move out of the way before launch and pilot may not launch

until all clear is given by the full launch crew. All wire crew persons are required to be USHPA member pilots with signed waivers.

Strong thermals during mid-day thermic season require high energy launches and flying straight out well away from the ridge before turning in order to avoid near terrain thermal/mechanical turbulence.

In winds over 10 mph from SW to WSW, single surface glider pilots must continuously monitor wind conditions (strength/direction) and their respective distance/glide to make it to the LZ.

Known venturi locations are behind “bug fart” hill and the Highway 132 canyon.

It is recommended to avoid the main LZ mid day in the summer months. Conditions can be very active and result in loss of control when landing.

## Airspace

Class G airspace surrounds the area, Victor airway 459 crosses Lake McClure 3 miles South of the LZ. Mariposa Yosemite MPI Airport is 17mi SE of the LZ; Pine Mountain Lake Airport is 12mi N of the LZ.

## Flying Requirements

### Memberships

A current USHPA pilot membership is required. Pilots must carry their physical or electronic membership card at all times.

A current MLSRA membership is mandatory for all pilots.

- Full Membership: Includes voting privileges and gate access to the launch.
- Associate Membership: A 30 day MLSRA membership is available for visiting pilots.
- H2 Pilot Associate Membership: Discounted 30 day membership rate for visiting H2-rated pilots.

Membership form: <https://mlsralakemcclure.wixsite.com/lakemcclurehg/site-guide>

### Waiver

MLSRA and USHPA waivers must be completed by every pilot, driver and passenger/guest and must be provided to a MLSRA club officer or representative.

MLSRA waiver form: <https://mlsralakemcclure.wixsite.com/lakemcclurehg/site-guide>

### Safety

A helmet and a reserve parachute are required.



International ridge and thermal soaring rules apply.

A site briefing from an MLSRA sponsor or authorised pilot is required before a pilot's first flight.

## Pilot Proficiency Requirements

An H3/P3+ minimum rating is required to fly the site.

Suggested skills:

- Turbulence (TUR)
- Assisted Windy Cliff Launch (AWCL)
- Restricted Landing Field (RLF)

Paraglider pilots are required to have at least a P3 rating plus previous mountain flying experience. Pilot experience to be vetted by the PG safety officer before flying.

## H2 Pilot Requirements

H2 pilots must adhere to strict requirements:

- Must purchase an MLSRA membership and receive approval from the MLSRA.
- Flights must be conducted when conditions are appropriate (typically late fall through early spring when conditions are non-thermic/low wind).
- Flights require the presence of the pilot's USHPA instructor and a USHPA Site Observer and/or an experienced MLSRA pilot sponsor.
- The MLSRA sponsor must conduct LZ/Launch site briefings and accompany the H2 pilot to launch.
- H2 Pilot information: <https://mlsralakemcclure.wixsite.com/lakemcclurehg/site-guide>

## Instruction

Hang gliding (HG) and paragliding (PG) instruction or commercial activities are strictly prohibited.

## Vehicle Access

The Mother Lode Sky Riders Association (MLSRA) club members are guests at both the LZ and launch site areas.

The launch is located on private property with MLSRA club member access via a locked gate and private road (four wheel drive with low range, high clearance vehicle required).

Access into the gated LZ is from the Merced Irrigation District's (MID) Lake McClure Horseshoe Bend Recreation area road (37.703983, -120.249773).

## Weather

Site weather information: <https://mlsralakemcclure.wixsite.com/lakemcclurehg/weather>

## Emergency Procedures

Emergency Contacts:

- Medical or other Emergency call 911
- Mariposa County Sheriff: 209-966-3615
- MID parks and recreation: 209-354-2954

A phone booth / land line telephone is located at the Lake McClure Boat Launch Ramp as cell phone service is not always available.

MLSRA site use radio frequency 144.150.

## Contacts

<https://mlsralakemcclure.wixsite.com/lakemcclurehg>

[MLSRALakeMcClure@gmail.com](mailto:MLSRALakeMcClure@gmail.com)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1400019886704703>