

Summary of Lake Berryessa Community Forum Meeting

Date: February 19, 2014

Time: 1:00 pm

Location: Capell Valley Fire Station

Status of East Side Management

Jeff Laird, Park Manager at Lake Berryessa provided an update of the current management issues on the east side. Currently the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area is managed under an agreement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Reclamation and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are pursuing a mutual termination of that agreement. Reclamation is meeting with other potential agencies and groups as potential managing partners, including the Blue Ridge-Berryessa Partnership and Tuleyome. These potential park partners will determine if they are interested in pursuing a partnership that includes management of the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area, and Reclamation has requested that they identify any management objectives they would desire incorporated into the agreement. Future meetings with potential partners will determine the shape of any new partnerships, and would include the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Cultural surveys of the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area are needed before any new plans or management are implemented. The area is divided into seven paddocks. Cultural surveys are completed in paddocks one and two, and will be underway in paddock three in the next week. The large fire in October burned paddocks two and three and half of paddock four, thereby exposing 375 acres for cultural review. With cultural reviews completed, Reclamation can implement a management plan to consider burns, grazing and wildlife management. Lake Berryessa Community Forum Coordinating Team Members asked about rancher involvement in any future partnerships and funding for management. Reclamation indicated that limited funding for management of that area is a major motivation to identify a managing partner and that several ranchers on the east side of the lake are members of potential managing partners. Coordinating Team Members asked about the timing of cultural review in the paddocks. Reclamation identified that cultural review in paddock 3 would be conducted in the coming week and in paddock 4 later this spring. The cultural review process will record cultural sites and create a report, which must be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office before actions can be undertaken. Coordinating Team Members asked about the number and type of cultural sites that have been found. Reclamation noted that the agency is not at liberty to state if any sites are found, and that the data is protected. Coordinating Team Members asked about recreation opportunities on the east side. Reclamation identified that consistent with the Visitor Services Plan/Record of Decision (VSP/ROD), low-impact activities such as hiking, equestrian use, and fishing access would be permitted, but not camping or recreational vehicle (RV) use.

Update on Existing and Future Recreation Services and Facilities

Jeff Laird, Park Manager at Lake Berryessa reviewed the currently available recreation accesses at Lake Berryessa. Reclamation managed areas are open daily from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, with the visitor center open on Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 3:00 pm. Markley Cove and Pleasure Cove are open with a full range of services. Steele Canyon and Putah Canyon are open with day use, boat launch, and camping. Spanish Flat is open with day use and camping.

Updates on Concession Area Improvement Contracts

Jeff Laird, Park Manager at Lake Berryessa reviewed the progress on several improvements in concession areas. A contract for two vault toilets each at Spanish Flat, Putah Canyon and Steele Canyon has been awarded, appropriate environmental review has been completed, and installation will occur in March. Replacement of previous concession contractor personal property is underway. Reclamation is installing tables, fire rings, and upright barbeque grills. Installation is nearly complete at Putah Canyon. Following completion at Putah Canyon, installation will continue at Spanish Flat and then Steele Canyon. Consequently, Spanish Flat will be closed for two weeks from February 24 to March 8 in order to install tables, fire rings, and upright barbeque grills. All installation of tables, fire rings and upright barbeque grills will be completed prior to the recreation season. A Concession Improvement Contract for temporary RV dump stations at Spanish Flat, Putah Canyon and Steele Canyon, repair of a roadside slide at Spanish Flat and, water distribution at Putah Canyon has been awarded and is in the design phase. Environmental assessments are being written with completion and approval anticipated by the end of May. Construction will begin upon completion of environmental assessments. A contract for drilling a well, electricity for the well, and a basic water distribution system at Putah Canyon has not yet been awarded. An environmental assessment is underway and is scheduled to be completed and approved by the end of May, and the contract will be awarded and construction will begin upon the approval of the environmental assessment. A contract for replacement of courtesy docks has been awarded. Two docks will be installed at Putah Canyon and three at Steele Canyon. Vaults for the cables for the docks at Putah Canyon and Steele Canyon have been dug and concrete will be poured this week. After time for the concrete to cure, the docks will be in place in the middle of March. Regarding water at Steele Canyon, Reclamation conducted site visits with contractors and Napa County staff and located an existing backflow prevention device at the Napa-Berryessa Resort Improvement District facility. Reclamation has now asked Napa County to identify the location where the waterline enters Steele Canyon in order to determine the location of the limited water distribution system. A completed and approved environmental assessment is expected by the end of May. Reclamation is exploring the possibility of adding Spanish Flat water hookup and limited distribution system to the Concession Improvement Contract. Local road directional signage in coordination with Napa County is underway. However Napa County is currently involved in replacing damaged, vandalized and broken signs. Upon the completion of that activity, Napa County will move on to the directional road signs. Napa County has submitted a project request for directional signage on state highways to CALTRANS.

Update on Long-Term Concession Contract Timeline

Drew Lessard, Central California Area Office Area Manager, provided an update on the timeline for long-term concession contracts. Reclamation has identified 90-100 tasks that must be accomplished as part of the planning and implementation process. A financial feasibility evaluation is the next step, which will incorporate data from the marketing assessment and will help to further refine site plans, based on the need to create viable business opportunities for the future concession contractors. Finalized site plans will then identify the scope of infrastructure planning needed. Reclamation's timeline targets the completion of environmental reviews for infrastructure and recreation facilities as early in the process as possible in order to permit construction upon the award of contract. Drew Lessard reviewed in brief the entire timeline from beginning to end. Members of the Coordinating Team asked about the contract award date. Drew Lessard identified that the current target date is May of 2016.

New Coordinating Team Members

Terms for five members of the Coordinating Team have come to an end. One position, representing fish and wildlife management, remains unfilled. Nancy Tamarisk representing conservation groups and Michael Haley representing land-based recreation will be leaving the coordinating team at the end of their terms, February 2014. Wendy Wallin has been selected to serve as the representative of conservation groups. Carol Kunze has been selected to serve as the representative for land-based recreation. George Gamble representing ranchers, Lonny Lopez representing water-based recreation, and John Donlevy representing gateway communities have been re-nominated and selected for new terms. Reclamation thanked members of the coordinating team for contributing time and effort to make the forum a success.

Future Meeting Potential Topics

Reclamation will provide updates for East Side management, improvements in the concession areas, and long-term concession planning. Coordinating Team members requested an update on public demand at resorts and concession areas for the upcoming recreation season. Coordinating Team members requested that meetings be held at least once every two months. Reclamation noted that based on project deliverables, the April meeting has been delayed into May. Coordinating Team members requested that security or emergency phone contact in concession areas be provided at each concession area.

Public Comments

In response to questions about the well drilling contract, Reclamation identified that drilling is scheduled to commence in June after on the completion of environmental review. Drilling will be conducted after Memorial Day, and the well is located outside of camping areas at Putah Canyon, which should minimize public impact.

In response to questions about the East Side management, Reclamation is unsure of the timeline for cultural surveys in all seven paddocks. As the surveys continue, that will allow actions to take place in areas where environmental review has been completed. Paddock one may be used as a test area for future management methods, possibly including reseeding, herbicide, burning, and grazing. Public also commented that the fences on the east side have not been repaired since the recent fire.

In response to questions about the water supply at Steele Canyon, Reclamation had been told that there was no longer a backflow prevention device serving Steele Canyon, and therefore needed to install a new one. However, a backflow prevention device was recently located onsite at the NBRID facility. Reclamation is estimating a hookup date of June based upon the completion of an environmental assessment. Reclamation has met with Napa county representatives regarding Steele Canyon's water hookup several times in the last year. Reclamation has chosen an option from NBRID to pay 150% of the monthly utility bill during a temporary hookup, which will cover startup costs and monthly fees. Any future concessionaire would have to pay a hookup fee commensurate to estimated water use.

In response to questions about replacing previous concession contractor's personal property, Reclamation noted that there was a contractual right to rent the tables and fire rings for one year and that Reclamation had to make plans to replace those items when the contractual right ended. As abandoned property, Reclamation will attempt to find other parks and facilities that will take the tables and fire rings.

In response to questions about replacement docks, docks from Steele Canyon and Putah Canyon will be treated as abandoned property. As well, a temporary launch ramp is in the plans for Spanish Flat, but designs need to be completed in order to complete environmental review. Design and construction are unfunded at this time.

In response to questions about directional marking plans for the lake, Reclamation will be placing numbered navigation buoys with lights that will assist boaters in locating Steele Canyon, Capell Creek, the Narrows, Pleasure Cove, and Markley Cove. Reclamation made that determination, rather than land-based signs in order to have a uniform waterway marking system.

In response to questions about why development plans for Markley Cove were not included in the recent public scoping meeting, Reclamation's interim contract for Markley Cove includes a provision identifying a more accelerated timetable for a prospectus for long-term contract than that planned for the other concession areas, and development needs at Markley Cove are much less than at the other concession areas.

In response to questions about fuel availability, Reclamation noted that marine fuel will be included at any marina development, but that automobile fuel would not, as Reclamation did not want to interfere or compete with potential local business opportunities. The fuel tank at Putah Canyon was removed because the permit had lapsed and the tank did not meet current standards.

In response to concerns raised regarding the times and dates of meetings, Reclamation noted that most meetings will be held in the evening, and many will be held near the lake, but that times and locations will be rotated to give as many interested people as possible an opportunity to attend a meeting.

Additional comments were made regarding a desire to receive handouts of visual aids and minutes, concerns that the concession boundaries were too extensive and included undevelopable land, questions about the possible expansion of the Spanish Flat Water District to include Berryessa Point and Monticello Shores, a desire to see annual use, a hotel, a restaurant, a bar, and other amenities to attract users, and concerns about a perceived lack of activity or development.

The next Lake Berryessa Community Forum meeting will be held in May, specific date to be determined.

For questions or comments regarding Lake Berryessa, contact Park Manager Jeff Laird, either by e-mail (JLaird@usbr.gov), mail (Lake Berryessa Office, Park Manager, 5520 Knoxville RD., Napa CA 94558) or by phone (707-966-2111, ext. 0).

For additional information, please visit the Lake Berryessa website at <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/cao/berryessa/index.html> and click on “Recreation Updates” in the light-blue navigation column on the left.