

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## Summary of Lake Berryessa Community Forum Meeting

**Date:** Aug. 14, 2013

**Time:** 6 p.m.

**Location:** Winters Community Center

**Update on Recreation Services:** Lake Berryessa Park Manager Jeff Laird provided the current status of recreation services. Day use areas and access points directly managed by the Bureau of Reclamation remain open. Five concession areas are open. Markley Cove and Pleasure Cove are operating with a full array of recreation and marina services. Steele Canyon, Putah Canyon and Spanish Flat are operating with limited services.

Several contracts for enhancing recreational areas have progressed. A contract for vault toilets, a contract for replacement tables, fire rings and grills for Steele Canyon, Putah Canyon and Spanish Flat, and a contract for courtesy docks to replace the docks at Putah Canyon and Steele Canyon have been awarded, with the targeted installation prior to the next recreation season. A contract to build and install temporary RV dump stations in Steele Canyon, Putah Canyon and Spanish Flat; to repair the road slide in Spanish Flat; and to develop a basic water distribution system in Putah Canyon is scheduled to be awarded by mid-Sept. 2013. A contract for a potable water well at Putah Canyon should be awarded in Jan. 2014 with the well installed prior to the next recreation season.

Potable water development is also proceeding at Steele Canyon and Spanish Flat Recreation Areas. In regard to Steele Canyon, Reclamation has sent an application to the Napa Berryessa Resort Improvement District (NBRID), and Reclamation must install a backflow prevention device and repair or install the necessary basic water distribution system prior to hooking up to water service. At Spanish Flat Recreation Area, the Spanish Flat Water District has installed a meter, and Reclamation is beginning the appropriate environmental compliance to make repairs since old water lines were put in before the National Environmental Policy Act.

Park Manager Jeff Laird provided an update on park visitation, which though consistent at Markley Cove and up slightly at Pleasure Cove is lower overall in 2013 than 2012. LT Pike, Napa County Sheriff's Office, provided a comparative synopsis of public safety for 2012 and 2013. Generally, the number of incidents are consistent between the two years, with minor changes in some categories. LT Pike indicated that the lake surface appears to be busier, based on the higher number of warnings issued on the lake surface in 2013.

Park Manager Jeff Laird identified that Reclamation is working with the Lake Berryessa Chamber of Commerce and Napa County on a directional signage plan. Napa County is scheduled to begin working on signs on Berryessa-Knoxville Road over the winter. Napa County is submitting plans for signs on Highways 121 and 128 to CalTrans. Reclamation is discussing lake-based navigational signage with the Napa County Sheriff's Office boat patrol and others to develop a plan for future presentation at the Community Forum.

Members of the Coordinating Team asked questions regarding replacement courtesy docks at the concession areas and stressed that the current docks are not long enough and not adjusted to changing water levels frequently enough.

**Status of Planning for Requests for Proposals and Long-term Concession Contracts:** Area Manager Drew Lessard provided an update of progress on long-term concession contracts. The Central California Area Office currently has awarded a prospectus support contract with an option to support Lake Berryessa prospectus development. A contract for architectural/engineering work, including a financial feasibility evaluation and market research study, is to be awarded in next couple of weeks. The first task under that contract is a market research study with a draft projected for early Oct. 2013. If the draft study is ready, it will be provided at the October Forum meeting. Tasks after the market research study include a financial feasibility study, conceptual site planning, infrastructure design and environmental compliance. The targeted schedule is to bring initial site plans to the Dec. 2013 meeting. Reclamation plans to provide an updated project schedule at the Oct. 2013 Forum meeting.

Members of the Coordinating Team raised questions about the status of the Steele Canyon launch ramp and were advised that an appraisal is nearly at draft completion. Members of the Coordinating Team and the public asked about the timetable for releasing a prospectus and receiving bids. Reclamation plans to provide an updated project schedule at the Oct. 2013 Forum meeting.

**Management Issues for the East Side:** Park Manager Jeff Laird reviewed issues and questions regarding the East Side from the previous meeting. Greg Martinelli from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was also in attendance to answer questions regarding:

- Reclamation's relationship with the CDFW: Coordinating Team members raised questions regarding the inactivity of CDFW in the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area (LBWA) on the East Side, encouraged an integrated plan for management of the LBWA, and urged Reclamation and CDFW to revise or end the partnership if no action is possible.
- Bird and Wildlife issues: Coordinating Team members raised a question about trail options through the LBWA. Reclamation has a Trail Management Plan, which includes trail plans for the entire lake, including a potential equestrian/hiking trail on the East Side. Community Forum members added that grazing can assist in habitat creation and management.
- Wildfires and Controlled Burns: Coordinating Team members raised questions about the effectiveness of the road as a fire break and a need for shorter grasses to prevent the spread of fires and the use of herbicides in non-grazing and non-burning areas.
- Cultural Surveys: Coordinating Team members raised questions about the costs associated with cultural surveys. Reclamation noted that a preliminary assessment by regional archaeologists estimated a survey of the northern six miles of the east side at \$150,000 but that the actual price and degree of study is based on what is found during the initial investigation.
- Grazing: Coordinating Team members raised concern that past cattle grazing was being described as a cause of habitat degradation.
- East Side Access: Coordinating Team members raised questions about signage and suggested that a "No Lake Access" sign would help with visitors driving down the road looking for lake access. Other concerns raised were about the appropriate maintenance of the road surface.
- Future East Side Actions: Coordinating Team members raised concerns that part of the problem with developing a grazing plan has been the turnover of management of the lake.

**Public Comment:** The public expressed concern about the availability of funds and resources to accomplish all of the necessary cultural surveys, especially in a time of smaller budgets. Reclamation stated they will continue to request funding for the cultural surveys. The public asked how quickly the survey process could proceed if money were not an issue. Reclamation stated it could take up to a year because the surveys would need to be added to the existing workload of regional cultural staff. The public expressed concern about the rigor of cultural resource surveys, especially in areas impacted by cattle for years. Concern was also expressed about the findings from the cultural surveys and the value of the surveys. Reclamation stated that findings from cultural surveys are not released to prevent disturbance and that the surveys are a legal requirement. Reclamation indicated that controlled burns are not the only management tool that could be used for the east side but that future management plans for that area would include an integrated approach, which might include tools like controlled burns, grazing, seeding and herbicides. The public also:

- Raised questions about the schedule for water hookup in Steele Canyon and were told that Reclamation is not waiting for a permanent concessionaire but is developing limited water distribution and working through NBRID to get temporary water service as soon as possible. Reclamation will need to install a backflow preventer then repair or install a limited water distribution system in order to implement limited water spigots for use by the interim contractor. Members of the Coordinating Team indicated that water was a priority not just for fire prevention but also to prevent people from using the lake for washing and relief.
- Asked about the lack of a means to pay for law enforcement and other emergency services. Reclamation is willing to explore enhanced service agreements, but there is currently no agreement for what services the sheriff provides.
- Expressed concern about visitor use and camping south of Steele Canyon. Reclamation is expanding trash pickup and patrol and is working on plans for fence repair, pedestrian gates and signage.
- Expressed concern about leeches in the lake. Reclamation indicated that there are natural populations of leeches in Lake Berryessa, especially in shallow areas at warm times of year; however, there is very little public health issue. Reclamation will make leaflets or signs available.
- Expressed concern about spending funds on vault toilets versus other possible needs and on the sanitary conditions of existing toilets. Reclamation committed, in the past, to provide a higher level of sanitary service, which is what the purchase and installation of these vault toilets will provide.
- Expressed concern that the East Side has rattlesnakes and mice and is not truly being managed as a wildlife area.

**Future Meetings/Potential Topics:** Future meetings may include a follow up on the relationship with CDFW and recommendations on East Side issues, expansion on the prospectus and timeline, presentation of market research for comment and the Steele Park launch ramp situation.

**Next Meeting:** Oct. 9, at the Napa Elks Lodge #832, 2840 Soscol Avenue, Napa, CA 94558.

For questions or comments, please contact Park Manager Jeff Laird at [JLaird@usbr.gov](mailto:JLaird@usbr.gov), or Park Manager, Lake Berryessa Field Office, 5520 Knoxville Rd., Napa CA 94558, or at 707-966-2111, ext. 0.

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