

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## Summary of Lake Berryessa Community Forum Meeting

**Date:** December 10, 2013

**Time:** 6:00 pm

**Location:** Berryessa Senior Center

**Status of East Side Management:** Melissa Vignau, Central California Area Office Resources Division Chief, identified that Reclamation has received verbal notification that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife will pursue a termination of the managing agreement for the Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area. Reclamation intends to pursue a new managing partner for the eastern shore of the lake, and is in discussions with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Blue Ridge-Berryessa Conservation partnership, and Tuleyome about potential partnerships. The scope of the lands under consideration and the management roles would be discussed with future partner organizations. Grazing, invasive species eradication, fuels management, and recreation are all issues that would need to be considered in a new management plan for the eastern shoreline of the lake. Members of the Lake Berryessa Community Forum Coordinating Team raised issues about the timeline for such a partnership change, and asked about the existing NRCS proposed grazing plan for the east side, and what actions have been done in areas recently burned by controlled burns and wildfire. Melissa Vignau stated that series of three burns have been researched, and USBR is considering other actions, and that Reclamation will use information from the NRCS plan as part of a comprehensive management plan for the east side to include grazing, spraying, seeding, and trails.

**Update on Existing and Future Recreation Services and Facilities:** Jeff Laird, Park Manager at Lake Berryessa reviewed the currently available recreation opportunities at Lake Berryessa. Reclamation managed areas are open daily from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, with the Dufer Point 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, Drew Lessard, Central California Area Manager, informed the forum that interests in the boat ramp and roads at Steele Canyon have been resolved and that Reclamation now owns all those facilities. Jeff Laird identified progress on improvements and contracts that had been briefly delayed by the government shutdown. A contract for two vault toilets each in Spanish Flat, Steele Canyon, and Putah Canyon has been awarded and installation may happen by May 2014. A contract for barbecue grills, fire rings, and picnic tables to replace previous concessionaire property has been awarded and the items have been delivered to Reclamation. Reclamation is waiting to deploy those items until the previous concessionaire has had an opportunity to remove its property or chooses to abandon their property in place. A contract to build temporary RV dump stations, to install a limited water distribution in Putah Canyon, and to make repairs to a road slide in Spanish Flat has been awarded to GD Nielson. Work will begin after environmental clearance is received. The well contract for Putah Canyon is waiting for a visit from a dowser to locate suitable prospective wells that are a safe distance from a contaminated underground storage tank site. A contract for courtesy docks has been awarded to Hallsten Inc., for installation prior to the 2014 recreation season in Steele Canyon and Putah Canyon.

Reclamation will be beginning environmental review for actions needed to connect to potable water systems at Steele Canyon and Spanish Flat.

Members of the Coordinating Team asked for clarification on the need and timetable for environmental review. Melissa Vignau described that in regard to Spanish Flat water supplies, the analysis would be limited as the area has previous disturbance, but that a National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 review must be completed. That archaeological review and State Historic Preservation Office consultation can include a 90 day cycle for Section 106 review.

Jeff Laird explained that Napa County is scheduled to begin fabrication and installation of directional signage in January 2014 for signs along Knoxville Road. Napa County has also submitted a sign permit request to Caltrans for directional road signage to recreation facilities to be installed along Highways 121 and 128. There is no estimated date for when Caltrans might approve this request. Members of the Coordinating Team asked about the impact of upcoming grants to improve Knoxville Road. Jeff Laird indicated that Napa County has been awarded a grant from the Federal Highway Administration, as part of the Federal Lands Access Program, to repave portions of Knoxville Road. Napa County and the grant would each pay for a portion of the repaving costs.

**Update on Long-Term Contract Timeline:** Drew Lessard provided an update on the timeline for a long-term contract. Reclamation has identified 90-100 tasks that must be accomplished as part of the planning and implementation process. A market assessment was put on hold during the government shutdown, but a draft has now been delivered to Reclamation. HDR/CDM Smith architectural engineering/consulting is conducting the market assessment and will generate conceptual site plans. An open house scoping session is scheduled for January 16, 2014 in Napa to allow the public to review initial site plans. A financial feasibility evaluation will be undertaken planning for a 30-40 year return on investment in order to determine an economically sustainable scope of services. The timeline includes releasing a prospectus and soliciting bids in 2015, with the award of one or more contracts and construction to begin in 2016. Members of the Coordinating Team voiced concern that the timeline is getting longer, and that the longer the process takes, the less likely that a winning bidder will be able to develop successfully, since the perception is that the lake is closed. As well, members of the coordinating team expressed a need for water sources in interim campgrounds, and expressed concerns that rates for recreation services and facilities are out of line with services in interim campgrounds.

**Preliminary Results of the Lake Berryessa Market Assessment:** Drew Lessard identified that HDR/CDM Smith is conducting the market assessment. HDR/CDM Smith will use demographic and market area data and comparable facilities to provide recommendations about the market capacity for Lake Berryessa. Reclamation wants a range of costs and experiences at the lake and wants to offer multiple recreation opportunities. A draft market assessment has been given to Reclamation. The draft market assessment identified a range of recreational opportunities that HDR/CDM Smith concluded that Lake Berryessa could likely support, including marina services, boat slips, RV camping, Tent camping, cabins, park models, and a variety of support facilities. Additionally, Napa County conducted an assessment through PKF Consulting focusing on lodging. That study concluded that a hotel is not likely feasible, but that approximately fifty park model style units may work for Lake Berryessa. Using data from the market assessment and financial feasibility evaluation, Reclamation will identify required and authorized services. Required services will be based on site planning and financial feasibility, and will include a schedule for development. Authorized services are facilities in excess of those identified as required. For the January scoping meeting, the market assessment contractor is developing conceptual site plans. The identification of required services will identify the scope of environmental review that Reclamation will undertake.

**NEPA process:** Melissa Vignau provided a general overview of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for an Environmental Assessment. Without complications, and including Section 106 compliance, three months is the minimum length of time for a simple environmental clearance.

**Lakeside Directional Points:** Jeff Laird identified proposals for directional aids on the lake. One proposed system would use lighted buoys to identify channels and routes to marinas. A second proposal would use large land-based directional signage to identify routes to marinas. Members of the Coordinating Team expressed that buoys would need to have an appropriate map to assist boaters. As well, numbered buoys would provide a landmark for emergency responders on the water. Directional signage would require reflectivity on the lettering.

**Coordinating Team Members, Expiring Terms Replacement Nominations:** Jeff Laird identified that the Forum has been in operation for nearly a year and that several terms are coming due, including representation for Ranchers, Land-Based Recreation, Water-Based Recreation, Conservation Groups, and Gateway Communities. As well, the Fish and Wildlife Management seat remains vacant. Stakeholder groups are urged to nominate individuals to represent their interests for terms that would start in March 2014. Jeff Laird request that individuals send short nominations, including self-nominations to him by February 7, 2014 and that there is no restriction on consecutive terms.

**Future meeting potential topics:** Jeff Laird presented a Reclamation proposal that future meetings move to quarterly. Comments from the Coordinating Team stressed a preference for every two months to more closely follow the progress of improvements. Jeff Laird identified that a January public meeting for scoping for long-term concession development will be held in Napa. This meeting will be conducted as a workshop to collect comments. Reclamation is expecting that conceptual site plans for that meeting will be posted on the website before meeting. Members of the Coordinating Team brought up several topics for future meetings including progress on interim contracts, future meeting locations, updates on the progress of identifying new partners to manage the east side, security in concession areas, and progress on the development of trails.

**Public comments:** Public in attendance expressed their firm desire that meetings be frequent and that the timeline for long-term contracts be accelerated. They asked about the possibility of creating a special district to manage recreation at the lake. They also asked about delays in providing water service in Steele Canyon. One member of the public stressed the need for posting of street addresses at parks and concession areas and another expressed a desire to receive meeting materials prior to the meeting in order to facilitate review.

The next Lake Berryessa Community Forum meeting is to be determined.

**Open House Scoping Session on the Lake Berryessa Long-term Concession Development:**

Thursday, January 16, 2014, Napa Elks Lodge #832, 2840 Soscol Ave., Napa, 94558. This is an open house where the public is welcome to drop by anytime between 4:00 pm and 7:00 pm to talk with Reclamation staff at Information Stations.

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> and click on “Recreation Updates” in the light-blue navigation column on the left.**