

Draft Visitor Center Exhibit Design Plan  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Central California Area Office  
Lake Berryessa Recreation Area

**Background**

Reclamation, and where applicable, its managing partners (including non-profit organizations), will ensure that visitor centers are planned, developed, interpreted, managed, and operated in an appropriate and cost-effective manner. According to Freeman Tilden (the Father of Interpretation) “the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation”. With this in mind, the idea is to create exhibits that will give meaning and relationship to park resources rather than communicating factual or anecdotal information. Well thought out displays should engage visitors by telling a story, using both text, images and unique interpretive devices. The exhibits to be developed will be thematic, and to a large degree interactive, using firsthand experience, graphic illustrations, and activities to help the visiting public, understand, appreciate and care for the natural and cultural environment.

A visitor center is a public educational facility or dedicated space for interpretive displays, programs, and services. Visitor centers generally have support facilities and conveniences for the traveling public. Reclamation develops visitor centers with appropriate facilities, services, and programs for the purpose of:

1. Informing the public about Reclamation and water projects.
2. Enhancing the quality of recreation and tourism opportunities for visitors.
3. Describing other opportunities and facilities that are available within the project.
4. Providing information on the recreation, natural, cultural, and historic resources within the project area regionally.
5. Helping to provide for visitor safety and enjoyment.
6. Educating the public about water resources, conservation, and water safety.

The visitor center exhibits will largely emphasize important goals 2, 3 and 4 with special attention given to point 4 – as a support to the project.

**Scope**

**Exhibit Design and Construction**

Design of the exhibits will follow the outline described in the background section of this document. The exhibits to be developed will be thematic, and to a large degree interactive, using firsthand experience, graphic illustrations, and activities to help the visiting public of all ages, understand, appreciate and care for the natural and cultural environment. The goal is to create exhibits that will give meaning and relationship to park resources rather than communicating factual or anecdotal information. The design and subsequent construction will support the historical background and theme.

**Overall Visitor Center Theme**

The theme statement for the Dufer Point Visitor Center is:

## ***“Our Lives Depend On Natural Resources”***

This broad, overarching theme allows connections to be made between cultural, historical, and the present day use of natural resources. The Native American and early settler story as well as the creation of the reservoir itself can be examined from the view point of people adapting to, utilizing and modifying the resources of their local environment. Exhibits relating to the natural history of the area will generate awareness of distinctive plants and animals, drawing attention to their importance as resources to be appreciated.

The overall visitor center theme statement will be refined into “sub-themes”, specific to each exhibit. What follows is a description of themes, goals and objectives for those exhibits.

### **Native American Exhibit (pending assistance from local Native American Tribe.)**

**Theme:** *The plants and animals of Berryessa gave life to Native Americans.*

**Goal:** Visitors will gain an understanding of how local Native American People(s) utilized the flora and fauna of the region.

**Objective 1:** Visitors will learn to identify important food plants, medicinal plants, plants used for materials and game animals.

**Objective 2:** Visitors will draw parallels between modern products (i.e. medicines) and local natural resources.

**Objective 3:** Visitors will recognize the oak tree as the most viable resource for Native Americans.

### **Early settler Exhibit**

**Theme:** *The Berryessa Valley was an important resource to early settlers.*

**Goal:** Visitors will learn about the settlement of the Berryessa Valley.

**Objective 1:** Visitors will recognize the Berryessa brothers as early settlers to the valley.

**Objective 2:** Visitors will identify Monticello as the principal town site of the Berryessa Valley.

**Objective 3:** Visitors will be able to identify ways in which the residents of Monticello made a living (i.e. agriculture).

### **Dam Exhibit**

**Theme:** *Lake Berryessa is an important resource for the entire watershed socially, economically and environmentally.*

**Goal A:** Visitors will learn why Lake Berryessa was created.

**Objective 1:** Visitors will identify at least one reason for the creation of the lake.

**Objective 2:** Visitors will recognize the Bureau of Reclamation as the principal agency responsible for the dam’s construction (Reclamation mission statement will be displayed within the VC).

**Objective 3:** Visitors will identify ways in which the Lake Berryessa water is utilized, as well as downstream utilization to include Solano Irrigation District and Putah Canal.

**Goal B:** Visitors will gain an appreciation of why it’s important to conserve water.

### **Natural History Exhibit**

**Theme:** *The plants and animals of Berryessa are an important part of our natural heritage.*

**Goal:** Visitors will become familiar with the natural history of the Lake Berryessa area.

**Objective 1:** Visitors will be able to identify common plant and animal species.

**Objective 2:** Visitors will be able to recognize characteristics of an Oak Woodland Community. (Some mention to the chaparral community might also be given.)

**Objective 3:** Visitors will challenge their knowledge of local animal species and their habitat.

**Objective 4:** Visitors will be able to view bird and mammal taxidermy specimens as well as mounted fish specimens.

**Objective 5:** Visitors will learn to recognize rattlesnakes, poison oak and ticks and the precautions necessary to be safe in respect to all three.

**Objective 6:** Visitors will use their senses to experience the local ecosystem.

**Objective 7:** Visitors will gain an appreciation of natural resources conservation and preservation.

### **Applicable Documents**

- Bureau of Reclamation's Visitor Center Policy, Directives and Standards and Guidelines
- Statement for Interpretation and Visitor Information Services; Lake Berryessa, California 1993-97
- Lake Berryessa Visitor Center Building Renovation Design Plans
- Lake Berryessa Interpretive Plan (1985) and (1991)
- Visual Identity Policy