
LAKE BERRYESSA

VISITOR SERVICES PLANNING EFFORT

May 2001

An update on long-term planning efforts for the lake

Bulletin 2

VISITOR SERVICES PLAN

Formal Public Comment Opportunity

Since Summer 2000, Reclamation has been working to develop the long-term Visitor Services Plan (VSP) for Lake Berryessa. Following is a summary of the information developed to date and questions that define possible future parameters of public recreation at the lake.

This is the first formal public comment opportunity. We are requesting your comments or suggestions relative to those questions which are of interest to you. If you wish to provide any comments, please do so electronically or in writing by Friday, June 29, 2001.

Please e-mail your comments to:
bwadlington@mp.usbr.gov

Or address your comments to:
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
2800 Cottage Way, MP-140 (Berryessa VSP)
Sacramento, California 95825

We expect to receive many comments and will be unable to respond individually to all of the letters and e-mails. All comments and suggestions received will be carefully considered as we begin formulating the various alternatives for the lake. All comments will be consolidated by subject, and Reclamation will respond to each subject area as part of a future document which will be released to the public later in the planning process.

Thank you for your interest in planning for Lake Berryessa's future. You will find additional up-to-date information by logging on to Reclamation's website: <http://www.mp.usbr.gov/berryessa>.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the VSP and Environmental Impact Statement currently being developed is to present and analyze alternatives that comprehensively look at public recreation opportunities, facilities, and programs at Lake Berryessa. The Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, is responsible for the management of all aspects of public recreation at the lake. These responsibilities are met both directly through Reclamation operations and facilities and through contracts with seven concessionaires located along the west shore of the lake.

The core goal of the alternatives is to provide high-quality recreation and leisure time experiences to the general public while allowing minimal appropriate impacts on the area's natural, cultural, and scenic resources.

Alternatives will be based on the broad goals of the Resource Area Management Plan (RAMP). The RAMP is a 'generic' or 'programmatic' document that provides overall direction for planning, development, and management of the lake. The VSP is intended to conform with and bring additional focus and specific direction to certain areas addressed in the RAMP.

The following sources will provide general direction in the preparation of draft alternatives:

1. The RAMP as identified.
2. The 1959 Public Use Plan (PUP) as amended in the RAMP.
3. The 1972 General Accounting Office and 2000 Inspector General Audits as they apply to the lake's recreation facilities and programs and conformity to the RAMP.

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4. Studies regarding the public's present and future recreation needs and desires both generally and specific to Lake Berryessa.
 5. Public comment as part of the formal scoping process.

The five main areas of concern towards which specific actions are directed in this VSP are:

1. Serving the recreation needs of the general public.
2. Resource preservation and restoration.
3. Long-term exclusive use areas (trailers, lake access, docks, etc.).
4. Establishing parameters for concession operations beyond the 2008/2009 expiration of current concession authorizations.
5. Identifying changes/additions to Government operated recreation facilities and programs.

NEED FOR THE PLAN

Beginning in 1959 with the PUP and continuing through 2000 with the DOI Inspector General Concessions Management Audit, the intended goal for recreation activities at the lake has been consistently identified. That goal is to appropriately support traditional short-term recreation users. Many other reports, observations, and plans over the past 42 years have also reemphasized that goal; however, the actual results obtained have not been in line with the oft-highlighted aspirations.

Early in the history of recreation development at Lake Berryessa, decisions were made and actions were taken that resulted in the primary focus of developing long-term exclusive use trailer villages. Neither Napa County, who was initially in charge of all recreation management, nor Reclamation since 1975, had insisted on maintaining or returning to the original intent of the public recreation program.

Currently there are approximately 1,500 occupied long-term trailer sites at Lake Berryessa operated

by the seven concessionaires. This number has been fairly constant over the last 30 years. Even though these facilities are not a part of any formal plans or area goals, they have, through their longevity and Government acquiescence, become the most apparent long-term feature at Lake Berryessa.

As the current concession contracts approach their 50-year terminus and expiration in 2008/2009, it is an appropriate time to refocus on the provision of outstanding recreation facilities and support for the general short-term public at Lake Berryessa. It is the proper time to analyze the changes and future needs for the lake and the opportunity to establish new requirements for commercial services following the approaching expiration in 2008/2009.

It is appropriate that the Federal Government formulate the VSP at this time. Since 1959, the need for quality recreation areas on public land has increased exponentially throughout the Nation and specifically throughout Northern California. Lake Berryessa is within a 2-hour drive of millions of people. It is important to assure that outdoor recreation programs conducted by the Government (trails, visitor centers, picnic areas, campgrounds, boat launch ramps, restrooms, parking, etc.) or through concessions contracts (lodging, food and beverage services, retail sales, marinas, RV parks, campgrounds, houseboating, etc.) are managed to appropriately serve the widest spectrum of the public in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Questions to the Public Concerning the Lake's Future Direction Regarding Public Recreation Programs and Support Facilities

Definitions applicable to these questions

The following explanations will help in applying certain terms that may have a wide range of meaning, specifically to the issues and conditions surrounding public recreation programs and facilities at the lake.

Short-term Use - Refers to the traditional type of recreational use seen at most federally managed recreation, forest, and park areas typified by public use that does not exceed a pre-established maximum time frame. This use is also characterized by the users not having any level of exclusive or permanent status over others also wishing to use the available facilities. The actual period of time can be flexible and depends on the demand for available public use facilities. This means that it could be possible to have a short-term use period for some area types that would last for several months, but with no exclusive rights of continuation at the end of the period.

Long-term Use - Refers to the permanent trailer installations present at each of the seven concession operations. It does not refer to any specific length of time. Some of the permittees have been present for up to 40 years. Trailers are often sold on-site, and the permittee pays a month-to-month fee to the concessioner for use of the site.

Dry Sites - Refers to trailer sites at many of the concession operations where the permittees do not have direct hook-ups to water and sewer connections.

Common Conditions - Refers to various situations that are intended to be present in any options discussed. This means that these conditions have been identified as 'unconditional' for the future of Lake Berryessa. The Common Conditions are necessary for many reasons including compliance with laws and regulations and concerns regarding public health and safety. Facilities and programs included in this category are:

Common Conditions RE: Concessionaire Operations

- Elimination of long-term Dry Sites.
- Compliance with applicable environmental, health and safety, and construction laws regulations/codes.

- Elimination of long-term trailers and support facilities, including private docks, stairways, or other built facilities, from the flood zone (455 mean sea level (msl) and below).
- Rehabilitation of lakeshore including the removal of poorly engineered and unapproved stabilization attempts.
- Sub-concessionaires will not be permitted. All commercial activities will be conducted directly by concessionaires.
- Informational and regulatory signing style in each concession area will be of a type compatible with the overall signing throughout the Lake Berryessa Recreation Area and of a common theme within individual concession properties.

Common Conditions RE: Government Operations

- Trails - A better system of trails around the lake is a need for hiking, equestrian, and multiple use. The RAMP stipulates the development of 40 more miles of trails. Cooperate with surrounding land holders (other agencies, private individuals, etc.) to develop a variety (hiking, mountain biking, equestrian, etc.) of designated trails. Provide accessible trail opportunities where feasible. The Eastside should follow the existing Lake Berryessa Wildlife Management Plan (1997) and the RAMP.
- Visitor/Information Programs/Facilities – The CA Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is becoming a major land owner north of the lake. As a Region, we can offer a lot to the area, especially working together to develop multi-agency/joint services. For example, the development of a multi-agency visitor facility by Reclamation, BLM, the University of CA at Davis, DFG, and the Blue Ridge/Berryessa Natural Area Group. Even if other groups are unable to participate, Reclamation believes that any facility should provide basic information and assistance beyond just the immediate Lake Berryessa area managed by Reclamation.

- Interpretive/Educational Programs - Development of a more consistent level of interpretation to enhance visitors' knowledge and education of natural and cultural resources at Lake Berryessa. This need could be initially developed on a seasonal basis.

- Public Parking - Additional parking is needed in some areas to accommodate public use.

Common Conditions for Both Government and Concessionaire

- Additional or new development will not occur outside of the areas currently established and used for public support areas. This means that none of the concession land assignment areas will be expanded and no significant new Government facilities will be developed with the possible exception of boat launch and parking areas as earlier identified. Some acreage originally designated as part of a concession land assignment but undeveloped may be withdrawn from such assignment.

* Trail development in previously undeveloped areas may occur by the Government. This VSP will address, in general, the development of additional trails, but the environmental clearances will be done independently when specific routes are proposed.

- Dock flotation will not be permitted if it is unenclosed foam or other installation that results in break up and trashing the lake. This common condition will apply to the upgrades of currently existing facilities as well as new construction.

Other Common Conditions

- The area now utilized by the Boy Scouts may no longer be retained for exclusive use. It is not in the best interest for contemporary public use to have this area set aside for the exclusive use and management of a single group (Boy Scouts). Flat, usable land is at a premium at the lake, and this area could support some quality visitor use

activities and seems to lend itself to being further developed for group use activities. The intent is to provide more opportunity for public lake access. Boy Scout groups would be provided an equal opportunity to reserve the area.

- Private waterskiing clubs or organizations may no longer be provided exclusive use of certain areas of the lake. Formal waterskiing activities and instruction, if permitted, will become a responsibility of a concessionaire, and for control and safety purposes, there may be assigned and restricted use areas.

The following questions provide an overview of the various possibilities for the future parameters of public recreation at the lake. If you wish to send us your comments, please submit them using the addresses on page 1.

LAKESHORE DEVELOPMENT

The lakeshore designation at a minimum will include all areas within 100 linear yards of 455 feet msl.

Ques. What types of lakeshore development should be acceptable at the lake above 455 msl?

Ques. Should there be significant development along the shoreline in concession areas and those other areas designated in the RAMP?

Ques. Should short-term uses such as RV parks, cabins, motels, camping, and general day-use be developed within concession areas?

Ques. Should concession facilities such as marinas, restaurants, launch ramps, and other water-based recreation facilities remain and expand as needed and as appropriately planned?

Ques. Even within concession areas, should lakeshore development be restricted to certain zones?

Ques. Other comments on future shoreline activities or facilities?

TRAILS

Ques. Should multi use trails be the standard or should Reclamation designate some trails or parts thereof as specific use types (i.e., hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)?

Ques. Where should trails and trailheads (to accommodate parking, etc.) be developed?

Ques. Should boating access trailheads be developed? Where?

Ques. Should interpretive nature trails be developed on the eastern shoreline?

Ques. Other comments on future trail facilities?

DAY USE

Day use encompasses picnicking, swimming, beach use, and fishing.

Ques. Is current access sufficient?

Ques. Are current facilities sufficient?

Ques. Should current federally managed day use areas (Oak Shores, Cappel Cove) be managed by a concession? Even though these areas are presently free, they may become fee areas even if staying under Government management.

Ques. Other comments on future day use activities or facilities?

BOAT-IN CAMPING

Ques. Should boat-in camping be considered for development at Lake Berryessa?

Ques. Where should boat-in opportunities be developed?

Ques. Should the naturalness of the islands be maintained?

Ques. Can this type of program be managed appropriately in an environmentally sound manner with the proper handling of sewage and solid waste? Would the public be willing to pay the premium to assure proper care if boat-in camping is established?

Ques. Who should manage these facilities, the Government or concessionaires?

Ques. What facilities would be needed on island and on shore (i.e., restrooms, docks, campsites, parking, garbage receptacles and pick up, etc.)?

Ques. Other comments on the future of boat-in camping activities or facilities?

GROUP CAMPING

These questions refer to the area known as the Boy Scout Camp west of Putah Creek Resort. As identified under 'Common Conditions' this area may no longer be assigned for the primary use of the Boy Scouts.

Ques. Should group campsites (of varying capacities) be developed?

Ques. Should individual (traditional campground) campsites be developed at this location?

Ques. Who should manage the facilities developed, the Government or concessionaires? Neither alternative will provide free use.

Ques. Should a trailhead and trails be developed from this location?

Ques. What facilities would need to be developed (i.e., restrooms, water, campsites, shade shelters/pavilions, BBQ pits, etc.)?

Ques. Other comments on this area's future use?

ZONING

Ques. Should certain areas of the lake be zoned to prohibit some types of usage (i.e., water skiing, houseboating, motorized boating, fishing, swimming, etc.)? Provide examples and locations.

Ques. Other comments on future zoning needs?

WATERSKIING

Ques. Should exclusive areas for waterskiing instruction and/or events continue to be permitted and set aside?

Ques. Other comments on future waterskiing activities or facilities?

COMMERCIAL HOUSEBOATING

Ques. At present there are no full service commercial houseboat rental operations on the lake. Should such an operation be authorized to provide similar services as are currently available in areas such as Lake Shasta, Lake Oroville, New Melones, McClure Reservoir, etc.?

Ques. Other comments on future houseboating activities or facilities?

FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPERATIONS

Ques. What types of food and beverage outlets should be associated with the following facilities (options would include full service dining, fast food/deli, grocery, vending): For hotels/motels/cabins? Marinas? Campgrounds and RV Parks?

Ques. Other comments on food and beverage needs?

LODGING

Ques. What types of lodging facilities would you want to see at the lake: Hotels including some support facilities for meetings? Motels? Cabins?

Ques. Other comments on future lodging needs?

RETAIL OUTLETS

Ques. What types of retail outlets or merchandise do you feel are necessary at Lake Berryessa: Marina and boating supplies? Groceries? Camping or RV supplies? Souvenirs and gifts? Hiking or fishing supplies? General sundries (books, health, postcards, etc.)? Other?

Ques. Other comments on future retail needs?

MARINAS

Ques. What types of marina facilities would you like to see in the future: Long-/short-term slip rentals? Dockside utilities? Land-based boat/trailer storage?

Ques. Are current marina facilities adequate?

Ques. Other comments on future marina needs?

GENERAL

Lake Berryessa is not presently fulfilling its potential as a public recreation area. The VSP should provide a bearing for recreation and environmental management at the lake for the next 15-20 years.

Ques. Do you have any other questions or comments regarding concerns or perceived needs for the lake regarding public recreation facilities and services?

VSP Schedule

As of May 2001 - Schedule is subject to change

May 8 - September 30, 2000

- Field work and information collection
- Informal public scoping
- Develop Website and newsletter

October 1, 2000 - March 30, 2001

- Begin developing written Draft Alternatives

April 1 - July 31, 2001

- Feasibility Analysis of Draft Alternatives
- Formal public scoping
- Explanation/identification of Draft Alternatives
- Newsletter mailings

August 1 - 31, 2001

- Analysis of public comments
- Rewrite of Alternatives (if needed)
- Agency determination of Preferred Alternative

September 1 - November 30, 2001

- Release of Draft Preferred Alternatives to the public
- Formal public comment/scoping
- Newsletter mailings
- Collection and analysis of public comment

December 1, 2001 - February 28, 2002

- Develop Final Draft Alternatives
- Determine environmental clearances

March 1, 2002

- Release Final Approved Plan

2002 - 2009

- Begin implementing sections of the plan that are not tied to Concession Contracts
- Based upon mutual agreement with individual concessionaires, may begin some changes in concession operations

2009

- Remaining conditions of VSP will be put into effect through new Concession Contracts

Correction to Bulletin 1

The Monticello Hydroelectric Power Plant was built by the Solano Irrigation District (SID), not by Reclamation as was stated in the October 2000 bulletin. Construction of the Power Plant began in September 1981; the first electricity was generated on March 9, 1983. A \$17 million revenue bond issue financed the project, and no Federal, State, or local tax monies were used. SID owns and operates the Power Plant. Electrical energy is generated by three hydroelectric units utilizing water releases to Putah Creek from Lake Berryessa through the existing northern penstock of Monticello Dam. Electricity is transmitted to the Pacific Gas and Electric Company's power grid. The installed capacity is 11.5 megawatts.

Meeting Held with Lake Berryessa Long-Term Trailer Site Permittees

On March 31, 2001, Reclamation held a special Open House for families who are long-term trailer site permittees at the lake. The Open House, held at the Solano County Fairgrounds, was attended by an estimated 500 people. Many important issues and events are ongoing at the lake, and a special effort was made to ensure the families are being kept informed. With the current concession contracts expiring in 2008/2009, these individuals have many questions. A number of comments were received after the event, and Reclamation is developing responses to them. The comments and responses will be available on Reclamation's Lake Berryessa website soon.

Need Additional Information?

You can find up-to-date information on Reclamation's website at:

<http://www.mp.usbr.gov/berryessa>

Or you may contact:

Bruce Wadlington, Concessions Manager
916/989-7175, bwadlington@mp.usbr.gov

Janet Harp, Public Involvement Specialist
916/978-5112, jharp@mp.usbr.gov

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