

March 23, 2001

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To: Interested Public

From: Bruce Wadlington, Mid-Pacific Regional Concessions Manager // s //

Subject: Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan - Formal Public Comment Opportunity

The following information outlines some of the data that has been developed to date in an effort to complete a long-term Visitor Services Plan (VSP) for Lake Berryessa. The document includes a revised tentative planning schedule indicating how the VSP is intended to progress.

Also included is a series of questions that define possible future parameters of public recreation at the lake. You may wish to respond to certain questions based on your personal interests. If you wish to provide Reclamation with any comments or suggestions related to the questions, you may do so either electronically or in writing:

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, Room E-1704
(Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Planning Effort)
Sacramento, California 95825

Please be aware that we expect to receive a large volume of comments and therefore will not be able to respond individually to the letters and e-mails. However, all comments will be consolidated by subject, and Reclamation will respond to each subject area as part of a future document. This document will be released to the public later in the planning process. All comments and suggestions received will be carefully considered as we begin formulating the various alternatives for the lake.

Thank you for your interest in planning for Lake Berryessa's future. You will find additional up-to-date information by logging on to: <http://www.mp.usbr.gov/berryessa>. If you have questions on the VSP, please contact Bruce Wadlington at 916/989-7175 (TDD 916/989-7285) or at the e-mail address listed above.

Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan (VSP)

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The *Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan (VSP) and Environmental Impact Statement* currently being developed will 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 directly through Reclamation operations and facilities and also currently 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 opportunities 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 guidance and general direction in the preparation of the draft alternatives:

1. Reservoir Area Management Plan as identified.
2. 1959 Public Use Plan as amended and highlighted in the RAMP.
3. 1972 General Accounting Office and 2000 Inspector General Audits as they apply to Lake Berryessa recreation facilities and programs and conformity to the RAMP.
4. Studies regarding the public's present and future recreation needs and desires both generally and specifically to Lake Berryessa.
5. Bureau of Reclamation National Concessions Management Policies.
6. Public comments as part of a formal scoping process.

The five main areas of concern toward 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 or additions to Government-operated recreation facilities and programs.

NEED FOR THE PLAN

Beginning in 1959 with the *Public Use Plan (PUP)* and continuing through 2000 with the *DOI Inspector General Concessions Management Audit*, the intended goal for recreation activities at Lake Berryessa 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 often 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 the Bureau of Reclamation, since 1975, have insisted on maintaining or returning to the original intent of the public recreation program.

Currently, there are approximately 1,500 long-term exclusive use trailer sites at Lake Berryessa operated by the seven concessionaires. These sites are utilized for recreational purposes by the long-term permittees and are not primary residences. This number has been fairly constant over the last 30 years. Even though these facilities are not part of any formal plan or area goal, 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 Lake Berryessa and the opportunity to establish new requirements for commercial services following these approaching expirations.

It is appropriate that the Federal Government direct the formulation of 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 2 hours of millions of people in the combined Sacramento, Bay Area, and other Northern California communities. It is important to assure that outdoor recreation programs conducted directly by the Government (trails, visitor centers, picnic areas, campgrounds, boat launch ramps, restrooms, parking, etc.) or through concessions contracts (lodging, food and beverage, retail sales, marinas, RV parks, campgrounds, houseboating, etc.) are managed to appropriately serve the widest spectrum of the public in an environmentally sensitive manner without exclusivity to certain members of the public.

Definitions Applicable to the Visitor Services Plan

The following definitions/explanations will help in understanding and applying certain terms specifically to the issues and conditions surrounding public recreation programs and facilities at Lake Berryessa.

Short-Term Use - Refers to the more 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 dependant 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 that are present at each of the seven concessionaire 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 concessionaire 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. Water is obtained by temporary external hook-ups to fill the trailers' freshwater holding tanks. Toilet usage must be at external restrooms provided by the concessionaire. It is prohibited for dry sites to utilize the sewage systems of their trailers since hook-ups are not available.

Common Conditions - Refers to various situations and options that are intended to be present in any planning alternatives discussed. This means that these conditions have been identified as 'unconditional' for the future of Lake Berryessa. These Common Conditions are necessary for a variety of reasons including compliance with laws and regulations and concerns regarding public health and safety.

Common Conditions To All Planning Alternatives

The following discussions outline those conditions and situations that are intended to be common to all planning alternatives. See the previous definition of Common Conditions if this term is confusing. These conditions are presented as follows:

Common Conditions RE: Concessionaire Operations

- < Elimination of long-term dry sites
- < Compliance with applicable environmental, health and safety, and construction laws, regulations, and codes.
- < Elimination of long-term trailer usage and support facilities from flood zone (455 mean sea level (msl) and below).
- < Rehabilitation of lakeshore including the removal of poorly engineered and unapproved stabilization attempts, private stairways, and other structures.
- < Sub-concessionaires will be strongly discouraged. All incidents where a concessionaire wishes to utilize a *sub* will be submitted in advance to Reclamation for consideration.
- < Informational and regulatory signing style in each concession area will be of a type that is 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. Eastside should follow existing Lake Berryessa Wildlife Management Plan (1997) and the RAMP.
- < *Visitor/Information Programs/Facilities* – The California 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 such as the development of a multi-agency/group visitor facility by Reclamation, the Bureau of Land Management, the University of California Davis, DFG, and the Blue Ridge/Berryessa Natural Area Group. Even if other agencies/groups are unable to participate, Reclamation believes any facility should provide basic information and assistance beyond just the Lake Berryessa area we manage.
- < *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 and 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 up the lake. This common condition will apply to required upgrades of currently existing facilities (in new contracts) as well as new construction.

Other Possible Common Conditions - The following items are areas that are being considered for inclusion under *Common Conditions* and will be determined as part of the market analysis of the various alternatives.

- < The Boy Scout area may no longer be retained for exclusive use. It may not be 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 Lake Berryessa, 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 to the public lake access. Boy Scout groups will 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.

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

Please review the following information and questions for an overview of the various issues and possibilities for the future parameters of public recreation at Lake Berryessa. Your comments or suggestions on any of the following are invited and encouraged.

LAKESHORE DEVELOPMENT - As regards this discussion, 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. Any 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 east shoreline?

Ques. Any 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 they stay under Government management.

Ques. Any 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 camping 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 (i.e., 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. Any other comments on the future of boat-in camping activities or facilities?

GROUP CAMPING - *Refers to the area presently known as the 'Boy Scout Camp' just west of Putah Creek Resort. As identified under 'Common Conditions,' this area may no longer be assigned for the primary or exclusive 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 (i.e., Government or concessionaire)?
(Note: 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. Any other comments on the future use of this area?

ZONING

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

Ques. Any other comments on future zoning needs?

WATERSKIING

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

Ques. Any other comments on future waterskiing activities or facilities?

COMMERCIAL HOUSEBOATING

Ques. At present there are not any full-service commercial houseboat rental operations on Lake Berryessa. 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. Any other comments on future houseboating activities or facilities?

FOOD AND BEVERAGE OPERATIONS

Ques. What types of food and beverage outlets would you want to see associated with the following facilities (i.e., full-service dining, fast food/deli, grocery, vending):

- Hotels/motels/cabins?
- Marinas?
- Campgrounds and RV Parks?

Ques. Any other comments on future food and beverage facilities or needs?

LODGING

Ques. What types of lodging facilities would you want to see at Lake Berryessa:

- Hotels including some support facilities for groups and meetings?
- Motels?
- Cabins?

Ques. Any other comments on future lodging facility 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 supplies?
- Souvenirs and gifts?
- RV supplies?
- Hiking supplies?
- Fishing supplies?
- General sundries (books, health needs, postcards, etc.)?
- Other?

Ques. Any other comments on future retail needs and facilities?

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 and trailer storage?
- Private houseboat slips?

Ques. Are current types of Marina facilities adequate?

Ques. Any other comments on future Marina needs or facilities?

GENERAL - *Lake Berryessa is an area that is not presently fulfilling its potential as a public recreation area. This plan should provide a bearing for effective and insightful recreation and environmental management at Lake Berryessa for the next 15 to 20 years.*

Ques. Are there any other questions, comments, concerns, or perceived needs for Lake Berryessa regarding public recreation facilities and services?

LAKE BERRYESSA VISITOR SERVICES PLANNING SCHEDULE

(as of March 2001)

May 8 - September 30, 2000

Field work, information collection, and newsletter mailing

October 1, 2000 - March 2001

Development of Purpose and Need Statements

Development of questions to the public in preparation for scoping

March 2001 - May 2001

Formal public comment period (scoping)

+ Newsletter mailing - formal scoping

May 2001 - September 2001

Condition assessment of concessionaire facilities

Develop Initial Alternatives

Determination of level of environmental clearances

Feasibility analysis of Draft Alternatives

September 2001 - November 2001

Public comment (scoping) of Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Alternatives

+ Explanation and identification of Draft Alternatives

+ Newsletter mailing

+ Release of Environmental Impact Statement

November 2001 - January 2002

Collection and analysis of public comments

January 2002 - March 2002

Development of Final Draft Alternatives

+ Determination of environmental clearances required

+ Completion of final environmental clearances

May 2002

Release of Final Approved Plan

2002 - 2009

Begin implementation of sections of the VSP that are not tied to Concession Contracts

+ Based upon mutual agreement with individual concessionaires, some changes in concession operations could begin

2009

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