



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Mid-Pacific Regional Office
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, California 95825-1898

IN REPLY
REFER TO:
MP-140
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MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: Kirk C. Rodgers
Regional Director

Subject: Record of Decision for the Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan

The Bureau of Reclamation has released the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan (VSP). The ROD states the decision that will be implemented and discusses the factors that led to the decision.

In the late 1950s, Napa County awarded seven long-term (30-year) concession contracts on behalf of Reclamation to develop and manage recreation activities at Lake Berryessa. All seven contracts were extended an additional 20 years (two successive 10-year terms each) after Reclamation assumed responsibility for recreation at the lake in 1975. Six contracts are expiring in 2008/2009 after 50 years; one interim contract expires in 2007. There is no statutory authority to renew the contracts or to provide preferential consideration to existing contractors.

Reclamation initiated extensive public outreach beginning in 2000 to plan for future visitor services at the lake after the contracts' expiration. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the VSP was published in October 2003. In conjunction with the Draft EIS, Reclamation conducted two public review and comment periods over 7 months and received more than 3,400 written comment letters and e-mails. Reclamation published the Final EIS in October 2005. Reclamation conducted 12 public meetings and briefings, attended by some 1,200 people, to present and discuss the Final EIS and the forthcoming decision process.

Reclamation adopted an interest-based approach to developing the ROD. The decision was determined only after Reclamation identified and systematically considered each major interest of each participating stakeholder group in relation to written public comments and feedback from public meetings. The process took almost 5 months to complete and resulted in substantive modifications to the Preferred Alternative identified in the Final EIS.

In the VSP ROD, Reclamation's previous Preferred Alternative (Alternative B) was modified to include elements of Alternatives A, C, and D. The VSP ROD also carries forward key recreation-related provisions from the 1993 Reservoir Area Management Plan (RAMP) ROD and includes a range of mitigation measures. Key points in the ROD include:

Recreation Program Management: The VSP ROD prescribes basic management principles designed to guide and support lake-wide integration of Government and commercial operations in the best interests of the visiting public. Reclamation will sponsor a forum of public agencies, with meetings open to the public, to promote communication and collaboration in implementing the VSP ROD and addressing issues of mutual concern.

Government Operations: Government-operated day-use recreation areas include Oak Shores, Smittle Creek, Olive Orchard, Pope Creek, North Shore, Eticuera, Markley Cove, and Steele Canyon. Reclamation will continue to operate Capell Cove launch ramp. Reclamation will continue to operate Camp Berryessa and will develop facilities on a partnership basis.

Concession Operations: The current concession areas at Markley Cove, Pleasure Cove, Steele Park, Spanish Flat, Lake Berryessa Marina, Rancho Monticello, and Putah Creek will be developed and operated by commercial concession contractor(s).

Facilities: Future development of the concession areas is limited to facilities that support short-term, traditional, non-exclusive, and diverse recreational opportunities at the lake. Future concession operations at any particular concession area may include any or all facilities identified in the VSP ROD subject to certain requirements. No particular concession area is designated the "center" for any particular activity. All facilities must be constructed or installed, operated, and maintained by the concession contractor in conformance with Reclamation policies and requirements. All privately owned trailers, mobile homes, and associated personal property must be removed from Federal property at Lake Berryessa.

Occupancy on Federal Lands: Day-use occupancy refers to picnicking, boating, hiking, and activities typically experienced in a single day and not associated with an overnight stay. Short-term occupancy refers to overnight use of campsites, RV/travel-trailer sites, motel/lodge, park models, etc. for a term not to exceed 14 days during any period of 30 consecutive days. Annual occupancy may be permitted but only under certain conditions. Annual occupancy refers to use of cabins, cottages, or park models constructed or installed, operated, and maintained by contractors, for a term of 1 year with option to renew for not more than two consecutive 1-year terms. Actual use shall be limited to no more than 90 consecutive days, and no more than 6 months per year.

Facility Locations: Specific types of facilities may be developed within each of three geographic locations at each concession area. The locations correspond with elevations above mean sea level (MSL) related to critical reservoir operations. Specifically, elevation 440' MSL represents the top of the active conservation pool for water supply/ water quality purposes, and elevation 440'-455' MSL is the reservoir surcharge capacity for flood control purposes.

Land and Water Use Classification: The Water Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (WROS) is not adopted in the ROD. Paragraph 17, "Water Surface Zoning and Restrictions," of the 1993 RAMP ROD is carried forward on an interim basis pending future adoption of the WROS or other land and water use classification system.

Water Craft Occupancy: Occupancy requirements for houseboats will be carried forward in accordance with Lake Berryessa Operational Policy #1 dated July 23, 1993.

Water Craft Carrying Capacity: Pending completion of a comprehensive analysis of water craft carrying capacity, Actions 20, 30, and 32 from the 1993 RAMP ROD is carried forward: capacity remains at 3,000 water craft (powerboats, sailboats, etc.), and 150 houseboats (75 commercial/75 non-commercial).

Powerboats at Markley Cove: There will be no reduction in the current capacity to support the use of powerboats at Markley Cove.

Trails: Reclamation will partner with other Government agencies, private landowners, and private organizations to design/construct a regional trail system for non-motorized recreation, to include a multipurpose shoreline trail.

Signage: All Government-operated recreation areas and all concession areas will be clearly identified as a Reclamation facility on all appropriate signage. All signage will be consistent with Reclamation Visual Identity Program requirements.

Mitigation Measures (Hardship Situations): Reclamation will accommodate approximately 20 mostly elderly individuals who live permanently in concession areas as a sole residence. Reclamation will develop eligibility criteria. Accommodation may include relocation to another concession area.

Mitigation Measures (Existing Contractors): Among other measures, Reclamation will (1) consider amending certain provisions in existing contracts to offset contract close-out costs, (2) expedite valuation of contractor-owned facilities, and (3) structure Requests for Proposal (RFP) to allow prospective contractors to submit proposals for individual concession areas, combinations of concession areas, or all seven concession areas.

Mitigation Measures (Permittees): Eligible permittees will receive priority consideration for cabins, cottages, or park models approved for annual occupancy through the RFP process. At a minimum, permittees must first remove their trailer or mobile home and associated personal property from Federal lands at no cost to the Government. Reclamation will establish a transition service capability to assist permittees in finding resources remove their personal property to non-Federal lands.

Mitigation Measures (Current Contractor Employees): Reclamation will include provisions in new contracts that recommend priority consideration of current contractor staff for employment.

Request for Proposal (RFP): Reclamation will solicit proposals for concessions operations as soon as possible upon release of the VSP ROD. Proposals will be solicited from the widest practicable range of qualified bidders nationwide. All proposals must conform to the VSP ROD and other requirements. Approved proposals are subject to site-specific environmental analysis prior to implementation.

The ROD is available on the Region's website at www.usbr.gov/mp/berryessa. For a paper copy, please contact Ms. Janet Sierzputowski at 916-978-5112 or e-mail jsierzputowski@mp.usbr.gov. For further information on the ROD, please contact Mr. Pete Lucero, Park Manager, Lake Berryessa, at 707-966-2111, ext. 106.