

Lake Berryessa Political History Timeline: 1958 - 2020

1958

Reclamation enters into a long-term agreement with Napa County to manage recreational development at Lake Berryessa.

1958 - 1959

Napa County awards seven long-term (30 year) concession agreements to newly formed resorts to provide recreation services. Leased mobile home sites provide revenue needed to support short-term uses such as camping and launching.

1959

The "Arc of Enthusiasm" begins. A Lake Berryessa Public Use Plan (PUP) is prepared by the National Park Service (NPS). "Should accommodate 3,000 boats at 125 launch ramps; minimum of 8,000 picnic sites and 800 camp sites."

April 22, 1970

The first Earth Day marks the birth of the modern environmental movement. Coincidentally, the five year "The Big Lie" attack on Lake Berryessa begins.

February 1972

Government Accountability Office Audit: "Public Recreational Facilities Not Adequately Developed at Lake Berryessa." One of the first 1970s reports criticizing Lake Berryessa facilities. Generally a silly hit piece introducing "The Big Lie: The Lake Berryessa resorts, especially the mobile homes in the resorts, discouraged the general public from accessing the lake, prevented the public from using the best parts of the shoreline, and also polluted the lake."

1972 - 1973

Congressman Don Clausen involvement: Supported Napa County. Introduced H.R. 11758 to authorize the Federal government to direct the development, operation, and maintenance of day-use facilities.

March, 1972

National Park Service releases controversial "Plan for Recreation Development - Draft". Opposed by Napa County.

April, 1972

Napa County released "Lake Berryessa Day Use Facilities Plan" in response to the NPS plan.

August, 1972

The "Arc of Enthusiasm" continues. The National Park Service formally updates the PUP at Reclamation's request. "Plan for Recreation Development - Final". NPS concluded that Lake Berryessa is "not of national significance for recreation". Proposed 16 Development Areas all around the lake to serve 9 million annual visitors!

1974

The "Big Lie" engenders the "Big Fail". After years of fruitless discussion and debate with Reclamation regarding the Lake Berryessa management agreement, Napa County notifies Reclamation of its intent to turn lake recreation management back to Reclamation by 1975.

1974 - 1980

Congress enacts Public Law 93-493 authorizing Reclamation to manage recreation at Lake Berryessa. Reclamation constructs facilities as authorized: two day-use areas, public boat ramp,

parking lot, and administrative offices. Amends 1975 Public Use Plan to allow mobile homes with some restrictions. Reclamation constructs federal recreation facilities as authorized: two day-use areas, public boat ramp, parking lot, and administrative offices. Amends 1975 Public Use Plan to allow mobile homes with some restrictions.

1976 - 1980

Reclamation Lake Manager, B.E. Martin, attempts to cancel concession contracts. A lawsuit ensued and was settled in the concessioners' favor in 1979. Court concluded: Plaintiffs (concessioners) constructed, at its own cost and expense, facilities for public use including but not limited to buildings, stores, access roads, vehicle parking areas, boat launching ramps and docks, mobile home pads, swimming beaches, picnic areas and camp sites. All of said improvements conformed to the Public Use Plan and had prior approval of Defendants and all County, State and Federal agencies having jurisdiction over said matter."

September, 1980

Public Law 96-375: This law was passed to protect both the concessionaires and the government by allowing the concessionaire to receive fair market value for their property and improvements. Intent was twisted by Reclamation in 2009 to force removal of ALL facilities in 2009. This was the key element in the destruction of most facilities at the resorts. Reclamation's interpretation was upheld in court.

1980

Reclamation extends all seven concession contracts for ten years each.

1988 - 1989

Reclamation prepares the Lake Berryessa Reservoir Area Management Plan (Ramp). The plan allowed long-term use for its positive economic benefits (Pg.60).

May 1, 1992

Reservoir Area Management Plan (RAMP) Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) released. Detailed 150 page+ analysis. Supported resort owners and long-term uses with some restrictions.

May, 1995

Inspector General (OIG) Report (95-I-870): "Recreation Management Activities at Selected Sites, Bureau of Reclamation." Criticized Reclamation for not removing mobile homes at the resorts.

1995

Reclamation extends all seven concession contracts for another ten years.

May, 2000

OIG Report (00-I-376): "Concessions Managed by the Bureau of Reclamation" is critical of Reclamation management with negative comments about Lake Berryessa. Timing seems designed to support the newly announced Visitor Services Plan.

June 26, 2000

Reclamation announces the Visitor Services Plan (VSP) in a news release.

October, 2000

VSP Bulletin #1 sent out: Included VSP Schedule and negative (Big Lie) photos.
Nov. 7, 2000 Reclamation formally initiates the Visitor Services Plan (VSP) process with a Notice of Intent published in the Federal Register.

March 6, 2001

Reclamation holds a "Media Tour" to publicize "pollution" problems allegedly caused by long-term sites. This is the rebirth of the "Big Lie" strategy originally used in the 1970s to discredit the resorts and mobile homeowners (permittees).

March 23, 2001

Reclamation VSP planning memo released for public comment on the VSP.

March 31, 2001

Reclamation hosts VSP open house at Solano County Fairgrounds - 500 people attend. Meeting announcement states that this is "not a formal meeting."

May - June, 2001

Reclamation begins formal "Public Scoping" per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

May, 2001

VSP Bulletin #2 sent out soliciting public comments.

May, 2001

Task Force 7 at Lake Berryessa formed by co-chairs Peter Kilkus and Pat Monaghan. Mission Statement: "To prevent the unjustified removal of mobile homes from Lake Berryessa through political action, community education, and environmental stewardship."

May 10, 2001

Task Force 7 requests meeting with Reclamation for permittees. Reclamation ungraciously agrees "even though permittees are only one special interest group." Reclamation is clear at the meeting that it will require that, despite any relevant analysis to the contrary, all long-term sites are to be removed in any new plan.

July, 2001

Reclamation publishes 28 pages of "Scoping Responses" - comments and written responses to the May, 2001 VSP Bulletin #2.

August 7, 2001

TF7 representatives meet with Reclamation to discuss VSP. Reclamation again made it clear that mobile homes must be removed as part of any plan. Reclamation states permittees have no rights and have paid "\$10,000 for a trailer and \$50,000 for a view."

August, 2001

Removal of 127 trailers from the "Outback" at Pleasure Cove due to a Notice of Violation from the Regional Water Quality Control Board regarding illegal ground discharge of wastewater. Reclamation was aware of this issue for years.

November, 2001

Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Planning Task Force (LBVSPT) is formed and introduces its Coordinated Resource Management Plan (VSP-CRMP) and a new web site for public comment on the draft VSP. LBVSPT is a broader group than Task Force 7 and includes all stakeholders who support positive future improvements at Lake Berryessa. "Preserve the Best, Improve the Rest."

September 23, 2002

Task Force 7 representatives travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with local Congressional representatives and present 10,015 signatures to the Bureau of Reclamation stating: "We, the undersigned, are opposed to the Bureau of Reclamation's intention to remove all long-term sites at Lake Berryessa. We do not believe there is a compelling public policy reason for this harmful action, which would devastate the community and cause economic hardship to many citizens. We support the LBVSPT alternative plan, which retains long-term sites, advocates an environmentally sound policy for managing the lake, and provides the public with a rewarding recreational experience."

December 19, 2002

LBVSPT publishes its VSP-CRMP. LBVSPT representatives meet with Reclamation representatives to discuss the VSP. Reclamation rejects the LBVSPT plan.

December 30, 2002

Reclamation publishes its Environmental Compliance and Facility Condition Assessment Report, Seven Concession Areas ("Kleinfelder Report"). Generally negative summary of the physical condition of existing facilities and infrastructure at the resorts.

February, 2003

LBVSPT distributes letters and posters announcing VSP CRMP to all businesses and resorts around Lake Berryessa and 25 public agencies. Posts notices on Reclamation information boards at public launch ramp and Smittle Creek. Posters are removed by Reclamation.

March 4, 2003

In response to LBVSPT announcement of VSP CRMP, Congressman Mike Thompson rejects LBVSPT, defends Reclamation process.

March 17, 2003

LBVSPT mails 360 VSP CRMP announcement letters to all home owners around Lake Berryessa (Berryessa Highlands, Spanish Flat, Berryessa Pines)

May 10, 2003

LBVSPT/TF7 holds scoping and information meetings at Putah Creek Resort, Rancho Monticello Resort, Spanish Flat Resort, Steele Park Resort.

May 25, 2003

TF7 Banjo Band Flotilla event introduces a Petition Signature drive. Boat caravan to Steele Park Resort, Spanish Flat Resort, Rancho Monticello Resort, and Putah Creek Resort with representatives to gather signatures and educate campers and visitors.

June 2, 2003

LBVSPT began Online Petition in support of LBVSPT CRMP: 986 signatures as of April, 2004.

July, 2003

Reclamation Area Manager, Tom Aiken, releases incendiary, false presentation and brochure promoting The Big Lie that resort mobile homes are polluting the lake. Includes nasty photos of a few mobile home violations at the Pleasure Cove Outback which had been known to Reclamation for many years and should have been resolved by them. Presentation claims Native Americans will weave special baskets to purify the lake water. Task Force 7 writes strong rebuttal to the brochure and presentation.

October 15, 2003

Reclamation releases the Dornbusch Report which evaluates the financial feasibility of VSP draft Alternative B, the "preferred alternative" which removes all mobile homes from the lake. Concludes the Reclamation's plan is marginally feasible but intensely complex based on highly questionable assumptions. Reclamation disingenuously promotes the report as justification for major disruption of lake operations with no guarantee of success.

October 31, 2003

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) released (250 pgs.). Four alternatives (A, B, C, D) proposed, but skewed to remove "long-term" sites "to correct over four decades of resort operations under which prime recreational areas have been reserved for long-term trailer site permittees to the exclusion of the majority of visitors to Lake Berryessa." New version of "The Big Lie".

November, 2003

Initial DEIS comment period begins. Extended twice in response to intense stakeholder demands created by TF7 and LBVSPT.

April 20, 2004

LBVSPT publishes its final Lake Berryessa Visitor Services Plan: LBVSPT Alternative A+. Proposes improvements to all facilities without the destruction of mobile homes. "Preserve the Best, Improve the Rest."

May, 2004

Reclamation evaluate DEIS comments but intentionally skews results to support its plans. Reclamation categorizes comments that "want change" as being against retention of mobile homes even though written by present mobile home owners who also want positive change. Includes 888 Blue Water Network form letters to ban jet skis as anti-mobile home comments. A physical review by TF7 of all the 1,600 comment letters at the time (excluding the irrelevant Blue Water Network form letters) showed that at least 60% support the retention of mobile homes and other positive improvements.

September, 2004

Citizens to Protect Lake Berryessa commissions an independent economic peer review of Reclamation's DEIS.

October 25, 2004

Economic Analysis of the Dornbusch Associates Report and the Bureau of Reclamation's "Alternative B" Plan for Lake Berryessa By Adam B. Summers, M.A. & Michael R. Summers, Ph.D. Supports the conclusions of LBVSPT A+.

February, 2005

Reclamation, in an almost unprecedented action based on the Summers and Summers Economic Analysis, reopened the DEIS comment period for 45 days to accept additional comments regarding the economic issues of their plan.

April 4, 2005

Lake Berryessa resort owners publish their VSP alternative: Resort Owners Plan (ROP), Future Recreation Use and Operations of Lake Berryessa. An independent economic analysis of the ROP is commissioned by LBVSPT: Analysis of the Resort Owners Plan for Lake Berryessa by Adam B. Summers, M.A. and Michael R. Summers, Ph.D, April 4, 2005. Summers Report supports the conclusions of the ROP.

Summer, 2005

Citizens to Protect Lake Berryessa and other groups bring the issue before Congress and request a review of the Reclamation's actions and the implementation of the Resort Operators' Plan in place of the Reclamation DEIS. Proposal receives no support from Cong. Mike Thompson.

September, 2005

Reclamation submits modified DEIS and analysis of comments to Reclamation's Washington, DC Office.

November 4, 2005

Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) released.

November 19, 2005

Winters Protest Meeting: More than 900 people with a stake in Lake Berryessa's future packed the Winters High School gym to denounce the Bureau of Reclamation's effort to eliminate long-time family recreation. Cong. Thompson does not attend. Reclamation's plan for Lake Berryessa continues to grow in unpopularity.

November, 2005

At the request of Congressman Richard Pombo, Reclamation extends 30-day "cooling off " period under NEPA to a full 6-months and accepts comments to the FEIS throughout this time.

June 2, 2006

Final Record of Decision (ROD) released. Requires removal of all mobile homes. Creates an "Annual Usage" category but refuses to allow this option to be used in future bids without penalty to the bidder.

April 22, 2007

Earth Day

Rancho Monticello Resort Announces Compliance with the ISO 14000 International Environmental Standard. Rancho Monticello becomes the only resort at Lake Berryessa to implement an Environmental Management System meeting the requirements of ISO 14001, the internationally recognized environmental management standard being used by leading companies around the world.

June 16, 2007

Berryessa For All v. United States Bureau of Reclamation seeks injunctive relief on the basis that the FEIS and VSP ROD violate NEPA, Administrative Procedure Act, and Federal Law.

June, 2007

Reclamation completes appraisals of existing facilities. Appraisals are contested as too low by concessioners for excluding their major infrastructure investments. Ultimately the appraisals were of no practical value since Reclamation claimed that no existing facilities were necessary and required them all to be demolished at the Concessioner's own cost - citing their flawed interpretation of Public Law 96-375.

June, 2007

Initial Bid Prospectus released soliciting proposals for all seven concession areas. Evaluation standards were deliberately written to favor a single bidder for multiple resorts and to penalize inclusion of the annual usage sites approved in the Record of Decision

September 6, 2007

Initial due date for proposals in response to the Prospectus.

January - February , 2008

After delays due to litigation by Markley Cove owners, Reclamation panel evaluates bid proposals.

April, 2008

Selection of successful bidders: Pensus (5 resorts), Forever Resorts (Pleasure Cove), Markley Cove. The selection of Pensus is regarded by most knowledgeable observers as a fundamental error on the part of Reclamation. Subsequent events prove them correct.

Reclamation rejects the best and most environmentally advanced bid from Lago Resorts on a technicality without even evaluating it. The bid was declared non-responsive due to one sentence that did not make the U.S. government the first lien holder on personal property loans. Lago Resorts, a partnership among Rancho Monticello, Putah Creek, Berryessa Marina, Spanish Flat and Markley Cove, immediately agreed to fix the "deficiency" but was rejected by Reclamation. Another major nail in the coffin of the recovery of Lake Berryessa as a prime recreation destination.

June, 2008

Negotiations initiated or scheduled between successful bidders and Reclamation. Pleasure Cove contract with Forever Resorts signed. Markley Cove contract nearing end of negotiations but never signed. Complex Pensus contract in process.

July 10, 2008

District Court Order in *Berryessa For All v. United States Bureau of Reclamation*: Court determines that the FEIS and VSP ROD adequately complied with NEPA and federal law. Mobile home owners have no further recourse and must demolish their homes at their own expense (approximately \$3,500 each) since they are too old to be moved.

December, 2008

Reclamation awards new long-term concession contract for Pleasure Cove Marina to Forever Resorts.

March, 2009

Reclamation cancels negotiations with Markley Cove and Pensus because of a minor technicality in the bid document regarding future federal funding. The Antideficiency Act prohibits the government from purchasing, or implying that they may purchase, assets for which funds have not yet been officially approved by Congress. This could have been easily resolved. A single government attorney seriously disrupts a decades long process. Requires a complete rebid of the concession selection process, but allows Pleasure Cove contract to remain in force.

May 15, 2009

Revised Bid Prospectus released for six concession areas.

May 26, 2009

Intense public pressure forces Reclamation to sign interim contracts with Markley Cove and Steele Park to avoid interruption of services.

June 9, 2009

Intense public pressure forces Reclamation to agree to operate temporary campground at Oak Shores Day Use Area.

June, 2009

Reclamation initiates "environmental remediation and clean-up" at each concession area, including demolition of millions of dollars of useable facilities and infrastructure (launch ramps, roads utilities, restaurants, marinas, lodging)

September 30, 2009

New bid proposals due; five separate proposals received. Some previous bidders dropped out. Reclamation's bid evaluation panel analyzes latest proposals during November.

January 14, 2010

Pensus Group selected as most responsive bid for all six concession areas. Markley Cove loses the bid it had previously won. Markley owners question the legality of the results and demand an investigation. OIG Investigative Report (March 3, 2011) determines there were no improprieties with contract award process.

February 5, 2010

Reclamation signs settlement agreement with former operators regarding clean-up and access and use of launch ramps and roads at the Steele Park concession area. Reclamation pays Steele Park owner several hundred thousand dollars despite previous requirement to demolish said roads and launch ramp. This action contradicts Reclamation's demolition policy implemented at the other resorts and appears to be reacting to the intense public pressure to keep Steele Park open for basic recreation services.

April 28, 2010

Pensus Contract awarded. Pensus changes resort names which is a profoundly unpopular action with the local community. Basic services are provided by Pensus during 2010 at Lupine Shores

(previously Steele Park) and Chaparral Cove (previously Putah Creek) concession areas. Relations between Pensus and Reclamation soon begin to deteriorate.

June 21, 2010

Long-term concession contract awarded to Pleasure Cove Marina LLC, superseding latest contract, despite previous statements by Reclamation that no contract changes would be allowed.

December, 2011 - February, 2012

Relations between Pensus and Reclamation continue to deteriorate with long legal arguments exchanged. Many of the problems appear to observers to be caused by Reclamation's unrealistic policies and poor management. Pensus management appears inept and arrogant despite the validity of many of their complaints.

February - March, 2012

Reclamation provides Pensus a Letter of Non-Compliance with 30-day opportunity to cure. Pensus responds to Reclamation's demand for cure. Reclamation provides Pensus a Notice of Proposed Termination

May - September, 2012

Reclamation and Pensus agree to invoke mediation. Mediation ended with no settlement.

December 6, 2012

Notice of Proposed Termination referred to Mid Pacific Regional Director whose final decision is to terminate the Pensus contract.

December 7, 2012

Under intense public pressure, Reclamation staff began operating three concession areas (Steele Park, Spanish Flat, Putah Creek) to continue to provide services to the public.

December, 2012

Reclamation held three public meetings to explain decision to terminate Pensus contract. Agrees to change five recreation area names to Putah Canyon, Berryessa Point, Monticello Shores, Spanish Flat, Steele Canyon. Names for Pleasure Cove and Markley Cove remain.

January - September, 2013

Reclamation negotiates draft interim concession contracts with potential contractors; purchased picnic tables, fire rings, and upright BBQ's to replace Pensus personal property; installed six double-vault concrete toilets at Steele Canyon, Spanish Flat, and Putah Canyon; installed six aluminum courtesy docks at Steele Canyon, Spanish Flat, and Putah Canyon Recreation Areas; and funded a \$128,760 contract to provide private security services for Putah Canyon, Monticello Shores, and Berryessa Point Recreation Areas.

January 17, 2013

Reclamation holds a public meeting to discuss the establishment of a Community Forum followed by six Lake Berryessa Community Forum meetings during 2013.

May 1, 2013

Reclamation executes an interim contract with John and Linda Frazier to operate Markley Cove Resort. Contract had the unique and inconsistent provision, not allowed in any previous contract nor included in the previous bids invoking Public Law 96-375, that any company winning a future bid or buying Markley Cove would have to pay for the assessed value of the facilities (approximately \$6M).

May, 2013

Reclamation executes an interim contract with Pleasure Cove Marina, LLC, to operate Steele Canyon and Spanish Flat Recreation Areas, and with Royal Elk Park Management to operate Putah Canyon Recreation Area.

August, 2013 to January, 2014

Reclamation prepares a Market Development Plan, Conceptual Site Plans, Conceptual Designs, and Potential Market Demand and Financial Feasibility Analysis for five concession areas.

September 11, 2013

Reclamation awards a contract to design and install three RV Dump Stations in Steele Canyon, Spanish Flat, and Putah Canyon Recreation Areas and to design and install a water distribution system at Putah Canyon Recreation Area.

January, 2014

Reclamation releases preliminary conceptual site diagrams for Steele Canyon, Spanish Flat, Berryessa Point, Monticello Shores, and Putah Canyon and held a public workshop to gather input on the draft plans.

July, 2015

Reclamation releases Concession Bid Prospectus.

February, 2016

Reclamation announces that no successful bids were received in response to the Prospectus for the development and long-term management of five concession areas at Lake Berryessa (Putah Canyon, Spanish Flat, Monticello Shores, Berryessa Point and Steele Canyon recreation areas).

March 2, 2016

Reclamation holds Community Forum Public Meeting to explain results of failed bid process and faces vocal criticism from the attendees. Provides several potential alternative future actions. No communication from Reclamation after that.

March, 2016

Lake Berryessa News begins Renaissance Lake Berryessa campaign to return management of Lake Berryessa to Napa County.

April, 2016

Reclamation informs interim concessioners for three recreation areas that their contracts may be extended up to two years.

May 20, 2016

Reclamation releases Markley Cove Bid Prospectus several months late.

May, 2016

Lake Berryessa News: "A Path Forward To Revitalize Lake Berryessa: Fire The Feds!"

June, 2016

Lake Berryessa News: "Letter to the Federal Government: Get Out of Lake Berryessa!"

June, 2016

Napa County Supervisors direct staff to enter into negotiations for a Managing Partner Agreement between the County and Reclamation for the management of Lake Berryessa.

January, 2017

Napa County Supervisors direct staff to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Reclamation and a contract with Ragatz Sedgwick Realty who will assist the County in identifying interested concession partners by marketing the opportunity to the resort community and performing a feasibility analysis to determine the best use of each site.

March, 2017

Napa County releases on-line survey to help determine the public's desires for the types of recreational opportunities and amenities they would like to see at the lake. More than 3,000 people responded. 92% are interested in visiting Lake Berryessa if it has the right facilities.

July, 2017

Ragatz Sedgwick Realty presents comprehensive, extremely positive 434-page report to Napa Supervisors, Lake Berryessa: An Untapped Resort Development Opportunity.

October, 2017

Napa County releases a Request for Interest and Information (RFII) to solicit potential concessionaires for five sites at the lake. Nine companies responded.

January, 2018 - February, 2020

Negotiations between Napa County and the Bureau of Reclamation regarding a Managing Partner Agreement (MPA) continue with no visible results. Napa County frustrated by Reclamation stalling tactics. Original schedule for an RFP has slipped by six months. Reclamation says it supports the process but will not finalize a decision to allow new concession contracts with 55-year terms.

Reclamation requires a long-term schedule and financial analysis from Napa County. County presents a new plan. Schedules slip again into 2020 and beyond. No tangible results follow. Napa County and the Bureau of Reclamation announce in December, 2019 that negotiations are complete and an MPA will be signed in February, 2020.

March 17, 2020

The Napa Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the Managing Partner Agreement (MPA) with the Bureau of Reclamation.

March - July, 2020

Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic crisis hit at the same time. The County, country, and world went into lockdown. The Lake Berryessa bid process suffered another significant delay.

August - September, 2020

Napa County works with Ragatz Realty to develop the bid prospectus for Steele Canyon, Spanish Flat, and Monticello Shores Recreation Areas. Napa County also develops a job position for Concession Manager.