

Lake Berryessa Revitalization and the Napa General Plan

by Peter Kilkus

Some people have raised the issue of the Napa County General Plan and its applicability to the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program (Renaissance Lake Berryessa). Legally the General Plan has no jurisdiction over Lake Berryessa development since federal government owns the land on which the target resort redevelopment is occurring. But since the county signed a Managing Partner Agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to take over management of the resorts at the lake and is now in charge of the future redevelopment of those resorts, the Napa General Plan should, and will, inform the planning for the new resorts. So, what does it actually say?

My conclusion is the general plan does not conflict with nor contradict the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program. It actually supports the resort planning goals.

The plan is available online at: <https://www.countyofnapa.org/1760/General-Plan>

I scanned the whole plane for references to Lake Berryessa, the region around it, and the term nature-based recreation. The following report summarizes my findings.

Napa County General Plan

The County's General Plan serves as a broad framework for planning the future of Napa County. This General Plan is the official policy statement of the County Board of Supervisors to guide the private and public development of the County.

- Directs housing and commercial enterprises to the incorporated jurisdictions and designated urbanized areas through the use of maps and policies.
- Protects agriculture and agricultural, watershed and open space lands by maintaining 40- and 160-acre minimum parcel sizes, limiting uses allowed in agricultural areas, and designating agriculture as our primary land use.
- Provides for the additional workforce and affordable housing by identifying necessary sites and programs and by continued collaborations with municipalities.
- Contains policies aimed at preserving the County's irreplaceable biodiversity, protecting significant natural resources and water resources, and improving the ecological health of the Napa River.
- Includes provisions focused on identifying and preserving the County's cultural and historical resources.
- Provides transportation policies aimed at addressing congestion, safety, and accessibility, emphasizing alternatives to the private automobile and limited road improvements.
- Describes a network of bike routes and recreational trails connecting residents to parks and an increasing amount of permanently protected public open space.
- Includes policies aimed at reducing local contributions to global climate change and encouraging sustainable building practices, sustainable vineyard practices, and ecological stewardship.
- Recognizes that protecting the economic viability of agriculture is critical to the County's future and that tourism and supporting industries that are compatible with agriculture also contribute to its viability.

Table of Contents: All files below are in the Adobe PDF format. You need Adobe Reader to view these files.

- Napa County General Plan - Complete Document (PDF)
- Amending Resolutions (PDF)
- Signature Page (PDF)

- Introduction (PDF)
- Summary and Vision (PDF)
- Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Element (PDF)
- Circulation Element (PDF)
- Community Character Element (PDF)
- Conservation Element (PDF)
- Economic Development Element (PDF)
- Housing Element (2014) (PDF)
- Recreation and Open Space Element (PDF)
- Safety Element (PDF)
- Implementation Plan (PDF)
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The remainder of this report is simply the actual General Plan contents copied below. The titles of the sections referenced below are:

Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Element: AG-LU

Recreation and Open Space Element: ROS

Nearly 90 percent of Napa County is “open space” of some type (see the definitions of various open space types on page 216 of this Element). About 450,000 acres of a total of approximately 507,000 acres in the county fall into this category. About three-fourths of these open space lands are privately owned. Private open space lands are used for farming (approximately 50,000 acres) and grazing (approximately 54,000 acres), with the remainder relatively natural watershed lands that accommodate a variety of low intensity uses including rural residences, hunting, fishing, and other privately sponsored recreational activities. Approximately 14,400 acres of these private lands have their open space values permanently protected through conservation easements.

In terms of user numbers, the biggest recreation provider by far is the Bureau of Reclamation; more than a million people a year visit Lake Berryessa. The Bureau provides two public day use areas for picnicking, fishing, and hiking, as well as one public boat launch. Tent and RV camping, houseboat and other boat rentals, trailer parks and related rentals, and retail activities have been for many years provided through seven long-term concession contracts. The nature and scope of these concession-provided facilities and services is currently undergoing major changes, with an increased emphasis on short-term overnight accommodations, in part in response to strong demand for overnight accommodations in natural settings. Unlike most recreational uses, campgrounds and houseboat, park model, and cabin rentals have the potential to generate sufficient user fee revenues to cover both capital and operating expenses and modest profits, when they are provided by the private sector through concession contracts.

As with facilities at Lake Berryessa, overnight visitors generate the bulk of the operating revenues of these parks. Boating, both motorized and non-motorized, is another popular activity. However, boating access in Napa County is limited; the primary locations are Lake Berryessa which provides all types of boating. However, boating access in Napa County is limited; the primary locations are Lake Berryessa which provides all types of boating.

In general, therefore, while there is a strong demand for outdoor recreational opportunities, the ability to maintain and expand facilities and services in Napa County will require a flexible blend of techniques, including (a) partnerships between public agencies which own open space lands and private and non-profit entities able to manage public access using fee revenues and volunteer community resources, (b) providing multi-use facilities where management and operating costs can be spread across a diverse mix of recreational activities, and (c) public financing for popular activities for which user fees are impractical or undesirable

Policy AG/LU-27: For the purposes of this General Plan, the terms “urbanized” or “urbanizing” shall include the subdivision, use, or development of any parcel of land for non-agricultural purposes. Engaging in nature-based recreation or agriculturally compatible uses that are permitted in the applicable zoning district without the issuance of a use permit, such as development of one single-family house and/or second unit on an existing legal lot, shall not be considered urbanizing.

Collectively, the maps, goals, policies, and action items contained within the Recreation and Open Space Element ensure that Napa County’s wealth of natural open spaces are increasingly protected and made accessible to residents and visitors, with scenic trails and bikeways connecting population centers to nature based parks, environmental education facilities, and regional trails.

Napa County defines Nature-Based Recreation as recreation which takes place in and around, and is significantly focused on, the natural environment, including but not limited to walking, hiking, equestrian and mountain bicycle riding, camping in tents, recreational vehicles, and rustic cabins, wildlife viewing, fishing, hunting, picnicking, swimming in lakes and rivers, and paddling.

The federal plan for the lake focuses on improved public access, new visitor-serving accommodations, and diversification of the recreational activities from boating and fishing to hiking, biking, and paddling, with more emphasis on nature interpretation. Critical to the economic future of the Lake Berryessa are the quality of the new federal concessions to be opened within the next two years, developing facilities to support a new focus on nature-based recreation, improving public access to the thousands of acres of public land in the area, and protecting the natural resources that attract visitors, including the scenic views of the hills and ridges.

Goal E-4: Promote the Lake District (Lake Berryessa and Lake Hennessey) to residents and visitors as a destination for both water- and nature based recreation while protecting the lake and the natural resources, including the scenic views, as valuable economic assets along with local agriculture.

Policy E-20: Tourism at Lake Berryessa provides an opportunity to serve visitors to the lake and provide commercial opportunities that will benefit local residents and the county as a whole. The County encourages the expansion of visitor-serving uses at the lake in the locations shown on the Land Use Map and as described in the area-specific policies for Lake Berryessa in the Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Element.

Policy E-22: The County endorses the importance of visitor-serving, nature-based, public recreational facilities in appropriate locations, particularly those that improve access to public land and are consistent with protection of local natural resources and agriculture.

Policy ROS-15: Support the improvement and operation of Lake Berryessa as a year-round recreation area providing a balanced and hospitable environment for nature-based recreation and motorized boating.

Policy ROS-30: Other than at Lake Berryessa, recreational facilities should be designed and scaled to serve the needs of county residents, recognizing that facilities that serve local residents will also serve visitors, that visitors can help pay for the construction and operation of recreational facilities beneficial to residents, and that the provision of additional nature- based recreational opportunities is an important tool for achieving economic development goals while also reducing potential adverse impacts of tourism. In the

case of Lake Berryessa, recreational facilities are understood to serve a broad regional market, but should nonetheless be designed to also serve the desire of Napa County residents for water- and nature-based recreation.

Policy AG/LU-35: The following standards shall apply to lands designated as Rural Residential on the Land Use Map of this General Plan.

General Uses: Single-family dwellings, day care centers, large residential care homes, existing major medical care facilities (facilities licensed with a minimum of 100 beds), private schools, agriculture, stables (and others under specified conditions). In Capell Valley and Lake Berryessa Areas, tourist-serving commercial uses and mixed uses will also be allowed.

Policy AG/LU-43: Lands along the west bank of the Napa River south of the City of Napa and specific urban areas within four miles of the high water mark of Lake Berryessa are appropriate areas for marine commercial zoning and development.

Action Item AG/LU 43.1: Consider amendments to the Zoning Code to allow additional commercial, residential, and mixed uses in the areas currently zoned for commercial use in the Spanish Flat, Moskowitz Corners, and southern Pope Creek areas in order to complement recreation activities at Lake Berryessa.

LAKE BERRYESSA: MOSKOWITE CORNERS, POPE CREEK, AND SPANISH FLAT

Lake Berryessa is a 19,000-acre man-made lake dating from the 1950s. Together with the Blue Ridge Mountains to the east, the lake defines the character of much of eastern Napa County and provides its emphasis on recreation, rather than wine. The lake and a narrow shoreline band (28,000 acres total) are under the jurisdiction of the federal Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), while private properties in upland areas are within Napa County jurisdiction. Water from the lake primarily serves Solano County, but the lake's scenic and recreational values accrue to Napa County.

Mixed-Use Communities. Mixed-use communities west of the lake include Pope Creek, Spanish Flat, and Moskowitz Corners. All are rural in character and even the closest to the City of Napa, Moskowitz Corners, is remote by urban standards—at least a 30-minute drive from most services.

Pope Creek consists of a residential subdivision known as Berryessa Pines south of the Pope Creek bridge. Marine storage is the only commercial use in the area. The

Rancho Monticello Resort—along the shoreline nearby—is a concession area under BOR jurisdiction.

Spanish Flat consists of a residential subdivision, a mobile home park, and a small commercial enclave. Commercial services include two restaurants, self-storage, laundry, small gift shop, and boat storage facility. The Spanish Flat Resort— along the shoreline nearby—is a concession area under BOR jurisdiction. The Monticello Cemetery is also nearby. Moskowitz Corners is located at the intersection of Highway 128 and Highway 121 (Monticello Road) some distance from the lake, but anyone accessing the southern end of the lake

Berryessa Highlands is a large residential subdivision dating from the 1970s and has been only partially developed. A variety of housing styles pepper the hillside above the lake in an area that goes from rolling hills to steep slopes. The zoning is a combination of Planned Development (PD) and Residential Country (RC). Water and sewer services are provided by the Napa Berryessa Resort Improvement District.

Policy AG/LU-69: Recognize the character of this community and the quality of the environment in the review of future development projects in the Berryessa Highlands area. All new subdivisions, use permits, and other discretionary actions shall conform to the General Plan Land Use Map and be reviewed to

determine impacts and mitigations related to water quality, water availability, slope stability, habitat protection, and other environmental issues.

Policy AG/LU-70: The importance of views to residents shall be considered in the review and approval of new development. Hillside homes typical of Berryessa Highlands have views of Lake Berryessa. Where possible, existing views— particularly of Lake Berryessa—should be preserved.

Lake Berryessa Policies:

Policy AG/LU-78: Moskowitz Corners lies at a critical crossroads and should be viewed as a staging area for the Lake Berryessa recreational area, with affordable housing for those who work in the area and services for residents and travelers. Moskowitz Corners, with its winery and vineyards, should also be viewed as a link between Lake Berryessa communities and the viticultural economy of Napa Valley.

Policy AG/LU-79: Pope Creek should remain a mostly natural area, with lake view residences and limited commercial uses.

Policy AG/LU-80: Spanish Flat lies at the heart of the **Lake Berryessa** recreational area and should be viewed as its primary resort community, with affordable housing for those who work in the area and an attractive “village center” providing commercial services to locals and visitors.

Policy AG/LU-82: Targeted Re-Investments. If the County is successful at recouping the cost of services provided to concessionaires at **Lake Berryessa**, either through collection of transient occupancy taxes or in-lieu fees, a percentage of those funds should be invested in infrastructure and services benefiting communities within County jurisdiction at the lake.

Policy AG/LU-83: Removing Barriers. The County will seek to identify current barriers to economic development in the mixed-use communities near **Lake Berryessa** and identify ways to remove those barriers and encourage revitalization.

Policy AG/LU-84: Signs and Streetscape Improvements. Signs directing visitors to **Lake Berryessa** communities, signs announcing arrival in those communities, and streetscape improvements within the village centers of Spanish Flat and Moskowitz Corners are all important to the identity and success of these communities.

Policy AG/LU-85: Infrastructure Needs. The County acknowledges that well maintained roads, modern energy transmission, and telecommunications infrastructure are critical ways to connect **lake communities** to the rest of Napa County.

Policy AG/LU-86: Trails. Hiking trails linking the communities of **Lake Berryessa** to the lake and to other visitor services shall be considered integral area amenities and be located appropriately to avoid impacts to residential areas.

Policy AG/LU-87: Small Business Assistance and Workforce Housing Development Assistance. County programs related to small business assistance, workforce development, and affordable housing development should be reviewed periodically to ensure they are effectively targeted to **lake** communities.

Policy AG/LU-88: Marketing. The County shall work with the **Lake Berryessa** Chamber of Commerce and others to ensure that the lake, its recreational amenities, and visitor services are included in marketing materials developed for the County as a whole.

In addition to agriculture, the other potential economic opportunity lies in the local federally owned lake and the scenic natural resources and the visitors they attract. This region, sometimes referred to as Napa’s Lake District roughly includes some 155,000 acres of land. The focal point of the Lake District is the **Lake Berryessa** Recreation Area, a 19,000-acre lake formed by the development of Monticello Dam in 1957,

including 9,000 acres of land around the lakeshore. Lake Berryessa draws some 1.4 million visitors per year⁷ who come to enjoy the lake, the scenery, and the recreational opportunities.

Policy E-9: The County recognizes the needs of residents in remote and outlying areas such as Angwin, Pope Valley, and **Lake Berryessa**, and encourages efforts to retain and attract local commercial services in these areas, in appropriate locations.

Policy E-20: Tourism at **Lake Berryessa** provides an opportunity to serve visitors to the lake and provide commercial opportunities that will benefit local residents and the county as a whole. The County encourages the expansion of visitor-serving uses at the lake in the locations shown on the Land Use Map and as described in the area-specific policies for **Lake Berryessa** in the Agricultural Preservation and Land Use Element.