



**LAKE BERRYESSA**  
**AN UNTAPPED RESORT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**  
**NAPA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**



Prepared for

**NAPA COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE**

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**PART ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**LAKE BERRYESSA**  
**AN UNTAPPED RESORT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY**  
**NAPA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

**PART ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION**

**Purpose**

This document represents Phase I of a two-phase assignment. Its primary purpose is to describe attributes of Lake Berryessa in northeastern Napa County. As such, it will provide critical background and educational information for Phase II. The purpose of Phase II is to attract appropriate entities who will develop and operate five available concession areas at the Lake.

Lake Berryessa is one of the largest and most attractive freshwater lakes in California. It has 165 miles of shoreline. It is 26 miles long and three miles wide. It contains 20,700 surface acres. It is within 100 miles of over 10 million people. During its peak years of activity, it annually attracted more than one million visitors. It now represents one of the most untapped opportunities in the country for new resort development and local economic impacts.

The history of Lake Berryessa is long and complicated. It was created in 1957 with construction of the Monticello Dam. Purposes of the project were to control flooding, provide drinking and irrigation water, and generate hydroelectric power. These benefits were to be realized primarily by nearby Solano County and the environs, although both the dam and the Lake are in Napa County.

In 1958, it was decided that Lake Berryessa could be a prime destination for outdoor recreational activities of all types, especially boating and camping. In an



arrangement with the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Napa County entered into an agreement to manage development of the recreational opportunities. The land around the Lake, however, has always been owned by BOR.

In 1959, a General Development Plan was created by these three public entities. It provided for seven concession areas in strategic locations on the west side of the Lake. These seven areas were developed, and quickly became popular boating and camping destinations for families throughout northern California and beyond.

In 1975, BOR decided to take back control of the seven concession areas from Napa County due to alleged mismanagement. Control has remained with BOR ever since.

Recreational use of Lake Berryessa continued to grow, peaking at over 1.8 million annual visitors in 1996, and annually averaging well over one million. However, such popularity led to overuse and inappropriate use. The concession areas were not properly monitored and regulated, and BOR decided in 2009 that leases on five areas were not to be renewed. The five areas were closed by BOR, and most remnants removed.

During the next several years, numerous studies were completed by BOR, involving thousands of pages of documents and significant time and resources. BOR also briefly contracted with a new concessionaire, but without long-term results.

In 2015, six years after the closings, BOR felt ready to issue an RFP for redevelopment of the five concession areas. Three proposals were received, but none were accepted. Finally in 2016, Napa County began new conversations with BOR, and is now considering entering into a Managing Partner Agreement for the five areas, and to supervise their future development and operations, consistent with BOR's Visitor Service Plan.

Almost a decade has gone by since BOR closed the five areas. During this time, Napa County has missed out on significant economic opportunities, and families throughout northern California and beyond have missed out on outdoor recreational opportunities. It is now time to redevelop the five sites. The purpose of this document is to assist in finding the most appropriate concessionaires possible. The five areas include:

- Putah Canyon (formerly Putah Creek)
- Monticello Shores (formerly Rancho Monticello)
- Berryessa Point (formerly Berryessa Marina)

- Spanish Flat (always referred to as Spanish Flat)
- Steele Canyon (formerly Steele Park)

At the end of this part of the report is a more detailed history of Lake Berryessa.

## **Organization**

This document has six parts, including this first one (Part One). Part Two provides a detailed description of Lake Berryessa, the surrounding environs and the five concession areas. Included are sections on location, physical attributes, existing facilities and services, and attractions, amenities and activities. It is intended to educate readers on why the Lake is a prime destination for all types of outdoor recreation activities and other visitor-serving attractions, and not just boating, camping and fishing.

Part Three describes the Primary Market Area (PMA) for Lake Berryessa. Contents demonstrate the uniqueness of Lake Berryessa, e.g., within 100 miles of over 10 million people with high participation rates in outdoor recreation, limited competition from other large freshwater lakes, and so forth. There are sections on the PMA's demographics, freshwater lakes, marinas, pleasure boat registrations, campgrounds, RV registrations, participation rates and the tourism industry in Napa County.

Part Four describes results of an important consumer survey conducted specifically for Lake Berryessa. The survey generated over 3,211 responses. Questions concerned past and future use of the Lake, most desirable services, amenities, activities and accommodations, etc.

Part Five contains snapshots of various types of attractions and amenities that could be included in the five concession areas and environs. In order to maximize its potential, Lake Berryessa should be positioned as more than just a pretty place for boating, camping and fishing.

The document concludes with Part Six, containing a summary of the first five parts, along with a series of conclusions and recommendations.

As noted at the outset, this document and its six parts comprise Phase I of the overall assignment. It provides background and educational information to be used in Phase II which will involve actual solicitation of appropriate concessionaires for the five areas.

## **Brief History**

The following paragraphs material is excerpted from BOR's "Lake Berryessa Prospectus," 2009.

In 1948, construction of Lake Berryessa was authorized as part of Reclamation's Solano Project. The Solano Project was initiated to control flooding and to supply water for agricultural, municipal, and industrial uses. The primary project facility was Monticello Dam, constructed on Putah Creek in 1957.

In 1958, before public recreational use of the reservoir was officially sanctioned, Napa County entered into a management agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation to administer the recreational development of federally owned lands at Lake Berryessa.

In October 1959 the National Park Service issued a 'Public Use Plan' (PUP) that they had been assigned and accomplished, in behalf of Reclamation, outlining a future for development of Concession Contractor facilities and programs at Lake Berryessa for support of public recreation use. The PUP called for the development by Concession Contractors and Reclamation of traditional short-term 'park like' facilities. The focus was on camping and marina development with associated retail and food/beverage sales. There was no mention or apparent consideration of developing exclusive long-term trailer villages. The 1958 agreement assigning recreational development of Lake Berryessa to Napa County included a preliminary General Development Plan, subsequently incorporated into the PUP.

The seven existing concession operations were all authorized to begin operations in 1958 and 1959. These are the same contracts, with one exception, that are now expiring in 2008/2009. The exception is Pleasure Cove that saw the original contract terminated in 2004 and is currently operating under a contract that will expire in 2038. The seven contracts were originally authorized for a maximum of 30 years but in 1980 Congress passed Public Law 96-375 that among other things provided two 10 year extension options for the seven concession contracts at Lake Berryessa. Those options were both authorized resulting in the upcoming expirations after 50 years of operation.

In the early 1960's the Concession Contractors began requesting of Napa County authorization to begin developing trailer installations to be operated in a manner similar to the continuing operations. Napa County approved such developments and Reclamation concurred with no apparent address of the development direction prescribed in the PUP. There are no apparent historic records that indicate exactly how many trailer sites were authorized at each of the seven locations but eventually there were over 1600 such sites developed. At the same time that the trailer facilities were being developed some of the short-term facilities; camping, lodging, marinas, and retail also developed.

The development of the long-term trailer installations were immediately popular and became the core economic base for the concession operations at Lake

Berryessa. The trailer installations, for the most part, were developed on the prime lakeshore areas within the Concession Contractor land assignments. Short-term facilities serving the traditional recreating public have always been a part of the mix at the Lake Berryessa concession operations and they were developed adjacent to the long-term trailer areas. With the exception of marina facilities and some lodging the short-term facilities at Lake Berryessa never became popular destinations areas for area visitors with the exception of holiday weekends. Short-term public use facilities have been very popular and commercially successful over the years in other areas, i.e. Lake Shasta, New Melones, Lake Oroville, Folsom Lake, and numerous others located significantly farther away from the population centers of their users than the operations at Lake Berryessa.

In 1972 an audit by the General Accounting Office of the United States determined the following:

*“The Bureau’s failure to control adequately the development of public recreational facilities at Lake Berryessa has resulted in a situation where access to and use of the lake by the general public has been severely restricted because of (1) extensive development by Concession Contractors of mobile home parks along the shoreline and (2) failure to provide public recreational facilities in accordance with the Public Use Plan.”*

In 1975 Napa County relinquished their control and management of all recreation oversight at Lake Berryessa and returned that responsibility to Reclamation where it has remained since. It has proven unfeasible to restructure the concession operations and the associated ‘long-term/short-term focus’ during the life of the existing concession agreements/contracts. Several attempts were made by Reclamation to upgrade the opportunities for short-term users with some success for day users in the development of Oak Shores and Capell Cove.

The recent planning and EIS work including thousands of public comments made it clear that the weak business profile for the short-term concession recreation facilities at Lake Berryessa was attributable to the proximity of the large trailer villages and the focus on their operations and not due to lack of public demand in the area for appealing short-term facilities. The atmosphere and associated experience for traditional short term users at Lake Berryessa has not been as positive as that perceived by members of the public willing to travel the greater distance to numerous other public land areas featuring water based recreation.

The present opportunity to restructure the concession contracts upon expiration of the existing operations in 2008/2009 has been the target of Reclamation throughout the last nine years of planning and public comment resulting in the recent completion of an Environmental Impact Statement, the associated Visitor Services Plan and the recent Record Of Decision for Lake Berryessa that establishes the operational focus for development and operation of short-term visitor use concession facilities.

In the nearly 50 years since the current contracts were established, the concession contractors had focused for the most part on the establishment and management of large, long-term trailer villages. Previously apportioned among six concession areas were over 1,200 trailers. This type of use and these specific installations that provided approximately 50 percent of the total revenue for the previous concession contractors has been terminated and must be removed no later than the last day of the subject concession. The future business models for Lake Berryessa will not include private exclusive use. The elimination of this use type and the availability of acreage within the concession areas that is no longer committed to trailers will make available some of the best shoreline areas (in the areas open for development and assigned for concession use) for new development of short-term commercial recreation and support facilities.

Reclamation also intends to begin a major effort at improving government support facilities at Lake Berryessa including a more extensive trail system to eventually encircle the lake, including sections that pass through each concession area.

Businesses nearby on the access routes to Lake Berryessa tend to appear not very financially healthy, with the exception of storage yards and dry storage for boats and trailers. Several businesses have been shut down for years.

Reclamation strongly believes that the business malaise that exists both adjacent to and within many of the existing short-term facilities at Lake Berryessa is a symptom of facilities poorly maintained and the associated affiliation with the large, exclusive-use, long-term trailer installations as a business anchor. A large percentage of the traditional recreating public does not even visit Lake Berryessa because of the general lack of physical appeal of dated facilities and the fact that the trailer villages were sited on the prime lakeshore locations in nearly every existing concession area.

With new, better-sited facilities and business models that focus on the short-term user, the visitor profile will change significantly and be more representative of those Bay Area, Sacramento, and Northern California users who are already using numerous other reservoir areas around the north State located a significantly greater distance from population centers. Given the often-superior natural beauty and lake vistas in combination with new and improved facilities, Lake Berryessa should draw hundreds of thousands of new visitors and compete very successfully with areas such as New Melones, Don Pedro, the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta, Shasta Lake, Trinity Lake, Lake Oroville, and others that are currently financially successful and draw heavily from populations much nearer and more convenient to Lake Berryessa. Proximity to Napa Valley attractions also provides a potential nexus that will eventually benefit new business models at Lake Berryessa.

The referred-to “Prospectus” in 2009 resulted in the selection of one master-concessionaire. Due to inadequate performance, the contract with this concessionaire was terminated in 2015. In July 2015, another Prospectus was prepared and a Request for

Proposal for new concessionaires was distributed. This process generated three applications, all of which were rejected by BOR due to being “non-responsive,” i.e., “...the bids did not comply with all requirements of the Prospectus, which may include price, quantity, quality or guaranty.”

## **PART SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Part One: Introduction**

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In 1958, it was decided that Lake Berryessa could be a prime destination for outdoor recreational activities of all types, especially boating and camping. In an arrangement with the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Napa County entered into an agreement to manage development of the recreational opportunities. The land around the Lake, however, has always been owned by BOR.

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During the next several years, numerous studies were completed by BOR, involving thousands of pages of documents and significant time and resources. BOR also briefly contracted with a new concessionaire, but without long-term results.

In 2015, six years after the closings, BOR felt ready to reissue an RFP for redevelopment of the five concession areas. Three proposals were received, but none were accepted. Finally in 2016, Napa County entered into conversations with BOR to again assume responsibility for the five areas, and to supervise their future development and operations, consistent with BOR's Visitor Service Plan.

Almost a decade has gone by since BOR closed the five areas. During this time, Napa County has missed out on significant economic opportunities, and families throughout northern California and beyond have missed out on outdoor recreational opportunities. The County is now considering a Managing Partner Agreement for five areas. The purpose of this document is to assist in finding the most appropriate concessionaires possible for one or more of the sites should the County enter into a Managing Partner Agreement. The five areas include:

- Putah Canyon (formerly Putah Creek)
- Monticello Shores (formerly Rancho Monticello)
- Berryessa Point (formerly Berryessa Marina)
- Spanish Flat (always referred to as Spanish Flat)
- Steele Canyon (formerly Steele Park)

The document is lengthy. Its preparation involved: (1) meetings and conversations with dozens of appropriate individuals and entities in Napa County, throughout the PMA and beyond; (2) conduct of a consumer survey with over 3,200 responses; (3) surveys of lakes, marinas and campgrounds in northern California; and (4) review of numerous



reports and documents prepared by BOR and others over the past years. The document should be viewed as a “resource manual” for anyone interested in operating a concession area at Lake Berryessa. It also is meant to educate Napa County about the uniqueness and value of Lake Berryessa itself.

## **Part Two: Lake Berryessa and the Five Concession Areas**

### **Lake Berryessa**

Lake Berryessa is one of the largest and most attractive freshwater lakes in California. It has 165 miles of shoreline. By comparison, Lake Tahoe has only 72 miles of shoreline (although more surface acres). It is 26 miles long and three miles wide. It contains 20,700 surface acres. It is within 100 miles of over 10 million people. It represents one of the most untapped opportunities in the country for new resort development and local economic impacts.

Lake Berryessa is in northeastern Napa County, about 30 miles north of the City of Napa and 25 miles east of the famous Napa Valley. It is 65 miles west of Sacramento and 84 miles north of San Francisco. Accessibility is facilitated by a variety of State and U.S. Interstate Highways.

All lands abutting the Lake are owned by BOR. Adjacent lands are fairly steep, and for the most part undevelopable with any significant density. Most likely, they will remain in permanent open space, and accessible for a wide array of outdoor recreational opportunities. The area has a pleasant year-round Mediterranean climate. Rainfall is concentrated from November through March. Temperatures are mild, although the average high is over 90 degrees in June through September – the prime boating season. The average low is in the 40’s in November through March, with average highs in the 60’s.

Water level varies from year-to-year, depending on rainfall. During extended droughts in the mid-1990s and 2010s, it was under 400 feet. It is now close to capacity of 440 feet. The water is clear and very pure.

When all concession areas were open prior to 2009, Lake Berryessa annually attracted over one million visitors. Visitor count was over 1.8 million in 1987, 1996 and

1998. The annual average count was 1.5 million during the 25 years between 1981 and 2005. It has averaged less than 500,000 since the closings. As with most water-oriented outdoor recreation destinations, usage peaks in the summer months. It is anticipated that usage could be more year-round once a wider array of services, activities and accommodations are available than just boating and camping.

Currently, there are 10 existing areas at Lake Berryessa that provide a limited number of facilities and services. Most are operated by BOR, and restricted to day use activities.

In addition to boating and camping opportunities, there are numerous other attractions and activities at the Lake and the environs. Some include:

- extensive hiking, mountain biking and walking trails, with many more possible, including one perhaps around the entire Lake
- large nearby public land holdings, accessible for hiking, camping and a wide variety of other outdoor recreation activities. Included are 330,780 acres in the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument, Cache Creek Wilderness, Cedar Roughs Wilderness, Knoxville Wildlife Area, Knoxville Recreation Area, Lake Berryessa Wildlife Area and Quail Ridge Natural Reserve.
- some of the best lake fishing in the entire state
- swimming in the many private coves and inlets
- quiet areas for non-motor activities, such as kayaking, canoeing, etc.
- bird watching and wildlife viewing
- a few privately-owned facilities, with convenience stores, restaurants and other services
- close proximity to world renowned Napa Valley with its more than 500 wineries, geothermal springs, boutique shops, fine restaurants, eight golf courses and spectacular scenery

**The Five Concession Areas**

The five concession areas available for redevelopment are diverse in their size, amount of shoreline, vegetation and viewshed. They are all self-contained and prime waterfront properties.

They were closed in 2009, with most remnants of previous development removed. They are listed below, along with important dimensions. Collectively, they contain 12.6 miles of shoreline and 725 total acres. Some 137 acres are within the 440 (high water line) to 455 foot elevation, while the other 588 acres are above 455 feet to the edge of the BOR lands. These elevations are important because different types of land uses and tenure of occupancy are allowed in them by BOR. Additional uses may be considered as the five areas are redeveloped.

<u>concession area</u>	<u>shoreline frontage</u>		<u>acres with elevations of:</u>		<u>total acres</u>
	<u>linear feet</u>	<u>miles</u>	<u>440 to 455 feet</u>	<u>over 455 feet</u>	
Putah Canyon	19,165	3.6	30.03	137.84	167.87
Monticello Shores	14,600	2.8	31.20	118.06	149.26
Berryessa Point	7,100	1.3	13.41	41.76	55.17
Spanish Flat	11,000	2.1	28.30	187.90	216.20
Steele Canyon	<u>14,886</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>34.54</u>	<u>102.55</u>	<u>137.09</u>
total	66,751	12.6	137.48	588.11	725.59
average	13,350	2.5	27.50	117.62	145.12

BOR has completed detailed, but preliminary development plans for the five areas. Environmental impact statements have been completed for the plans to “the 60 percent design level.” If new concessionaires adhere to these plans, the final 40 percent of the EIRs will need to be completed. If existing plans are extensively revised, new environmental impact statements may be required. With guidance and influence from Napa County, it is possible the existing plans may be extensively altered, with more creative services, facilities and accommodations. The current BOR plans simply emphasize camping and boating uses.

Existing public utilities are nominal, with water and sewer currently available at only one site. Some remaining clean-up remains following the closures in 2009.

If the County enters into a Managing Partner Agreement for one or more of the sites, it will facilitate and review the implementation process. This public entity will

balance economic impacts, profits for concessionaires, public access and environmental stewardship. There are basically no zoning regulations nor fear of lengthy litigation to prevent appropriate development.

### **Part Three: The Market Area for Lake Berryessa**

Lake Berryessa itself, the five concession areas and the surrounding environs offer many unique and outstanding attributes, as discussed in the previous section – accessibility, size, extensive shoreline and surface area, beautiful scenery in a very natural setting, some of the best fishing in the state, large enough to offer both nature-based and motor-based activities without interference (if properly planned, regulated and monitored), and a wide array of family-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

Besides its own many positive attributes, Lake Berryessa also benefits tremendously from the surrounding 13-county primary market area (PMA):

#### **1. population and households**

- 9.8 million people in the PMA (over 10 million if including counties to the immediate north), generating 3.5 million households – all within 100 miles
- one of the most vibrant and prosperous regions in the country
- 65 percent of households with incomes over \$50,000 and 36 percent over \$100,000 – proportions far above national averages
- high participation rates in all types of outdoor recreation activities, most of which can, or could be, pursued at Lake Berryessa

#### **2. other freshwater lakes**

- the eighth largest freshwater lake in California with 20,700 surface acres and 165 miles of shoreline
- by far the largest freshwater lake in the PMA, with only two others containing more than 2,000 surface acres

- very limited facilities and services not only at the two other freshwater lakes in the PMA, but also at other lakes in a much larger 20-county surrounding area
- very few full-service marinas in the surrounding 20 counties. The majority are in the Sacramento Delta rather than in actual lake-environments. Existing marinas report operating on a good 72 percent year-round occupancy.
- only 15,900 boat slips in the 20 counties, although are over 185,000 pleasure boats registered in the PMA

### **3. campgrounds**

- only 44 campgrounds around lakes in the 20 surrounding counties, and only 10 in the PMA, including the Delta
- only 164 campsites around lakes in the PMA, with another 575 in the Delta
- only 306 campsites around lakes with full RV hookups in the 20 surrounding counties (including the Delta). There are almost 30,000 RVs registered in the PMA.
- only 53 campgrounds in all types of locations in the PMA, generating less than 5,000 campsites
- limited amenities, services and contemporary comforts at the vast majority of the 53 campgrounds. Few provide food service, convenience stores, rental accommodations or even boating facilities.
- mostly managed by people without extensive experience in the hospitality industry
- mostly owned by the public sector, and suffer from lack of funding for proper upkeep and provision of activities. Most others are operated by small, private entrepreneurs with comparable funding issues. A survey conducted of campground operators in the area reveals the marginal condition, financial needs, and untapped opportunities.

#### **4. tourism in Napa County**

- close proximity to, and shared identity with, one of the most recognized tourist destinations in the PMA, as well as elsewhere in the U.S. and beyond
- a rapidly growing tourism industry, with 3.54 million visitors in 2016, up 20 percent from just four years ago
- some of the highest year-round occupancy rates and room rates in the country
- attractions and activities at Lake Berryessa complement those in Napa Valley, e.g., boating, fishing, extensive nature and other types of trails, etc. These complementary uses are attractive both to residents of Napa County and others throughout the PMA. Likewise, many visitors to Lake Berryessa will venture beyond the Lake into the Valley and Napa itself, thus generating additional consumer expenditures and economic impact.
- downtown Napa rapidly becoming a major tourist destination of its own, with large new supply of hotels, shops, restaurants and entertainment venues
- many intriguing potential opportunities for recreational attractions and activities that do not exist elsewhere in Napa County and/or are significantly under-supplied in the PMA, e.g., water park resorts, conference facilities, golf, wedding venues and outdoor musical performance venues

#### **Some Issues**

The preceding material has described the many positive attributes of Lake Berryessa, the five concession areas and the surrounding environs. There are few limiting factors regarding redevelopment of the five areas, with the most important being:

1. The concessions will be under a lease rather than deeded ownership in perpetuity. This could impact financing, and concern many in the resort development industry.

2. If managed by Napa County, BOR will continue to impose its many rules and policies controlling uses on the five areas. This also includes length of occupancy and permanency of structures.
3. Heretofore, there has been significant seasonality in visitation patterns, with the vast majority occurring in June through September, and especially July and August.
4. The last 25 miles before arriving at Lake Berryessa are over winding and fairly narrow two-lane highways. There are no plans nor budgets to widen and straighten the highways.
5. Being an inland lake at a relatively low elevation, Lake Berryessa is subject to significant variations in water levels. And, strict controls are in place to ensure public use of the water for irrigation, hydroelectric power, drinking and flood control.
6. There may remain some negative image of Lake Berryessa from previous years when rules and regulations were not carefully enforced, and overuse and misuse allowed.
7. A tourist-oriented infrastructure in the immediate area around Lake Berryessa is limited in terms of restaurants, shopping and entertainment. This will probably not change due to the topography and accessibility, but Napa Valley is only 25 miles distant.
8. The five concession areas are all very attractive, but have limited developable area, with irregular configuration, which may prevent some types of desirable uses.

## Part Four: The Consumer Survey

### Introduction

As part of Phase I, a consumer survey was conducted of households in northern California, with emphasis on the PMA. Some 3,211 responses were received, which is a significant number relative to most consumer surveys.

TapResearch provided 1,000 respondents, all of which participate in lake-oriented outdoor recreational activities. The survey also was announced in the *Napa County Register* and the *Lake Berryessa News* newspapers, with access information provided for completing the survey. These announcements resulted in the other 2,211 responses.

Respondents were very qualified to answer the survey:

- 90 percent have visited Napa County in the last five years
- 90 percent have visited Lake Berryessa in the past, and 50 percent have stayed overnight there
- 83 percent participate in motor boating, 73 percent in other types of boating, and 85 percent in hiking, walking, picnicking or other types of outdoor recreation
- 71 percent are between 30 and 60 years of age
- 92 percent have incomes over \$50,000, and 54 percent are over \$100,000
- 16 percent live in Napa County, 28 percent elsewhere in the North Bay, 34 percent in the South Bay, 10 percent in the Sacramento Delta, and 12 percent outside the PMA

Results of the survey were very positive in regard to: (1) awareness and perception of Lake Berryessa; and (2) potential size of future demand.

It also is apparent that interest in, and demand for, future use of Lake Berryessa will increase if offering more outdoor recreational activities than just motor boating and RV camping, especially those that are: (1) nature-based, family-oriented and/or innovative; and (2) in harmony with the lifestyle of today's participants in outdoor recreation. These themes are consistent throughout the report.



## Selected Highlights

1. Most respondents have a positive image of Lake Berryessa and a high interest in visiting in the future.

a. The following proportion of previous visitors to Lake Berryessa (90 percent of all respondents) had “positive” reactions to:

<u>item</u>	<u>% positive</u>
scenery and natural environment	90%
quality of water in the Lake	90%
climate	90%
distance/time from home	85%
ease of getting there	85%
family environment	77%
boating facilities	74%
security and safety	73%
quality of fishing	64%
enforcement of rules and regs	64%
visitor profile	63%
consistency of water level	60%
camping and RV facilities	60%
proximity to Napa Valley	60%
stores, restaurants and taverns	54%
lodging/overnight accommodations	50%

Especially high ratings were given to attributes of the Lake itself, e.g., scenery, quality of water and climate. Lowest ratings were given to some services/manmade items, e.g., camping and RV facilities, availability of stores, restaurants and taverns, availability of lodging and overnight accommodations, and enforcement of rules and regulations.

b. The vast majority (92 percent) are interested in visiting Lake Berryessa in the future. This includes 74 percent who are “very interested.” Interest is especially high among Napa County, higher income, middle-age and North Bay respondents. It is lower among younger, lower income, South Bay and Delta respondents.

- c. On average, respondents would annually visit Lake Berryessa four times a year for boating and two times for camping. They would stay an average of five nights per year and two nights per visit.
  - d. Over 90 percent would visit during May through September. And, over 25 percent would consider visiting in the winter months of December through February, assuming availability of appropriate services, activities and accommodations. In other words, it seems possible Lake Berryessa can become more of a year-round destination than in the past.
2. Results from several questions help determine services and facilities that should be included in the future of Lake Berryessa and the five concession areas in order to maximize visitation patterns. It is evident that potential users are interested in more than just motor boating and RV camping. Shown below are the proportion of “important” responses for 27 items that could be implemented at the Lake and the five areas.

<u>item</u>	<u>% “important”</u>
convenience grocery stores	96%
restaurants and other food services	93%
hiking, biking, walking trails	91%
equipment rentals	87%
taverns/bars	75%
children’s activities	75%
defined areas for kayaking, canoeing, sailboarding, paddleboarding	74%
evening entertainment, music, dancing, movies, etc.	73%
special events such as boat races, car clubs, triathlons, fishing tournaments	71%
defined areas for jet skiing and wave running	71%
amphitheater with outdoor concerts and “name entertainment”	70%
horseback riding trails	65%
central clubhouse with swimming pool, fitness center and other amenities/facilities	65%
zipline	64%
wine tasting on the shores of the Lake	64%
shuttle services to wineries and other attractions in nearby Napa Valley	60%

off-roading/motorcycling/ATV riding	58%
shooting range with clay facilities	58%
water park	57%
wildlife safari park	52%
wedding venues	50%
organized bird watching	49%
health and wellness facilities and seminars	48%
conference, meetings and lifestyle retreat facilities	46%
classes on culinary arts, wellness, crafts, etc.	45%
year-round sports/athletic academy with professional training facilities and name instructors	42%
golf	42%

Comments on the preceding list:

- Three items were checked by more than 90 percent of respondents as being “important” in encouraging them to visit Lake Berryessa, including convenience grocery stores, restaurants and other food services, and hiking, biking and walking trails.
- All 27 items were checked by more than 40 percent of respondents.
- More respondents said “defined areas for kayaking, canoeing, sailboarding, paddleboarding, etc.” and “defined areas for jet skiing and wave running” was important, than said such definition was not important. In other words, mixing all types of boating together throughout the Lake seems questionable.
- Interestingly, even items to which respondents probably have no direct connection received significant proportions of “important” answers, e.g., wedding venues, conference and meeting facilities, bird watching, golf, etc. It appears respondents feel the more services and facilities present at Lake Berryessa, the more attractive it will be as a destination for everyone.
- While some items received fewer “important” responses, it does not imply they should be neglected in thinking about the future of

Lake Berryessa. Many are inexpensive to implement, and could attract a wide variety of recreationists in the PMA. On the other hand, it does not mean that every imaginable amenity/service should be pursued. The challenge is to attract ones which are cost-effective to implement, and will attract the most visitors without harming the environment.

- Significant differences exist among the various respondent-groups regarding answers to this question. Some observations:
  - Great disparity between the age groups: younger respondents are more interested in having more amenities and services, especially those involving more strenuous activity; older respondents are less interested in almost all of the amenities/services, and perhaps, see their vacation experience at Lake Berryessa as being one more of rest and relaxation than physical activity. Middle-age respondents are somewhere in between for almost all amenities and services.
  - Less disparity exists among the income groups, although: lower income respondents are more akin in their answers to younger respondents, and vice versa. As with age, middle-income respondents always seem to be between lower and higher income respondents.

3. Questions also addressed the importance of several items relating directly to boating and camping. Results again suggest the opportunity and need to offer more services and facilities in the future than at Lake Berryessa in the past, especially ones relating to convenience, variety, comfort, perhaps more upscale, and in a properly controlled and regulated environment. Some observations:

- Shown below are “important” answers in regard to nine items relating to **boating and water-oriented activities**.

<u>item</u>	<u>% “important”</u>
full service marina	90%
improved boat-launching activities	90%
Lake patrolling and regulation of boats	90%
boating density on the Lake	82%
fishing	81%
availability of rental boats	75%
separate areas for motor boats, non-motor boats and jet skis	68%
limits on boat speed and horsepower	68%

- It is apparent respondents view Lake Berryessa as a boating destination, but more than just for motor boats and jet skis. For example, there is significant interest in houseboats for rent, as well as kayaking, windsurfing, rowing and canoeing. “Important” responses include:

<u>item</u>	<u>% “important”</u>
motor boats	91%
houseboats for overnight rentals	85%
water skiing	83%
kayaking, windsurfing, rowing, canoeing	80%
jetboats/wave runners	75%
sailboats	57%

- In regard to **camping**, there seems to be significant demand for rental facilities as well as those for personally owned campers. Some 53 percent would prefer to use their own RV, camper or tent, but 47 percent would prefer to rent some type of accommodation.
- Campers also want conveniences:

<u>item</u>	<u>% “important”</u>
public restrooms	98%
strict enforcement of rules and regulations,	93%

e.g., noise and cleanliness	
hot showers	92%
fuel, water and electrical hookups	89%
waste dump facilities	85%
improved pad for parking your own camper	79%

4. Finally, it appears significant demand exists for a variety of **overnight accommodations** and not just tent and RV camping. Such findings are significant, and support a much wider user-profile than in the past. Shown below are the proportions of “interested” responses in regard to nine possible types of accommodations. Tent camping only ranks sixth and RV camping ninth. Significant interest was stated for both higher-end and rustic cabins/cottages, houseboats and glamping.

<u>item</u>	<u>% “interested”</u>
higher-end, larger cabin/cottage with kitchen, restroom with shower, all utilities and separate bedroom(s)	87%
houseboat	87%
small rustic cabin/cottage without utilities, but near to hot showers and toilets	84%
“glamping,” i.e., a unique, high-quality canvas tent on a platform with kitchen, restroom with shower, all utilities, and separate bedroom(s)	83%
hotel/motel	75%
tent camping on the ground	72%
park model RV	65%
mobile home	63%
smaller RV	62%

### **Part Five: Potential Attractions and Amenities**

Heretofore, Lake Berryessa has been positioned as an attractive destination for outdoor recreation activities, especially motor boating and camping. Even during peak years when all concession areas were open, seasonality of use was high, with the vast majority of visitors coming in June through September, and especially July and August. Variety and quality of services and facilities were limited. Few convenience stores, restaurants, evening entertainment venues and unique accommodations beyond RV and

tent camping existed. Proper controls and regulations were not enforced. Despite such conditions, the area regularly attracted over 1.5 million visitors annually.

The challenge and opportunity are to redevelop the five concession areas into resorts that more appropriately reflect the lifestyle of today’s participants in outdoor recreation – higher quality, more variety, greater convenience, more nature-based (but not forgetting the ever-popularity of motor boats and RVs), more family-oriented, etc. If more care is given to these important trends, Lake Berryessa has the opportunity to: (1) become a significant **year-round** destination for the almost 10 million people in the PMA; (2) significantly impact the economy of Napa County; (3) be profitable to appropriately selected concessionaires; and (4) do so while maintaining and enhancing the natural environment.

Listed below are a variety of uses that could be considered in the redevelopment of the five concession areas. Some historically have existed, while others are new. Perhaps not all will be possible, but many will. It is not the intent to make Lake Berryessa into a highly-commercialized, over-dense environment. Care must be taken to always balance the criteria of consumer demand, economic gain and protection of Lake Berryessa’s beautiful natural setting.

<u>motor-based</u>	<u>nature-based</u>	<u>accommodations</u>	<u>commercial</u>
motor boating	trails for hiking, biking, walking, nature walks	RV camping	wine tasting/tour center
jet skiing	swimming	tent camping	Napa Valley shuttle
water skiing	bird watching	glamping	9-hole golf course
full service marinas	flora and fauna viewing	houseboats	conference, meetings, retreats
dry storage	fishing	rustic cabins, cottages and park models	schools, lessons, lectures
boat and equipment rentals	kayaking, canoeing, sailing, paddleboarding	higher-end cabins, cottages and park models	spa, wellness facility
off-road vehicles	picnicking	hotel/motel	wedding venues

horseback riding	nightly, extended stay and snowbird markets	amphitheater
interpretive center		indoor water park
eco-appreciation		restaurants, taverns
water trail		shopping
day care		night entertainment
quiet areas in coves and inlets		sports academy
photography		service station
		clubhouse with pool, fitness center, activities
		zipline
		special events, races, tournaments
		wildlife safari park
		Lake cruise boat
		water taxi
		fly-in

Found in the full report are sections describing several potential uses not currently present or under-utilized at Lake Berryessa. It is anticipated others will evolve during the search for appropriate concessionaires. The uses detailed in the full report include: (1) bird watching; (2) an indoor water park; (3) an outdoor concert venue; (4) wedding venues; (5) a cruise boat; (6) golf; (7) expanded sport fishing; and (8) conference facilities.

## **Part Six: Summary and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this final section of the report is to offer a variety of recommendations concerning the future of Lake Berryessa and the five concession areas.



The recommendations are open to further conversation between Napa County, the consulting team and others concerned with caring for this scarce resource. The 30 following recommendations are grouped under three general topics: (1) public policies; (2) actual redevelopment of the five concession areas; and (3) where to start.

### **Recommendations for Napa County Policies**

1. Fully balance a sometimes conflicting set of criteria: economic benefits to Napa County, outdoor recreational opportunities for residents of Napa County, the PMA and beyond, preservation and enhancement of the physical environment, and financial profit for the concessionaires. None of the four criteria should dominate the others.
2. Assume as much influence as possible in selecting the new concessionaires and reviewing and approving their plans, i.e., be more influential in managing the process than BOR.
3. Maximize the term of the leases with BOR for as many years as possible – hopefully, 65 years or more. The term could be shorter in concession areas requiring less capital investment.
4. Fully understand that today’s consumers are increasingly motivated by quality, variety, convenience, family, value, learning, experiences, etc. Boating and camping satisfy some of these trends, but certainly not all.
5. Create and enforce both land **and** water rules and regulations that properly control:
  - safety and security
  - noise pollution and other nuisances
  - cleanliness of the environment
  - boat density on the Lake
  - defined areas for motor-based water activities, e.g., motor boats, water skiing and jet skiing versus non-motor-based water activities, e.g.,

kayaking, canoeing, rowing, sailing, windsurfing, paddleboarding, and swimming, i.e., loud versus quiet

- density of the campgrounds
  - encroachment of inappropriate structures in the two elevations
  - term of occupancy in the accommodations in order to prevent year-round living
6. Constantly monitor enforcement of rules and regulations in order to prevent misuse and inappropriate uses, as in the past.
  7. Be prepared to subsidize concessionaires for initial expenses relating to: (1) required clean-up remaining from the previous operations; and (2) infrastructure for new development. Such subsidy could be in the form of waived franchise fees or lease payments for several years. Infrastructure costs will be expensive, especially when considering the land is conveyed only via a lease rather than deeded ownership in-perpetuity.
  8. Remaining environmental impact statement costs should be paid for by the new concessionaires.
  9. Simplify and clarify the RFP process, e.g., do not include the sometimes overwhelming list of BOR rules and regulations. Provide them in a complementary document.
  10. Promote more widespread recognition of Lake Berryessa via:
    - nationally recognized brands – e.g., for some of the accommodations, a health/wellness spa, a wine tasting facility, retail merchants, restaurateurs, etc.
    - popular events or tournaments, e.g., entertainment in an amphitheater, fishing tournaments, boat racing, name-sponsors, etc.
    - unique attention-getting attractions, e.g., indoor water park, cruise boat, conference/retreat center, wedding venues, etc.

- endorsement from a well-known celebrity/spokesperson in the nature-based outdoor recreation, boating and/or camping industries
- utilize an entity like Visit Napa Valley to publicize and market the Lake

11. Engage in conversations with adjacent private property owners around Lake Berryessa to discuss compatible uses, e.g., dude ranch, golf, estate home lots, vineyards, commercial, restaurants, etc. Extended development beyond the Lake itself, if properly controlled, should benefit all, and lead to greater recognition and use of the overall area.

12. Explore creating a Local Improvement District, or comparable funding mechanism, to help finance the infrastructure, utilities, roadways, trails and bank improvements.

13. Napa County, rather than BOR, should be the responsible agency for further environmental assessment and review in accordance with requirements of SQUA. The County should facilitate the process as much as possible, so that it does not require years of effort and irrational costs (but still being properly protective of the environment).

### **Recommendations for Redevelopment of the Five Concession Areas**

14. Encourage services, facilities, attractions and accommodation-types that will lead to year-round visitation patterns beyond the summer months, i.e., ones that will not require being in the water. For example:

- ease length-of-occupancy regulations to allow for two to three month tenures in appropriate accommodations for snowbirds from Canada and other northern climates
- conference, meetings and retreat facilities
- winterized and properly finished accommodation-types
- more year-round convenience stores, food services and evening entertainment venues

- nature-based activities in and around the Lake, e.g., trails, bird and wildlife watching, interpretive centers, photography, etc.
- shuttles to Napa Valley, on-site wine tasting, classes, central clubhouse with covered swimming pool, fitness center, etc.
- spa wellness center
- wedding venues in spring through fall months

15. Encourage variety at the five areas in terms of:

- pricing and fees
- quality and type of accommodations
- experiences and major attractions
- families versus couples/empty nesters/singles
- entertainment venues
- motor versus non-motor water activities
- In other words, each area should have its own identity and image rather than blending all into one commonality.

16. Explore exceptions to BOR's policy that "everything-must-always-be-open-and-available-to-the-public," e.g., consider memberships, short-term vacation ownership, undivided interests, etc., but only in limited situations.

17. Encourage use and enjoyment by both motor-based and nature-based participants. The Lake is large enough for all to enjoy without having disruptive conflicts. Neither group should dominate at the expense of the other.

18. Pursue trails of all kinds, e.g., hiking, biking, walking, jogging, nature interpretive, etc. Require concessionaires to implement a proper trail system through their own area, to hopefully attach to the proposed around-the-Lake trail. Pursue grants and other sources of money for the trails, rather than depending on public funds. Consider horseback riding trails in selected areas.

19. Encourage variety of accommodations that offer more than just tent and RV camping, e.g., both high-end and rustic cabins/cottages, glamping, a hotel/motel, houseboat rentals, etc.
20. Encourage full-service marinas that offer fuel service, convenience store, food service, rental boats and equipment, and both open and sheltered slips.
21. Encourage boat-launching facilities that are improved, easy to maneuver at all water levels and attractive.
22. Enhance the visual environment via sign control, a bank improvement program during times of low water levels, landscaping, and so forth.
23. Emphasize services, facilities, accommodations and prices that are at the 3 and 4 star level rather than the 1, 2 or 5 star level. This seems to be the primary market target for Lake Berryessa. Do not attempt to try and offer something for everyone.
24. Discourage skeet/clay shooting, shooting ranges and off-road vehicles, at least within the five concession areas themselves. Direct users of these activities to nearby Knoxville Recreation Area.

### **Recommendations About Where To Start**

25. Priority should be given to two concession areas at the outset of the RFP process, rather than bringing all five to market at once. We think it best to lead with the best and most attractive areas and thereafter work downwards, rather than leading with the least attractive and thereafter working upwards. It will be important to reestablish the reputation of Lake Berryessa with criteria of success, quality, and an “in” destination to visit (for the right reasons). If the first efforts meet these criteria, it will be easier for others to follow. In other words, the first two areas must have the greatest probability of success.

In an effort to rank the five concession areas in terms of attractiveness and potential for redevelopment, we use six criteria. The approach is subjective, and subject to refinement in Phase II of the assignment. The six criteria are:

- proximity/accessibility to the PMA
- scenic attractiveness
- existing infrastructure
- miles of shoreline
- acres in the 440 to 455 foot elevation, which typically have a flatter topography and direct water access
- total developable acres

The matrix below contains ratings for each of the five areas for each of the six criteria. A “1” is the top rating, and a “5” is the lowest rating.

concession <u>area</u>	criteria/rating						integrated <u>score</u>
	<u>proximity/ accessibility</u>	<u>scenic attractiveness</u>	<u>existing infrastructure</u>	<u>miles of shoreline</u>	<u>acres:</u>		
					<u>440 to 455 ft.</u>	<u>total</u>	
Steele Canyon	1	2	1	2	1	4	11
Monticello Shores	4	1	2	3	2	3	15
Spanish Flat	2	4	2	4	4	1	17
Putah Canyon	5	5	2	1	3	2	18
Berryessa Point	3	3	2	5	5	5	23

Based on the preceding rating system, the most attractive area is Steele Canyon. It is the most accessible, is the only one with existing infrastructure, and contains the most acres in the desirable 440 to 455 foot elevation. It also ranks high in general scenery. Its only low ranking is total number of developable acres.

Monticello Shores is ranked second. It is ranked as the most scenic, and second in acres in the 440 to 455 foot elevation, and third in miles of shoreline and total developable acres. Third and fourth are Spanish Flat and Putah Canyon. The latter is rated as the least scenic and least accessible, but has the most shoreline and is second in developable acres. Spanish Flat has the most developable acres, but has low ratings in regard to scenic attractiveness, miles of shoreline and acres in the 440 to 455 foot elevation.

Lowest ranking is Berryessa Point – primarily because of its small size. It has other attractive features, however, and should probably be ranked higher.

Potential concessionaires may weight the six criteria differently, and/or have different criteria. For example, a concessionaire wanting to develop a more upscale glamping or cabin/cottage resort may immediately decide on Monticello Shores. On the other hand, a concessionaire seeking to maximize the number of units, rooms or campsites may immediately decide on Putah Canyon.

26. Based on the preceding ranking system and general content of this overall report, it is recommended that the first two concession areas pursued in the RFP process should be Steele Canyon and Monticello Shores.

Steele Canyon should be a mixed-use resort, with one or more major attractions. It should establish a positive image and wide recognition for overall Lake Berryessa. Besides a variety of accommodations, full-service marina and boat launching facilities, one or more unique uses should be included, e.g., indoor water park, conference and retreat facility, 9-hole golf course, outdoor concert venue, etc. The concessionaire should be permitted, even encouraged, to build and operate a large passenger boat for weddings, wine tasting, dinner sails, and general Lake touring. In summary, Steele Canyon should be the “action” area.

27. Monticello Shores should complement Steele Canyon, and be the “quiet,” more upscale resort. Views, vegetation and general setting of this area are outstanding. Accommodations should emphasize glamping and/or fully serviced cabins/cottages. Activities should be more nature-based, educational, and with less emphasis on motors. Development should be lower density and less commercial. It should be the more exclusive area.

28. In looking at the other three areas, perhaps: Berryessa Point could emphasize a full-service commercial marina, a sea plane base, a small motel and limited (due to its size) camping facilities; Putah Canyon could emphasize a larger development, with modest quality and priced tent and RV camping, motor-oriented activities, etc.; Spanish Flat could be the central commercial area with stores, food services, boat launching facilities, etc. – all just preliminary thoughts.

29. Some specific uses and themes were suggested in the preceding paragraphs for the five areas. BOR has suggested much more detailed uses in their “Lake Berryessa Concession Infrastructure Design” (described in Part Two of this document). It is recommended, however, that the County not adhere too strictly to either set of suggestions, but simply use them as guidelines. In other words, the County should welcome, and be open to, other plans submitted by potential concessionaires, since they will be the actual investors and operators. It is not the purpose of this document at-hand to create a detailed master-plan for the five areas – nor should it be the responsibility of the County nor BOR.
30. Although tempting to seek a single “master developer” for multiple (or all five) concession areas at once, we believe each has its own unique character and “highest and best” use. An experienced conference resort operator, for example, is unlikely to have expertise both in campground and marina development and operation. We also believe that more creative and market-responsive concepts will flow from the efforts of several operators rather than one. In addition, some time should lapse between proposal calls for the various areas.