

The Lake Berryessa News

August 24, 2025

Pickett Fire Update

News of this fire threatening Calistoga, Aetna Springs, and Pope Valley is updated regularly. See your local news sources for the latest information. At 11 AM Lake Berryessa is filled with smoke and I cannot see Berryessa Peak from the Berryessa Highlands. Photo below.

Crews hold line against Pickett Fire in Napa County as blaze reaches 6,800 acres

<https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/wildfire-napa-county-firefighters/>

(August 24, 2025, 9:36AM)

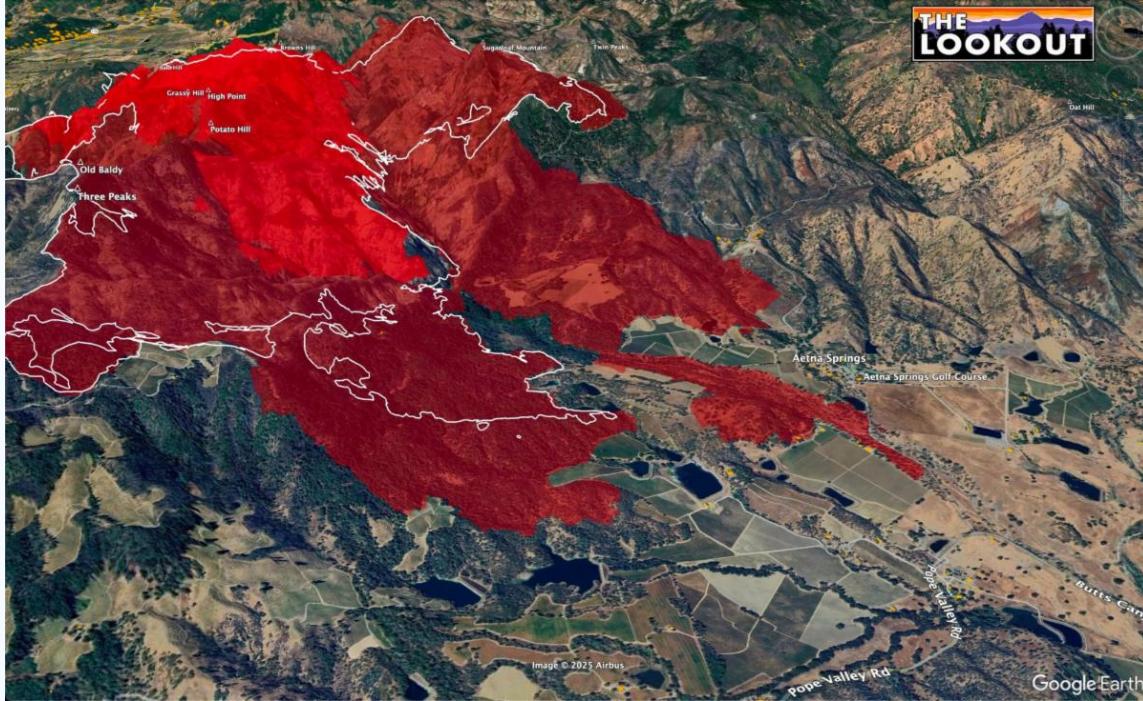
The wildfire — the largest in the region this year — spread more than 1,800 acres Saturday and grew another 270 acres overnight into Sunday, according to Cal Fire. The Pickett Fire has scorched 6,803 acres across Napa County as firefighters continue to battle both flames spreading east, rugged terrain and hot and dry conditions, according to a Sunday morning Cal Fire update. The wildfire erupted Thursday on the northern outskirts of Calistoga and has spread through steep, sparsely populated terrain within the burn scar of the 2020 Glass Fire.

On Saturday, the Pickett Fire grew by more than 1,800 acres, mostly toward Aetna Springs Road on its northeastern front. In order to curb any threat to the Aetna Springs and Pope Valley areas, fire crews conducted a controlled burn west of the road, according to a Cal Fire incident update. Defensive lines held, Cal Fire said in its Sunday morning report.

Overnight into Sunday, hand crews, bulldozers and five night-flying helicopters fought moderate fire activity and maintained 11% containment. However, the blaze grew another 270 acres. Below is a map view of the fire. The second photo is a comparison of the view from The Lake Berryessa News headquarters above the Berryessa Highlands.

Regional webcam views are available at:

<http://www.rntl.net/lake-berryessa-cams/>



Pickett Fire
Calistoga, Aetna Springs, Pope Valley
8/24/25
10:30 AM

Firewise 2025 — Napa Valley Gets Tactical on Wildfire

By Tim Carl, [Napa Valley Features](#)

A New Tactical Approach to Wildfire Readiness

With a new \$3.5 million county contract and a separate \$1 million CAL FIRE grant, NCFF is rolling out its 2025 “Valley Stewards” strategy. The plan centers on more than 100 Enhanced Resilience Sites — clusters of neighboring parcels, from vineyard blocks to ranchland, that commit to shared fuel breaks, mapped access routes, water resources and coordinated response zones.

Of Napa County’s roughly 50,000 fire-prone private acres, about 20,000 — steep slopes above key roadways and communities — are targeted first. The priorities come from a detailed mapping system developed with CAL FIRE, a tactical tool that tracks progress in real time but isn’t public because it contains sensitive information about private properties.

The CAL FIRE grant will help fund outreach to landowners in these areas, encouraging neighbors to develop Master Resilience Plans. These site-specific plans, written after on-the-ground reviews by Firewise staff, outline what’s needed for defensible space and infrastructure improvements — and can serve as documentation for insurers.

Read the full article at Napa Valley Features:

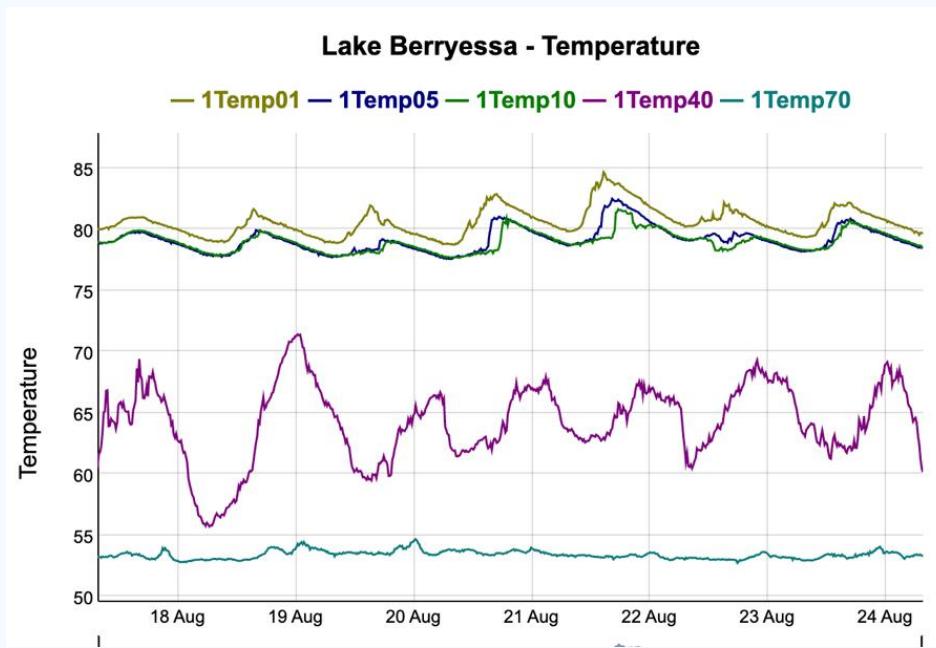
<https://Napavalleyfocus.Substack.Com/P/Under-The-Hood-Firewise-2025-Napa>

Lake Berryessa Statistics (8/24/25)

The Lake Berryessa water level is at 432.0 feet, 8 feet below Glory Hole.

Lake capacity is at 90.5%

Lake surface temperature is 80 degrees from the surface to 10 feet down.



Berryessa Highlands TOWN HALL

Thursday, August 28
at 6pm - 8pm

Capell Valley Fire House

1193 Capell Valley Rd., Napa, CA

Meet Napa County's District 4 Supervisor, Amber Manfree!



At our town hall meeting, you'll have the opportunity to:

Hear updates about Margaritaville, evacuations, fire mitigation, the golden mussels, emergency preparedness, and homeowners' insurance

Questions?

Contact Abigail Flores, District 4 Aide

abigail.flores@countyofnapa.org 

707-299-1478 

Camp Margaritaville Resorts Plan for the Revitalization of the Steele Canyon Recreation Area

(Steele Canyon Campground - <https://campsteelecanyon.com/>)

The Camp Margaritaville Resorts planning process is continuing at a rapid pace. The final plan is scheduled to be presented to the Napa County Board of Supervisors in a couple of months. Despite overwhelming support for the Camp Margaritaville Resorts plan from local residents, campers, anglers, and the residents of the other small communities around the lake, there is still some opposition from what I describe as "pseudo-environmental exclusionists", the folks who don't want to see other people have fun, unless it is their narrow definition of "fun".

I was reminded this week of this mindset when I was forwarded a rather bizarre, fact-free email from some relatively new Berryessa Highlands residents complaining to Margaritaville corporate headquarters. I was told this letter was also sent to Supervisor Amber Manfree.

I'm including the original email below for reference followed by my, hopefully, educational response. I have also been informed that some opponents of the revitalization of Lake Berryessa are planning to attend the meeting at the fire station this coming Thursday. See the flyer above. If you support the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program, please attend this meeting to let Supervisor Amber Manfree know your opinion. If you can't be there, please send a comment directly to Supervisor Manfree:

District 4: Amber Manfree
Amber.Manfree@countyofnapa.org

You can also contact the other supervisors at:

District 1: Joelle Gallagher.
Joelle.Gallagher@countyofnapa.org

District 2: Liz Alessio
liz.alessio@countyofnapa.org

District 3: Anne Cottrell
Anne.Cottrell@countyofnapa.org

District 5: Belia Ramos
Belia.Ramos@countyofnapa.org

Original Anti-Margaritaville email

From: Kelli Lynch <kelli94553@yahoo.com>
Date: Friday, August 15, 2025 at 4:23 PM
To: Development <development@margaritaville.com>
Cc: Craig Davis <craigcdavis85@yahoo.com>
Subject: Proposed Massive Development at Steele Canyon in Napa CA

The purpose of this email is to inquire as to whether you are really planning a massive development at Steele Canyon in Napa. If you are moving forward with this, we would like you to know that the residents of the Berryessa Highlands neighborhood that your “resort” will dwarf are overwhelmingly against this, as are the fisherman and campers who enjoy the lake currently. We will protest this development every step of the way, including but not limited to petitions, contacting local environmental, wildlife, and water conservation groups, informing local news and Napa County residents, utilizing social media platforms, and reaching out to law firms that might like to represent our neighborhood.

This is unconscionable for so many reasons including the massive waste of water, the noise and traffic that residents will be subject to, and the fire risk to our neighborhood. Are you aware that there are several bald eagle nests on the property? That will mean Federal and State permits will be required, no construction will be allowed during nesting times, and you will be responsible for them not returning once our quiet lake is gone.

Are you also aware of the fact that a few resort corporations have already entered into exclusive negotiating agreements with Napa County/Steve Wilkins, and they have all backed out because development costs were going to be astronomically higher than they originally thought? There is little to no infrastructure here, and what there is is old and failing. Napa County wants you to pay for everything, so they don’t have to invest in our neighborhood. Access to this location is not easy. Whether coming from Napa, Winters, or St Helena you are driving on old, narrow, two lane highways that cannot support the traffic

your resort would need to succeed. This January a large section of the northbound lane on highway 121 from Napa literally fell off. It is still one lane through that section. Also, the fact that you serve alcohol at your supposed "family resorts" makes the drive even more dangerous when you consider that Napa County has one of the highest DUI rates in the state. Everything considered this is just a bad idea.

Weather is also a factor. During the summer months most days and nights bring 25-30 mph winds, and during the fall and winter winds can average 40-50 mph.

Does no one at your company have enough sense to see the absurdity of building a lazy river, wave machine, and water slides on the shores of a beautiful lake? I can only imagine what the public will think of Margaritaville when they hear such a ridiculous idea. Water parks are typically in areas that don't have access to water, and should not be allowed at all in a drought state. Perhaps working to get legislation passed would be a good way to stop you from developments in the state of California altogether, where we can't afford to waste natural resources and especially water.

This would be a bad investment for Margaritaville. The locals don't want you here, you will not get nearly the flow of people that you need to be profitable, and it will cost way more than initially projected.

Craig & Kelli Davis, Homeowners in Berryessa Highlands

The Lake Berryessa News Response

To: Kelli Lynch, kelli94553@yahoo.com, Craig Davis, craigcdavis85@yahoo.com
From: Peter Kilkus, pkilkus@gmail.com

Greetings:

My name is Peter Kilkus. I am the publisher of The Lake Berryessa News. I have a website (<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/>), Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064928340101#>), and publish a Lake Berryessa News email newsletter twice a month or so.

Tim Wilkens forwarded your letter to Camp Margaritaville Resorts to me. I don't expect that you'll receive a response from the Margaritaville folks you sent it to. The reason, as I learned myself a couple of years ago, is that the Margaritaville corporate entity is a franchise licensing business. Almost all of the Jimmy Buffet organization-related names are sold as franchises to private investor-owners. This is true for the name Camp Margaritaville Resorts which is a brand introduced a few years ago. So far there are five Camp Margaritaville RV Resorts in the US. These are franchised locations, meaning they are owned and operated by individual franchisees. Tim Wilkins and his private investors are the "franchisees" in this case.

The Camp Margaritaville Resorts offer a variety of amenities including RV sites, cabins, and other lodging options, along with resort-style features like pools, tiki bars, and entertainment stages. They're designed as family-friendly, environmentally sustainable

vacation locations. The new Camp Margaritaville RV Resorts are thriving.

<https://www.margaritavilleresorts.com/locations/ways-to-stay/rv-resorts>

I'm not sure how long you've lived in the Highlands or how much research you've done on Lake Berryessa issues. I encourage you to do a bit more research by exploring the history of the last 20 years on my website. Your letter shows several misconceptions about the plans for Steele Canyon Recreation Area. All of the required environmental studies have been completed. All the legal issues have been resolved. This is true for all the present open campgrounds and the closed resorts. The comments in your first paragraph have been discussed and litigated several times previously. Specifically, the various resorts, including the Camp Margaritaville proposal for the Steele Canyon Recreation Area (Steele Canyon Campground) meet NEPA, CEQA, Army Corps of Engineers, California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), and all other state and county requirements.

Wildlife has always thrived at the lake despite human use. In fact, wildlife viewing is an important recreational activity here as noted in the Ragatz Report (link below). We see several bald eagles and osprey every time we go boating.

I'm not sure to whom you've been speaking, but I can assure you from my contacts and social media platforms that the majority of Berryessa Highlands residents, as well as the anglers and campers who use the lake now, and the residents of the other small communities around the lake, enthusiastically support the Camp Margaritaville proposal, as do the Napa County supervisors. The plans include a \$1 million investment to upgrade the Berryessa Highlands (NBRID) water and sewer system.

The issues of traffic and crime are red herrings that have long been used against any renewal of the Lake Berryessa recreational community. They were not serious issues when the lake had 8 million visitors a year, and will not be so in the future - and they never reached up into our Highlands community. There are plans for mitigating the usual traffic outside the resort entrance that occurs sometimes on weekends.

Tim Wilkens is a local Napa resident who has been a Lake Berryessa visitor and boater for many years. He and his very savvy investors have done deep analyses of the potential financial returns from their plans and are convinced of the viability of their Camp Margaritaville proposal.

I have personally, along with thousands of other Lake Berryessa lovers, been fighting the Bureau of Reclamation's disastrous Visitor Services Plan process which began in 2000. I documented this process in my book:

Policy and Politics Betray the People: The Lake Berryessa Saga: 1958 - 2020

https://www.amazon.com/Policy-Politics-Betray-People-Berryessa-ebook/dp/B08MFSQDBR/ref=sr_1_1?

A fun book I wrote about Lake Berryessa is:

Lake Berryessa Technical Manual: The Science, Engineering, History, and Humor of a Major Unnatural Resource

Free downloadable chapters of both books are available on my website, or you can purchase them on Amazon. An example of a free chapter is:

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Political-History/Chapter-II-Timeline.pdf>

About ten years ago I created the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program to assist folks in understanding what's going on here now. Although there's a lot to consider, I hope that you will take some time to read and understand it.

The Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program Explained

by Peter Kilkus

I have referred to the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program for several years. I have been criticized that, "The "Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program" is not any recognized County process. It is your own invention, and does not exist beyond yourself." This statement is simply wrong, irrelevant, aimed at delaying the "Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program", and a bit mean-spirited.

The official name for Napa County's governing document for the revitalization process is:

[Managing Agreement Number 20-LC-20-2623 : Managing Agreement Between the United States of America and Napa County for the Administration, Operation, Maintenance and Development of Recreation Uses and Facilities at Lake Berryessa Area Project Lands.](#)

The second element of "The Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program" is the county-funded 2017 Ragatz Report, the most detailed report about the value of Lake Berryessa to Napa County ever produced, including an extensive public survey. Read it and see.

Ragatz Report Full

[https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf,](https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf)

The third element of "The Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program" is actually the

Napa County General Plan

<https://www.countyofnapa.org/DocumentCenter/View/3334/Napa-County-General-Plan---Complete-Document-PDF>

Hopefully the Board of Supervisors will live up to its public statement that:

"The County hopes that the private investment associated with a long-term concession agreement will improve recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, provide new employment opportunities, and possibly become an anchor for revitalization of the Lake Berryessa community."

The primary refutation of every negative attack on the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program is the Ragatz Report funded by Napa County. It includes comprehensive analysis of Lake Berryessa's potential as an asset to Napa County and a detailed survey of several thousand lake users, including Napa County residents.

[2017 Ragatz Report Full](#)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/References-PDFs/2017-Ragatz-Report-Full.pdf>

[Ragatz Report Introduction & Summary of Recommendations](#)

https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/Ragatz-Report-Introduction_Summary_Recomendations.pdf

After false statements that the Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program might violate the Napa County General Plan or that it didn't include "nature-based recreation", I wrote several reports refuting those allegations. I analyzed the General Plan and wrote a detailed report on the many ways the General Plan supports The Lake Berryessa Revitalization Program. These reports are available on my website (<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/>) at:

[Lake Berryessa and the Napa General Plan,](#)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Lake-Berryessa-and-the-Napa-General-Plan.pdf>

[Environmental Management at Lake Berryessa](#)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Environmental-Management-at-Lake-Berryessa.pdf>

[Nature Based Recreation at Lake Berryessa](#)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Past-Stories-&-Reports/Nature-Based-Recreation-at-Lake-Berryessa.pdf>

[Rancho Monticello Environmental Management System](#)

<https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/resources/Lake-Berryessa-Support-Documentation/RM-001-Rancho-EMS-Manual.2.pdf>

I hope you will read this documentation. It's a lot to digest. Thanks for your attention. Also please attend the community meeting next week at the Volunteer Fire Station.

By the way, my kids and I, as do most people, love lazy rivers, wave machines, and water slides!

Respectfully, Peter Kilkus

Please join us for a Town Hall Meeting on August 28th at 6pm - 8 pm with District 4 Supervisor Amber Manfree at Capell Valley Volunteer Fire Station 14, 1193 Capell Valley Road.

Below are a list of speakers and topics (in no particular order):

Public Works – Updates on Margaritaville, road projects, and water/sewage

United Policyholders – Homeowner's and renter's insurance

Sheriff's Office – Evacuation protocols and enforcement of invasive mussel boat quarantine

Cal Fire / NCFD – Fire mitigation projects and other updates

Firewise – Status of local projects

Lake Berryessa was ranked as the 6th best fishing lake in California

Fishmasters' recent list put Lake Berryessa at 6th place on the Top 30 Fishing Lakes in California. The report highlighted Lake Berryessa's healthy populations of bass, trout, catfish, and salmon and its diverse year-round fishing opportunities. The selection was based on first-hand experience, local knowledge, and advice from anglers across the state.

Lake Berryessa supports healthy populations of bass, trout, catfish, and salmon. The lake offers various fishing opportunities throughout the year, with early mornings ideal for topwater fishing and deeper sections holding larger catches in warmer months. The large man-made reservoir in Napa County is popular for outdoor activities.

Nestled in the beautiful Berryessa Pines Community

181 Berryessa Drive

<https://181berryessadr.com/>

\$410,888

Embrace a lifestyle of tranquility and natural beauty.

This home offers a serene lakeside living experience,

Picturesque lake view. Single-family home with 3 bedrooms, 2 bath

property sits on a generous lot of about 7,405 square feet.

The third bedroom is used as an office or den, providing flexibility.

New dual-pane windows, new HVAC system, Access to a spacious deck

offering stunning views of Lake Berryessa.

Ideal for relaxation and entertaining.



Amber Payne, Realtor, Lic. #01302244
707-235-1124
amber.payne@corcorancon.com
www.amberpayne.net

1300 Steele Canyon Road

<https://1300steelecanyonrd.com/>



1300 Steele Canyon Road, Napa

\$649,000

4 3 2,443

corcoran

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Sunsets, Space & Style This Lakeview Property Has It All! Perched on a corner lot with stunning lake and sunset views, this one-of-a-kind custom home blends charm, flexibility, and function. The main house offers 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, soaring ceilings, Brazilian cherrywood floors, and a beautifully updated kitchen with quartz counters, soft-close cabinetry, and a large island open to the family room with fireplace. The luxurious primary suite features a jetted tub, heated floors, and French doors leading to a covered porch with lake views. Need more space? Use the home as a 4BR/3BA or enjoy a detached ADU above the garage with its own bedroom, full bath, and kitchenette perfect for guests, rental, or multi-gen living. Outside, the professionally landscaped lot features custom brick patios, terraced gardens, RV/boat parking with electrical hookup, and even a generator & SOLAR. Whether you're entertaining under the stars or unwinding in total privacy, this home has everything you need and then some!

Redevelopment Opportunity | Spanish Flat – Lake Berryessa

<https://spanishflatctr.com/>

Unlock the visionary potential of Spanish Flat—an exciting and strategic redevelopment opportunity in Napa County's scenic Lake Berryessa corridor. This rare offering spans approximately 18.38 acres across two adjacent parcels with a County zoning overlay to allow for commercial and housing uses, including an affordable aspect. Whether you're a developer, investor, or planner with a creative vision, this property is primed for transformation.

\$995,000



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www.amberpayne.net



1011 Steele canyon
<https://1011steelecanyonrd.com/>
4 bedrooms, 2 baths, 10 acres
\$1,149,000

Exceptional Lake Berryessa Estate - Premier Peninsula Location. Discover unmatched privacy with the shoreline just steps from your door. As the only residence on this secluded stretch, it truly feels like your private lakeside retreat. The property attracts diverse wildlife, with visits from bald eagles, ospreys, deer, and foxes. The home features an open floor plan with high ceilings and expansive windows creating a bright atmosphere. Interior finishes include tile, laminate, and carpet flooring with a cozy fireplace. Minutes from the Steele Canyon Recreation Area.

Amber Payne, Realtor, Lic. #01302244
707-235-1124
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Lake Views, Outdoor Elegance & Stylish Living!

<https://www.1149rimrockdr.com/>

\$640,000

Tucked into the scenic Berryessa Highlands, this 4BR/2.5 BA home offers the ultimate indoor-outdoor lifestyle with breathtaking lake views and one of the most beautifully terraced backyards you'll ever see. Built in 1985, this home offers the perfect blend of comfort, character, and natural beauty—just minutes from Lake Berryessa recreation.



Features stylish interiors with a chef's kitchen complemented by solid oak floors and a cozy fireplace in the living room that opens to a deck with panoramic lake views! Boat/RV parking, and a dedicated garden area add both charm and function! A magical terraced landscape ideal for garden lovers and outdoor entertainers alike.

A true work of art and a MUST SEE



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[Lake Berryessa Fire Watch Cameras](#)

This site covers the whole Lake Berryessa Region.

<http://www.rntl.net/lake-berryessa-cams/>



UC San Diego

<http://www.rntl.net/lake-berryessa-cams/>

IMAGE
COURTESY OF
PG&E

Berryessa Peak Fire Lookout

6/1/25



axis-berryessa elev:2979' X:-176.82 Y:-2.68 Z:1.2 .CA LNU.mknopp.05-31T14:34 © ALERTCalifornia 2025/06/01 08:25:28.40



Steele Canyon Campground Inc.
1605 Steele Canyon Rd, Napa, CA 94558
Office: (707) 966-9410
Camp, Boat, Picnic, Hike or Bike...

Enjoy the great outdoors and beauty of Lake Berryessa.

<https://campsteelecanyon.com/>



Lake Berryessa Boat & Jet Ski Rentals

Take advantage of our low off-season rates through May 17th

Wakeboard/Ski Boats, Pontoon Boats

Jet Skis, Fishing Boats, Kayaks & Paddleboards

We include the gas in all our rentals. Which will save you \$\$!

All boats are launched from Spanish Flat.



4420 Knoxville Rd. (.9 mile north of Spanish Flat Campground)

707-966-4204 or 707-966-4205 www.lakeberryessaboats.com

Call or go online to book now

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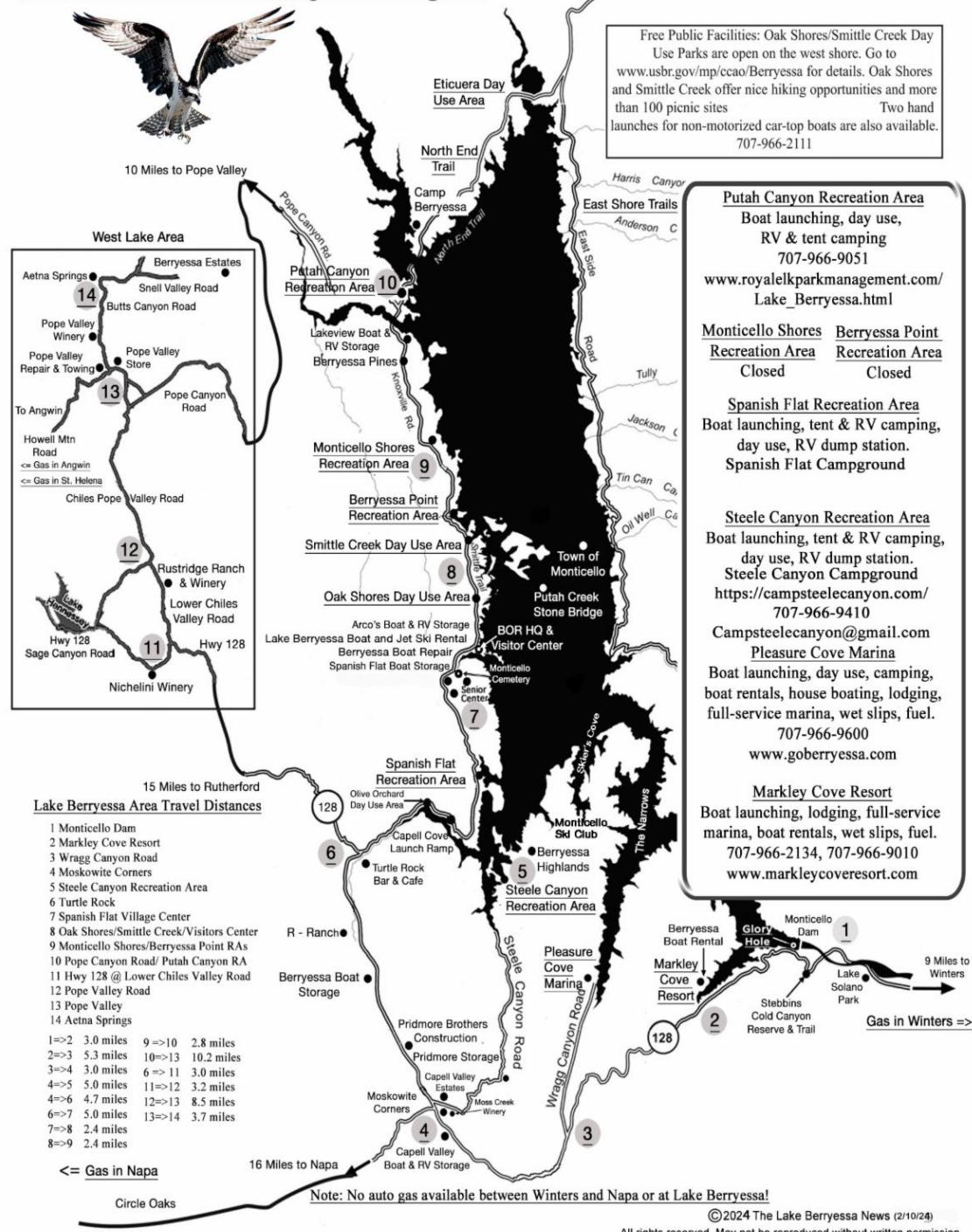
707-966-9954

FOR STORAGE, DETAIL, & CONSIGNMENT

707-480-3157

[Updated Lake Berryessa Map \(1/28/24\)](#)

The Greater Lake Berryessa Region



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pkilkus@gmail.com | [https://www.lakeberryessanews.com/](http://www.lakeberryessanews.com/)



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